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“Thank You For What You Are Doing in Nigeria”, Buhari Commends UN



L-R: President Muhammadu Buhari; Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon; and UNFPA Representative in Nigeria, Ms Ulla Muller at the State House Abuja. 24 August.

President Muhammadu Buhari has commended the United Nations system in Nigeria for its numerous life-saving interventions in the country. “Thank you for what you have been doing in the country, especially for women and children. I am glad you have put together a dedicated team to work with us,” he said while receiving the UN Country Team led by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr Edward Kallon, at the State House Abuja, on 24 August 2020.

The President further commended the various programmes of the UN in Nigeria. “I am very impressed with the number of programmes you are carrying out, and I hope that our ministers will continue to cooperate with you.” He added, “We will continue to make your job feasible and comfortable.”

Mr Kallon in his remarks, commended President Buhari for the establishment of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development; as well as his leadership and guidance in the response to COVID-10 pandemic in Nigeria. “We commend your wisdom in establishing the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 and adding your voice in the global call for a people’s vaccine for Corona Virus, so that it does not become a vaccine for the rich and powerful alone, but for all humanity.”

COVID 19, according to Mr Kallon, has been likened to an x-ray that has revealed fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. “It has laid bare risks including inadequate health systems, gaps in social protection, structural inequalities, environmental degradation and the climate crisis.”

The Resident Coordinator called for everyone to work together to find innovative solutions to turn this human tragedy into a generational opportunity to build back better a more equal and sustainable world.

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2011 UN House Bombing: UN Staff Members Honour Fallen Colleagues & Partners



Memorial: UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon, honours colleagues and partners killed in the 2011 attack on UN House Abuja.

On 26 August 2020, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Edward Kallon, led Heads of UN Agencies and other staff members in Nigeria to honour colleagues and partners killed in the attack on UN House Abuja on 26 August 2011.

“Today, we remember our colleagues and partners killed in the attack on UN House Abuja at 10.25 a.m. on 26 August 2011. We will continue to uphold our core values of peace, freedom, tolerance and justice; and raise our voices against threat of terrorism.” Said Mr Kallon in a message he delivered online to UN staff at a memorial held on 26 August 2020.

He later joined staff members who had gathered by the cenotaph erected in the memory of the departed at the front court of the UN House.

Gender-Based Violence: Laws Alone Are Not Enough, Individuals Must Do More – Kallon



Within the context of eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in Nigeria, the UN Resident-Coordinator Edward Kallon has noted that laws alone were not enough to end the scourge.

“Laws alone are not enough. We as individuals, must do more. We must –especially men – stand up against abusive behavior whenever we see it. We must say: “I do not agree with this. I will not support such action. It is wrong.” He said at the opening of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative townhall on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria, held on 25 August 2020 at Abuja.

The Resident Coordinator emphasised that Sexual and gender-based violence is the most extreme form of systemic inequality experienced by women and girls. It knows no geographic – or socio-economic – or cultural boundaries.

He therefore called on everyone to risk criticism for standing out from the crowd, to condemn all acts of violence and strive to establish equality with women in both their work and home lives. “We must change the everyday experiences of women and girls.” He added, “Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and to end violence against women and girls. This has to start by challenging the culture of discrimination against women and girls which allows violence to continue. We must shatter negative gender stereotypes.”

In his special message, President Muhammadu Buhari called for an end to violence against women and children in the country and around the world. He noted that Nigeria has made a lot of progress in the fight against gender-based violence.

“I stand in solidarity with all the women and children in Nigeria and around the world and say no to violence against women and children,” he said.

“A lot of good progress has been made in the past few months. We have established an inter-ministerial management committee on the eradication of gender-based violence in the country.

The EU Head of Delegation, Karl Karlsen, has called for transformative changes in the fight against Gender-Based violence (GBV) in Nigeria and around the world. He said that the matter

was being dealt with by groups working with civil society and the international community and urged other relevant sectors to join in the fight.

“We need all political leaders, governors and other relevant individuals to make this their priority because an initiative like the Spotlight Initiative can not solve all of these problems alone.

“The idea of the Spotlight Initiative is to build on best practices that have been put in place by organisations fighting GBV such as the Mirabel Center.

“We need to make sure that those practices are made available throughout the country and are maximised into becoming national and state policies.

The Minister for Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen, in her remarks, said cases of rape and other forms of violence against women are under-reported.

“For every one reported case of Gender-Based Violence, 10 are not reported,” she said while faulting statistics on GBV,” said Tallen who was a guest on the UN Spotlight Initiative Town Hall on Violence Against Women on Tuesday.

“I am happy that the last speaker you just interviewed on the street confirmed that some communities try to suppress and stop people from reporting Gender-Based Violence.”

The Minister called for an end to the rising cases of rape and other forms of violence against women and girls in the country.

While condemning the act, she declared that further violent cases were unacceptable.

She, therefore, encouraged Nigerians and other forms of victims to speak out in order to end the scourge of violence against the female folks.

According to the Minister, perpetrators of violence against women should be named and shamed to serve as a deterrent to others.

Sharing her shocking tale of how she was raped for years by a man she thought was her father, a survivor, Fatima Ada Isiaku disclosed that she was first sexually abused at the age of five when her step-father used his fingers on her.

The Life-long Impact Of Sexual Assault: A Survivor Speaks Out



Ms Fatima Ada Isiaku, a rape survivor who spoke at the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative townhall on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence at Abuja on 25 August.

Fatima Ada Isiaku was only 5 years old when her stepfather began sexually abusing her.

“At the age of 7, the abuse became worse,” Ms Isiaku revealed during a televised town hall on sexual and gender-based violence and Spotlight Initiative’s efforts to address the issue in Nigeria.

“I was a sex slave for complete seven years under my mother’s nose without her knowing that I was being abused.”

“[My stepfather] told me, ‘Your mother is no longer here to protect you’. He continued raping me” said Fatima Ada Isiaku, survivor of violence

It wasn’t until the age of 14 that Ms. Isiaku’s mother finally listened to her, after performing an at-home “virginity test”. When Ms. Isiaku explained that she was being raped by her stepfather, her mother told her to keep quiet and sent her to live at her uncle’s house. Two years later, her mother died and Ms. Isiaku was forced to return home.

“[My stepfather] told me, ‘Your mother is no longer here to protect you’... he continued raping me,” she said.

Ms. Isiaku says the abuse caused her to drop out of school, run away from home and begin drinking. “I was bullied. The stigma, friends abandoned me,” she said. Even today, she faces discrimination stemming from sexual assault.

Ms. Isiaku’s story was a harrowing reminder of the devastating impact of violence against women and girls – what EU Head of Delegation Ketil Karlsen called “the world’s longest lasting pandemic”. Thirty-one per cent of Nigerian women aged 15 - 49 have experienced physical violence according to the 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey, though underreporting means true statistics are likely much higher.

“I stand in solidarity with all the women and children in Nige-

ria and around the world and say ‘no’ to violence against women and children” - President Muhammadu Buhari

The town hall brought together survivors of violence, civil society representatives, government, police, and representatives from the EU and UN to discuss what needs to be done to end violence against women and girls in the country. It was broadcast live on Channels TV and focused on improving survivor access to justice, the challenges of prosecuting perpetrators of violence, and the adoption of legal frameworks that protect women and girls, as well as highlighting gender-based violence services that are available.

UN Resident Coordinator to Nigeria Edward Kallon spoke about the need for all of society to join the movement to eliminate violence. “It is not a woman’s issue, it is also an issue for men,” he said.

The event closed with a statement from President Muhammadu Buhari, who committed to making ending violence against women a national priority. He also echoed the need for men to be part of the solution.

“I stand in solidarity with all the women and children in Nigeria and around the world and say ‘no’ to violence against women and children,” he said. “I call on all our men and boys to help us in achieving our goal of creating a society that is free from domestic violence, rape and all other forms of violence against women and children.”

In addition to TV reach, more than a million viewers tuned in to watch the discussion via Twitter Live.

Spotlight Initiative is dedicating more than US\$43 million to ending violence against women and girls in Nigeria, making it the Initiative’s largest country investment.

Fatima has documented her horrid experience in a book titled, “I called him Dad”.

Traditional And Religious Leaders Urged To Mobilise Community Action To End Violence Against Women And Girls



Against the backdrop of increase in cases of violence against women and girls in Nigeria during the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent declaration of a State of Emergency by the Nigeria Governors' Forum, traditional and religious leaders in Nigeria have been called upon to deploy their influence in mobilising community action to end violence against women and girls in the country.

"We encourage and ask our esteemed traditional and religious leaders to engage effectively in facilitating dialogues at community, local government and state levels", stated the Spotlight Initiative Accountability Framework adopted at the end of a virtual roundtable conference of Traditional and Religious leaders on Sexual and gender-based violence. According to the Framework, traditional and religious leaders committed to engendering actions to end violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, that have damaging effects on women and girls' lives.

The conference which held on August 6, 2020, was hosted online by the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls in Nigeria. Over 400 participants across leadership and government, academia, civil society, media were in attendance. Speakers at the event included the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabamila, represented by the Chair, House Committee on Women and Social Development, Hon. Adewunmi Onanuga; His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, represented by HRH the 33rd Emir of Argungu, Alh. Sumaila Muhammad Mera; President, Christian Association of Nigeria, Archbishop Benebo Fubara-Manuel; Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline K. Tallen; Deputy Head of the EU Delegation, Alexandre Borges-Gomes; UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, UN

Heads of Agencies, as well as survivors, women advocates and child protection networks.

Declaring the conference open, the Hon. Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Dame Pauline Tallen commended President Buhari for his targeted action towards the prevalence of violence against women and girls, through the instruction to the Minister of Justice to expeditiously establish an inter-ministerial Gender-Based Violence Management Committee to respond to cases of violence against women and children in Nigeria.

In her remarks to enjoin communities to take action to end violence against women and girls, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed said, "For those who turn a blind eye or deaf ear saying, it's a private matter, know that you too are accomplices to violence... Because of these attitudes, millions of women and girls face a clear and present danger of the threat of violence and rape every day... Take responsibility. Speak up for women and girls... Let's rally our communities to say no to gender-based violence."

Demanding that all stakeholders recognise the role and participation of women, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria referred to violence against women as a crime against humanity. "There is no way Nigeria will develop without the full participation of women. Why should we continue eliminating them? Why should we continue harming them?"

The Spotlight Initiative virtual roundtable builds on past engagement with religious and traditional leaders, including with the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) and Nasrul-Lahi-L-Fatih Society (NASFAT) on the EVAC campaign, and holding them accountable to the communique signed at a Consultative Forum held on 26 February 2016 in Lagos, Nigeria. In Nigeria, the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls is being implemented in six states including Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Lagos, Sokoto and the FCT.

Nasarawa Launches State Action Plan, Inaugurates Steering Committee Of Women In Peacebuilding



The launch by the Governor, supported by the Deputy Governor, the First Lady, Secretary to the State Government, Emir of Lafia, Chair House Committee on Women Affairs, Programme Analyst, UN Women and the Action Aid Country Director.

On 6 August 2020, UN Women supported the launch of the State Action Plan (SAP) on the implementation of UNSCR1325 on Women Peace and Security by the Nasarawa State government, and the inauguration of the Steering Committee of Nasarawa State Network of Women in Peacebuilding.

The joint activity was kicked off by the Nasarawa State Governor, Engr. Abdullahi Sule. Other dignitaries in attendance included the First Lady of Nasarawa State, Deputy Governor of Nasarawa State, Dr Emmanuel Agbadu Akabe; Secretary to the Nasarawa State Government, Mohammed Ubandoma-Aliyu; Hajiya Sili-fat Abdullahi A. Sule; Chair of Nasarawa State House of Assembly Committee on Women Affairs, the Honourable Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Halima A. Jabiru; Chair, House Committee on Women Affairs, Mr Samuel Tsebe; Emir of Lafia, HRH Sidi Bage; Country Director, ActionAid Nigeria, Ms. Ene Obi; and Executive Director, Global Peace Development, Mr. Esike Onajite Ebruke.

UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, represented at the ceremony by the Women, Peace and Security Analyst, Ms. Olubukola Ademola-Adelehin stated: "The significance and importance of a State Action Plan in providing a framework for Women, Peace and Security cannot be over emphasized in Nasarawa state. Women and girls in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the world, continue to be directly impacted by violent conflict; including sexual violence in conflict, destruction of means of livelihood or indirectly becoming widowed and left to deal with family split-up, which leave women and children vulnerable to sexual and economic predation at different levels."

The UN Women representative also acknowledged that despite the role of women affected by conflict in brokering peace and mediating low-level conflict at the family and community level, they are largely excluded from participating in formal peacebuilding processes.

In October 2020, the United Nations will be commemorating 20 years since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325, a landmark resolution and the first comprehensive framework on the Women, Peace and Security agenda which affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the

delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace. On August 27th, 2013, Nigeria launched her first National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. With support from UN Women and key partners, Nigeria is currently implementing her second NAP and can boast of SAPs in 11 states and Local Government Action Plans in some local governments. The Nasarawa SAP launch, the 12th SAP in Nigeria thus comes at a critical time when Nigeria is undergoing a stock-taking on the domestication of the National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In Nasarawa, the Steering committee of the Network of Women in Peacebuilding will work closely with the Ministry of Women Affairs to promote the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the state. With the development of a State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, the Network led by the Steering Committee will contribute to advocating the implementation of the SAP, as well as promote the inclusion of women in all proposed peacebuilding processes. These actions will contribute meaningfully to addressing the herder-farmer conflict in a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive manner.

Under the UN Peacebuilding Office-supported Integrated Approach to Building Peace in Nigeria's Herder-Farmer Crisis Project, UN Women is working with the respective Ministry of Women Affairs in the target states (Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba) to respond to the urgent need for women to be mobilized at community, local government and state levels to synergize their efforts and contribute to formal peacebuilding processes to address herder-farmer conflict in the states.

The project seeks to build sustainable, cohesive relationships between herders and farmers in Nigeria by enhancing the abilities of communities affected by violent herder-farmer conflict to build resilient and cooperative frameworks through the provision of economic incentives. It also seeks to ensure that the role of women in contributing to the peace and security architecture in this conflict is highlighted and promoted. Other UN Agencies delivering their mandate under the Building Peace in Nigeria's Herder-Farmer Crisis project are UNDP, FAO and OHCHR.

Combatting Health Worker Infections In Nigeria



A WHO facilitator at the training of health workers in Kaduna

When Dr Mark Anthony makes his weekly rounds in Kaduna state, from public hospitals to private facilities, he is encouraged to see health workers protecting themselves, attending to patients with the right protective gear and performing the necessary hand hygiene. It gives him hope that the battle against COVID-19 will be won in his country.

In late March, Dr Anthony, Kaduna State Health Ministry Infection Prevention and Control lead, benefitted from a World Health Organization (WHO) supported training on infection prevention and control measures, which has since been held across all six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. He then came back to his home state, in the northwest of the country, equipped with the materials to pass on this knowledge to others.

“The training exposed us to many issues that were unclear to us before. It gave me the confidence to be able to come back to Kaduna and help nurture the right attitudes in our health workers,” Dr Anthony says.

Infection prevention and control is a key tenet of the response to COVID-19. So far Nigeria has recorded more than 52 000 infections, including 2175 health workers. In April, just a month into the outbreak in Nigeria, Kaduna state recorded some of the highest levels of health worker infections, with 30 health care staff infected.

Dr Anthony has helped to train as many as 4000 health workers in Kaduna and across the northwest region on infection prevention and control, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, respiratory and hand hygiene. The state now has some of the highest numbers of health workers trained, and this also cascades down to non-medical staff.

“Everyone benefited from the training, and we are really seeing the impact,” says Dr Isaac Nathaniel, a gynaecologist with the Kafanchan General Hospital in Kaduna. “In the new isolation centre located close to my hospital, none of my colleagues has been infected so far,” he adds. Like Dr Anthony, Dr Nathaniel has also helped to train others, including workers tasked with burying COVID-19 positive cases.

Limiting infections

In a bid to keep lowering infection rates, Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory and all 36 state governments have invested in training their health workers with the support of WHO. The national and the state governments have also strived to make personal protective equipment and other essential supplies more

readily available to health workers. Nigeria has benefitted from the United Nations Solidarity Flight campaign, which distributed essential medical supplies including personal protective equipment and ventilators.

Back in April, Kano state, which borders Kaduna to the north-east, was particularly badly hit by COVID-19 infections. Many of the first cases detected in the state were among health workers, prompting the deployment of a federal response team for support. WHO also helped in the infection prevention and control training for health facility staff.

Some of the challenges identified were: inadequate knowledge regarding COVID-19 transmission, non-triage of patients, and incorrect use of PPE. Intensive three-week practical training promptly began for healthcare providers in public, private and primary health care facilities in the state.

“IPC (infection prevention and control) is critical because it protects both the health workers and the people who come to the facilities,” says Professor Bola Olayinka, a WHO leading expert in infection prevention and control who led the training team deployed to Kano and coordinated national training across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. “Whether it is COVID-19, Ebola, Lassa fever, meningitis or cholera, we don’t want patients to come in with one problem and leave with an additional one,” she adds.

Since February, Professor Olayinka has been to several states in the country, including Ogun and Lagos in the south-west, to train various groups, including rapid response teams, on IPC. COVID-19 regulations mean she can only train a few people at a time, so she has adopted a train-the-trainer model, requesting states to send health workers who can then teach others. Across the country, about 10,000 health workers have trained under Professor Olayinka. In turn, they have gone on to train tens of thousands of others.

“Fewer healthcare workers are getting infected compared to before in the nine states that have gone through the intensive training so far and there is a better knowledge of what to do to avoid infection,” Professor Olayinka says.

But she cautions that the situation remains volatile. In Kaduna, while 30 health workers were infected in April, that number has since increased to 285, despite the training in infection prevention and control.

“IPC is not a once and for all thing and it’s not just a COVID-19 thing. It needs to be entrenched in the health care system and it should be part of the normal standard of care,” Professor Olayinka says. “People need to be aware, trained, retrained and reminded.”

COVID-19: Going Mobile To Combat Misinformation, Including On Breastfeeding

Nearly one million Nigerians in Enugu receive direct messages on COVID-19 prevention and breastfeeding



Photo: UNICEF Nigeria/ 2020

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about the nature of the disease and what needs to be done to avoid it is rife. Some of the misinformation circulating is about breastfeeding. Mothers who wish to practice it are confused.

Perhaps surprisingly, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in Nigeria is low - one of the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. Even before the pandemic, 70 percent of Nigerian infants were not being breastfed – thereby missing out on the potentially life-saving protection provided by exclusive breastfeeding.

Misinformation about COVID-19 has now been added to the mix of factors impeding exclusive breastfeeding.

Like other breastfeeding mothers, Blessing, 45, has had a tough time making sense of what the COVID-19 pandemic means for her and her baby's safest and healthiest meal, breastmilk.

COVID-19 has already taken away her main source of income, shutting down the market where she used to eke out a living selling vegetables. She can hear the cries for food from her children and struggles to keep them occupied, especially with schools closed. She has many questions about this frightening virus that is keeping everyone indoors, and it's hard to know where to find the answers.

Blessing gets second-hand information from the other women, and her children get an eyeful on social media. But it's hard to sift the truth from the falsehoods, as COVID-19 has brought with it a wave of rumour, mixed messages and deliberate misinformation across Nigeria.

"I don't know whether it is safe to breastfeed, or whether I would risk transmitting the virus to my baby," she said.

Despite an abundance of media channels and messaging platforms in Nigeria, helping people get the information they need in a clear way can be difficult, particularly for those in lower socio-economic brackets.

With this in mind, UNICEF, in partnership with National Orientation Agency (NOA), is using mobile vans to communicate directly with community members, providing information on how to stay safe and promoting breastfeeding - a crucial way of keeping babies healthy.

The mobile campaign works with traditional rulers and NOA officers, deploying a van with a large speaker to broadcast pre-recorded COVID-19 prevention messages to people across ten communities in Enugu State. As it makes its way through the communities, the van stops at designated points where staffers can talk directly to people, answer questions and share communication materials, all while observing social distancing protocols.

It was at one of these stops that Blessing got answers to her questions, as she discovered it was indeed safe to continue breastfeeding without fear that she could risk passing COVID-19 to her infant.

As some communities are hard to reach by road, messages are also transmitted through UNICEF/Enugu State on-air broadcasts called "COVID-19 Radio Talk," which is carried on eleven stations. The broadcasts use live interactive radio shows and catchy jingles to reach more than 300,000 households, covering nearly one million people.

During one of the programs, Dr. Ibrahim Conteh, Chief of UNICEF's field office in Enugu, encouraged listeners: "Like with every other infectious disease, you can stay safe through social distancing, regular handwashing with soap and water and wearing a face mask. Breastfeeding mothers can also continue to exclusively breastfeed their babies, without fear."

It's a clear message that Blessing and other breastfeeding mothers have been waiting to hear.

SPECIAL FOCUS: Polio Eradication - A Battle I fought With Undiluted Passion, Says Professor Tomori, A major Player Who Made It possible



Prof Tomori (Left) chairing Expert Review Committee (ERC) review meeting with polio experts
Photo: WHO Nigeria/ Victor

At 74, Professor Oyewale Tomori is the leading virologist who helped spearhead Nigeria's efforts to kick polio out of the country, a feat that was accomplished in June 2020 after decades of efforts.

A multiple-award-winning specialist in human, zoonotic and veterinary viruses including the poliomyelitis virus and immediate-past president of the Nigerian Academy of Science, Professor Tomori was appointed as the Regional Virologist for the WHO Africa Region in 1994 where he set up the African Regional Polio Laboratory Network, a first-of-its-kind system of laboratories that provided diagnostic expertise to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). He was subsequently appointed as the chairman of the Nigeria Expert Review Committee on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization in 2004 to date, a high-stakes role where he was charged with ensuring Nigeria defeats polio at all costs.

Nigeria has fought a long and hard battle with the poliomyelitis virus. Polio eradication efforts have been ongoing in the country since 1996 but several backslides delayed progress.

However, in June 2020, after another four years of monitoring the wild poliovirus and recording no cases, WHO declared Nigeria polio-free under. It was the last polio-endemic country on the continent. The WHO has certified Africa polio-free in August 2020.

Here, Professor Tomori narrates what the long journey to a polio-free Nigeria was like.

In the beginning

The journey to eradicating polio from Nigeria was a long and arduous task. It began in 1977 when the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted the Universal Child Immunization Program. The goal was to vaccinate every child in the world against measles, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and polio by 1990. But by the deadline - 1990, Nigeria was struggling to achieve the 80% coverage target.

That was when I got on board. I was appointed as a member of a team set up to ensure that we achieved the target. Though Nigeria was widely reported to have hit the mark, many states did not meet the criteria and it was my job to make sure all states recorded zero polio cases.

Before my deployment, I worked with the WHO Africa regional office from 1994 to 2004. There, I helped set up the polio laboratory network, the forerunner for diagnostic laboratories used to

test other viruses including the Lassa fever virus and the Ebola virus. And before my WHO role, I headed the Department of Virology at the University of Ibadan where I was actively involved in isolating polioviruses from children, especially from cases of paralysis in children treated at the outpatient clinic of the University's hospital.

In 2004, when I returned to Nigeria from the WHO regional office, I became a member of the Nigeria Expert Review Committee (ERC) on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization. The first meeting was in 2004, and I attended as a member of the committee and acted for the Chairman who was unable to attend.

Later, I became Chairman. I remained in that position until Nigeria was declared polio-free at the June 18, 2020 meeting of the African Regional Polio Certification (ARCC) where I am also a member. The ERC met quarterly and held a total of 37 meetings before Nigeria attained wild polio-free status.

Facing the challenges in eradicating polio from Nigeria

There were many obstacles. Accessing some areas was difficult and we struggled to reach some populations. Then in 2003, we had the vaccine boycott in Nigeria where some states, because of distrust, refused to allow children to take vaccines. Unfounded rumours had spread that immunization caused infertility. By 2004, even though the boycott issue had been resolved, vaccine uptake remained very low especially in many northern states where most of the polio cases were being reported. In Kano alone, 3.7 million children went unvaccinated. It was a huge setback. The armed conflict in the north that has now displaced some 2 million people, only compounded the problem.

In the beginning, the ERC's recommendations were not taken seriously and it was considered undiplomatic to be critical of the government. The quarterly meetings became routine talk shops. The more meetings we had, the higher the number of polio cases we recorded.

When I worked at the WHO regional office, it was my weekly duty to tally the number of polio cases detected in all African countries. It was always so painful and embarrassing to see Nigeria account for more than 50% of all polio cases in Africa.

The desire to see no child paralysed by polio and the national pride to see my country free of wild polio challenged me to work harder.

The ERC recommendations continued to be disregarded until the committee decided to start briefing the Minister of Health at the end of each quarterly meeting. We also concluded to have a media briefing at the end of our meetings. Often, we published op-eds on the performance of government and the status of polio eradication in Nigeria. It was easier to write truthfully and pungently since I was not a government employee.

Gradually, the government started to take the ERC seriously because we began to hold the Minister of Health accountable at our briefings by highlighting which of our previous recommendations had been implemented. At those briefings, we identified successes and areas that needed urgent government attention and we called out the government for not providing funding and for lacking political will and commitment.

Polio Eradication - A Battle I fought With Undiluted Passion...continued from page



Prof Tomori (Right) and Prof Rose Leke, Chair, Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) for Polio eradication during the ARCC visit to Ikeja LGA, Lagos Nigeria in 2019. Photo: WHO Nigeria/ Eromosele

...Unfortunately, some of our colleagues made the supreme sacrifice with their lives in the line of duty, caught in unrest in some parts of the country. Over the 16 years in which I served as the ERC chairman, I had the rare and unique opportunity to work with distinguished, committed and highly enthusiastic people – field workers, programme officers, partners- all united by the common purpose to rid Nigeria of wild poliovirus and see that Nigerian children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases. Their sacrifices gave me the will to overcome the challenges I came across.

Fighting the urge to give up

There were some really low points when I thought that eradication was impossible: the vaccine boycott, the unending armed conflict in the north, waning commitment from governors, election crises and the usual nonchalant attitudes to healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

Perhaps the saddest day for me was when two years after reporting zero polio cases, we found four new cases in 2016. We had to start a new three-year journey.

I went to bed that night with almost all hope lost but I woke up the next morning with renewed energy. I reminded myself that there was a time when polio-paralysed children could be seen in many parts of Nigeria, when states reported an average of 3 cases a day and now the entire country was reporting cases of polio fewer than the fingers on my left hand.

So I rose and told myself that giving up is not an option. I thought of all the years invested in polio eradication and resolved to fight to the end. I asked myself - If you give up now, what would you have to show for all the efforts, all your big talk? How about the lives lost? The children that will remain paralyzed for the rest of their lives?

Polio-free: Victory at last

On 18th June 2020, when the ARCC declared Nigeria polio-free, I shed some tears. I have shed tears of sorrow for my country before but this was one occasion where I was glad to shed tears of joy after thinking of the years, the efforts, the resources, the pain, the agony and the loss of life.



Prof. Tomori, during the ARCC visit to Lagos State, Nigeria, 2019 (C)WHO Nigeria/ Eromosele Ogbeide

Above all, I thought of all the people who worked to make this possible. For each of them, the tears of joy flowed freely. I did not know I still had any more tears left in me. I had to force myself to stop, to save some joyful tears for the day when good governance will ensure universal health care for all and when high-quality healthcare is accessible and available to every Nigerian.

How did we finally succeed? For me, the game-changer was the establishment of the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). It brought immediate and real-time solutions to routine problems. It moved us from delayed response to immediate action to positively address day to day problems. We also used innovative methods to vaccinate hard-to-reach children like our 'hit and run' operations where we entered areas temporarily or permanently abandoned by armed groups or when we used satellites to map safe zones. Some of these innovations have already been adapted to improve routine immunization programmes. The hope is that we move from emergency to routine operation centres to address immunization and to expand monitoring of other diseases.

Lessons learned on the zero-polio journey

I remember writing an editorial where I asked: Will Nigeria be the last country in the world to eradicate polio? It took 24 years to get the answer - a big no. It took great efforts from our partners too. From them, I learned that working together, we can make the world a better and safer place for us all.

I also learned that nothing good and beautiful is beyond our reach and that we must learn to let our reach exceed our grasp for anything of virtue.

Truly, the joy of seeing Africa Polio-free has drastically reduced my age and I feel so young and happy. Sometimes, I cannot find words to describe my feelings. Above all, I appreciate Almighty God that I am alive to see this day.

Over 60 Nigerians Return From Lebanon As Migrant Worker Conditions Worsen



Worldwide, extraordinary measures—including travel and mobility restrictions—are having an impact on all people. But some are exacerbating the precarious situations and vulnerabilities of migrant populations and in particular, leading to a large number of migrants being stranded.

A total of 219 countries, territories and areas had imposed 60,711 restrictions by early May, which was unprecedented historically. As visas and permits expire migrants are also facing deportation. This increases the possibility of more limited (or no) access to health care and social support, stigmatization and xenophobia, and the risk of detention in already overcrowded detention facilities, and homelessness. Those stranded may also be more vulnerable to exploitation, including traffick-

On Sunday, 16 August, 68 Nigerian women stranded in Lebanon returned home safely on a charter flight organized by the Federal Government of Nigeria arriving at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has recently provided accommodation and meals to the returnees—ranging between the ages of 18 and 35—during their stay in Abuja. This period will allow the necessary profiling to assess their needs and vulnerabilities.

Since May, 165 stranded Nigerian migrants returned from Lebanon – 13 of whom traveled through IOM’s assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programme. IOM provided assistance to all those who returned with case management support as well as access to food, accommodation, hygiene kits and legal counsel prior to their departure from Lebanon.

“We are all in Nigeria now and appreciate your kindness and your efforts for helping us get home,” said one of the migrants who returned to Nigeria at the end of July. “I’m so grateful you stood by me.”

Upon arrival in Nigeria, support from IOM included a 14-day quarantine period, referral for legal assistance, pre-departure testing for COVID-19, provision of protective personal equipment, shelter, as well as medical psychosocial support. IOM will provide additional reintegration support to the new arrivals following their needs assessment.

“Since the start of the pandemic, voluntary return operations for stranded Nigerians have been delayed,” explained Abraham Tamrat, IOM Nigeria Programme Manager.

“With the current situation in Lebanon, we are stepping up our coordination efforts with the Nigerian government to ensure that Nigerian migrants can return safely while keeping communities of origin healthy.”

“We must continue to ensure vulnerable migrants are properly screened and assisted in partnership with governments of origin and destination as well as civil society organizations and community leaders who have been very active in assisting migrants in Lebanon,” said Dima Hadad, IOM Lebanon Programme Officer for the Levant Regional Project.

Migrants are stranded for various reasons including, but not only, restrictions on travel and the related drop in international flights. Loss of jobs and income, lack of employment, loss of residence permits and lack of resources to return home have all impacted mobility.

ing in persons and -- out of desperation -- take up employment in conditions with increased exposure to COVID-19.

Last week, IOM reported that approximately eight per cent of the estimated 300,000 people affected by the explosions at the Port of Beirut are migrant workers, many living in economically disadvantaged areas in Greater Beirut. At least 150 migrant workers have been injured. Fifteen are known to have died in the explosion.

According to the Lebanese Embassy in Abuja, there are an estimated 5,000 Nigerians living in Lebanon. Many of these migrants, often working as domestic workers, report mistreatment from employers and have been exposed to further vulnerabilities following this tragic incident.

IOM continues to promote discussions between the Nigerian government and governments in transit and destination countries to establish humanitarian corridors that will allow those who request voluntary return to do so. Following the closure of the Nigerian airspace to international commercial travel, humanitarian corridors are a much-needed alternative to enable stranded Nigerians to come home.

On 28 July, with the support of the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Union Regional Direct Assistance Fund, 109 Nigerian migrants returned safely from Mali on the first charter flight to the country since the COVID-19 related airspace closure. On 29 July, a group of 158 Nigerians—including 32 children—were assisted in their return from Niger.

IOM’s assistance to returnees during the pandemic is aligned with measures such as testing, and quarantining recommended by the World Health Organization and local health authorities.

IOM continues to assist Nigerian returnees amid COVID-19 movement restrictions. From June to July alone, 1,500 returnees received reintegration assistance, counseling, and capital to start their own business according to their needs.

Recently, IOM launched an appeal to raise funds for its emergency response following the explosions in Beirut. Since late last year, Lebanon has plunged into an economic recession that has been accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis, directly impacting the lives of migrant workers and their families.

The accommodation and food assistance provided to the newly arrived returnees is supported by the Global Assistance Fund.

SDG WEBINAR

POST COVID-19 EPOCH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

Mr. Edward Kallon

UN Resident and Humanitarian
Coordinator in Nigeria



AUG
29



11
GMT



JCIN Creative Hub

ZOOM CLOUD



Link: <https://bit.ly/JCINSDDG>
Meeting ID: 860 4313 3132
Passcode: JCINSDDG

“We need young people who see and seek solutions. We have an opportunity to go beyond lamenting about where our world is today. We look to young people to work on solutions.” This was said by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the United Nations in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon in his statement on the occasion of the International Youth Day organised by the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Nigeria, on 29 August 2020.

“The world is seeking for solutions to old and new challenges. We need solutions in agriculture, health, industry, technologies and dealing with climate change. We also need young people to take positive action.” Mr Kallon who represented the UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed at the event, noted.

He further explained that it did not have to be an innovation. “Just do something. Demand action from the leaders. When we take action, participate in providing solutions and ensuring accountability from our leaders, we shall be working towards that future we all want.” He said.

Recalling the UN Secretary-General strategy to engage young people globally through our various entities operating at national, regional and global levels, Mr Kallon highlighted Engagement, Participation and Advocacy which focuses on amplifying youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world; Human Capital Development which is about supporting young people’s greater access to quality education and health

services; and Economic Empowerment through Decent Work which highlights supporting young people’s greater access to decent work and productive employment.

Others included Youth and Human Rights that focuses on protecting and promoting the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement; as well as Youth, Peace and Security aimed at supporting young people as catalysts for Peace and Security; and Humanitarian Action.

In his message on the Day, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, called on leaders and adults everywhere to do everything possible to enable the world’s youth to enjoy lives of safety, dignity and opportunity and contribute to the fullest of their great potential.

According to him, “Realizing the promise of this generation means investing far more in young people’s inclusion, participation, organizations and initiatives.”

Mr. Guterres noted that the present generation is resilient, resourceful and engaged; They are the young people who have risen up to demand climate action and they are mobilizing for racial justice and gender equality and are the champions of a more sustainable world.

“They are peacebuilders promoting social cohesion at a time of social distancing, advancing an end to violence globally and advocating harmony at a time of rising hatred.” He added.

Over 900 Young Nigerians Join Zoom Call To Learn Advocacy Skills For Positive Change

With only 10 years remaining to make the 2030 Agenda a reality for all, the engagement of youth is more critical than ever.

The vast majority of challenges humanity currently faces, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, require meaningful engagement and participation of young people to be addressed effectively. UNICEF, with the support of partners, is helping to nurture a growing community of young people in Nigeria who are systematically changing the world – including through advocacy.

To commemorate International Youth Day 2020, UNICEF Nigeria, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, hosted a webinar to improve the advocacy skills of young Nigerians. The event attracted more than 900 participants from across the country.

During the zoom event, young changemakers gave practical examples of how they have successfully advocated on critical issues, encouraging the young listeners to meaningfully engage in global issues – especially in making the SDGs a reality, and to draw attention to the important role of Nigerian youth in creating the future Nigerian society.

Key speakers included: Patoranking, singer and youth advocate; Beverly Naya, actress and filmmaker; Musa Musa, advocate for people living with disabilities; Mohammed Keana, advocate for the rights of Almajiri children; and representatives of youth networks.

“I believe if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything,” said Patoranking, popular singer and youth advocate. “Knowing where I am coming from, it was important for me to give people hope through my music, and also to be the voice for the voiceless.”

With one of the world’s largest youth populations, never has there been such a critical moment for Nigerian youth engagement and advocacy. Building young people’s advocacy capacity helps them find a seat at the table, articulate their opinions and contribute to decisions being made about their world.

The experiences shared by the event’s speakers helped the youth gain a deeper understanding of their issues, develop an

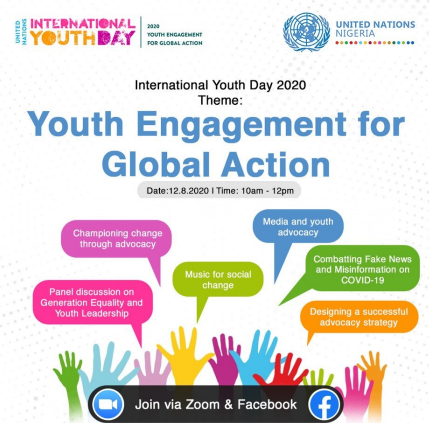
advocacy plan, and meaningfully engage with policymakers. There were also sessions on gender equality, combatting misinformation and the importance of inclusivity for children and young people living with disabilities. “Until the world recognizes all categories of youth and their differences, identifies

and addresses their concerns, total inclusion and development will continue to be a mirage,” said Musa Musa, an advocate for young people living with disabilities.

During the sessions on developing successful advocacy initiatives, the young Nigerians discussed their experiences in youth engagement and the barriers preventing them and their peers from creating the change they want to see. Many of the participants, through the polls sent during the event, felt that lack of funds and support from stakeholders were a major hindrance in engaging positively in their local communities. Others expressed a feeling of inadequacy and lack of motivation in carrying out advocacy initiatives.

Urging young Nigerians to become advocates for issues they are passionate about, and offering proactive ways to overcome the challenges they might face, Mohammed Keana, advocate for the rights of Almajiri children in Nigeria said: “I see advocacy as both a moral and constitutional responsibility for every citizen.”

With over 4,000 comments in the webinar chat box, many participants who attended the workshop expressed their optimism and hope for change. Participant Princewill Chikakpobi Chukwure said: “Nigerian youths must continue to push, press and speak up until we see the change we so dream of in Nigeria.”



UN Opens New Legal Hub In Nigeria To Bring Justice To Victims Of Trafficking

On the occasion of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30/7), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced the opening of a new facility in Edo state that will provide unhindered access to legal services to victims of trafficking in Nigeria.

The legal hub will provide free, prompt, timely and confidential legal aid to victims regardless of sex, age and gender. Parallel to the opening of the pilot facility in Edo, IOM conducted awareness raising sessions in Delta and Lagos states, where two additional hubs will be established at the end of the year.

“Currently, prosecution of traffickers in Nigeria is focused primarily on criminal cases,” said Bertha Nguvulu, IOM Nigeria Counter Trafficking Project Officer. “The legal hubs will bring together all actors involved in criminal, as well as civil proceedings for victims of sexual and labour exploitation seeking legal redress in the country,” she added.

The launch follows consultations with various legal actors in all three states such as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Ministry of Justice, the Nigerian Bar Association, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, as well as academia.

IOM will provide training and equipment to the Nigerian Minis-

try of Justice who will be responsible for the management of the Edo State. The Lagos and Delta legal hubs will be hosted by the University of Lagos and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), respectively.

“This facility is the first of its kind in West Africa to offer a victim-centred approach,” said Hon. Justice Urhomwen Isoken Erameh, representing the Ministry of Justice during the virtual opening ceremony. “We must ensure that victims are well informed about the services available to them.”

Since 2017, IOM has assisted the return of over 2,059 victims of trafficking—the vast majority of whom come from Edo and Delta states—to Nigeria. Support to these victims include accommodation in places of safety, medical and psychosocial support, education, skills development and vocational training, livelihood and income-generating opportunities, soft skills training, mentorship, legal aid, and family reunification.

Over 70 per cent of the 20,500 Nigerian returnees assisted by IOM since 2017 have reported some form of abuse along their migration journey.

This initiative is funded by the United Kingdom Home Office project on *Strengthening Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) in Nigeria Through a Victim Centred Approach*.

Humanitarian Needs On The Rise, Funding At A Historic Low

The humanitarian community in Nigeria called for urgent support for vulnerable people in the north-east, as the number of people in need of life-saving assistance has steeply risen.

Speaking at an online high-level briefing on 13 August, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr Edward Kallon, joined by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Hajiya Sadiya Umar Farouq and Borno State Governor, Prof Babagana Zulum, as well as other UN and NGO representatives, highlighted the significant rise in humanitarian needs and the subsequent increase in funding required to provide aid.

“The number of people needing humanitarian assistance is the highest ever recorded in five years of a joint humanitarian response,” stressed Mr Kallon. “The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting us all. Its’ devastating effects will distress Nigeria’s most fragile region. Unless we take immediate action, we should prepare for a spike in conflict, hunger and destitution in north-east Nigeria.”

The ongoing conflict in north-east Nigeria - now in its eleventh year - and the upsurge in violence witnessed over the past year in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, have deepened humanitarian needs. Over 10.6 million people - out of a total of 13 million, or four in five people – will need some form of humanitarian assistance in 2020. This is close to a 50 per cent increase in people in need since last year, mainly from increasing violence and insecurity further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As needs are increasing, UN and partner NGOs have reviewed their collective appeal and the budget required to provide urgent aid to 7.8 million people who are amongst the most vulnerable. The requirement now stands at US\$1.08 billion; however, funding is at an historic low. With only five months left until the end of the year, aid organisations have only received one-third of the required amount, amounting to around than 30 cents for each person in need for the whole year.

If the international community fails to respond, up to 4.3 mil-



lion people will be facing hunger; some 255,619 children suffering from severe malnutrition will be at risk of dying; 4.2 million children will miss out on an education; and 2.5 million people will lack access to clean water and sanitation.

The panelists also stressed the challenging environment in which aid workers are trying to provide life-saving assistance, such as heightened insecurity, increased risk for aid workers of being abducted or killed, access restrictions, and repercussions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite challenges, the humanitarian community remains committed to supporting the people of Nigeria who are desperately in need of assistance. UN and NGO partners have already provided assistance to over 2.6 million people since the beginning of this year.

“Now is the time for all of us to step up for the most vulnerable and demonstrate our solidarity amid the greatest global challenge of our times. Together we have already changed the course of history in north-east Nigeria for the better and we can do so once again,” Mr Kallon concluded.

World Humanitarian Day 2020: A Tribute To Real Life Heroes

World Humanitarian Day is celebrated each year on 19 August, to commemorate and honour humanitarian workers killed or injured while providing urgent support and protection to some of the world’s most vulnerable people. This year’s theme, “Real-Life Heroes” put a spotlight on humanitarians, community volunteers, and frontline health workers, who continued to put their lives at risk to deliver basic services amid the COVID-19 crisis.

World Humanitarian Day also provided an opportunity to advocate for the safety and security of humanitarians working in some of the most volatile and insecure environments in the world. The day came just a month after three aid workers in north-east Nigeria were brutally executed after being abducted by non-state armed groups along a main supply route in Borno State. Two aid workers remain in captivity, while the risks for humanitarians in the north-east are increasing.

“The imperative of protecting aid workers and the assistance they deliver has never been as pressing as it is today,” said Mr Edward Kallon, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria. “Yet, insecurity and attacks against aid workers are still occurring despite our repeated calls for protection of civilians and the urgency to facilitate unimpeded access to humanitarian aid.”

While paying tribute to the colleagues and civilians who lost

their lives in the eleven-year-long crisis in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners reiterated calls for any parties to the conflict to take all possible measures to protect civilians and aid workers. Furthermore, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria cautioned against spreading rumours and misinformation about humanitarian personnel and health workers, since false perceptions can further put their safety at risk. The urgency to ensure COVID—19 preventive measures are in place to protect health workers, humanitarians and communities was also emphasized.

“We are also here to pay tribute to the thousands of colleagues, partners, community members and volunteers, who, for months, are relentlessly leaving the safety of their home to join our collective fight against the deadly coronavirus that has claimed the lives of close to a thousand people in Nigeria so far,” Mr Kallon added. Since the beginning of the crisis, 40 aid workers and UN staff have been killed in north-east Nigeria, while the UN and its humanitarian partners continually reiterate calls for the immediate and safe release of the two aid workers still being held hostage by non-state armed groups.

In conclusion, Mr Kallon stressed the importance for everybody to embody the spirit of humanitarianism in commemoration of World Humanitarian Day, to continue changing lives for the better and remaining committed to the values of humanity and solidarity.

'Corruption Wahala - An Everyday Tale' Premieres

On the occasion of the launch of “Corruption Wahala – an Everyday Tale”, a host of Nigerian entertainment industry giants of the likes of Sasha P, Basketmouth and Dakore Akande joined renowned anti-corruption activists, social entrepreneurs, journalists and scholars, including Soji Apampa, Achalugo Chioma Ezekobe, Professor Femi Osofisan, Carolyn Seaman, Rev. Fr. George Ehusani and Laila Johnson-Salami, in a discussion moderated by TV anchor Maupe Ogun.

The short animated movie summarizes the key findings of the 2nd Corruption in Nigeria Survey report in a format more attractive for broader national audience. Aligning with the objectives of UNODC’s Education for Justice initiative, the film seeks to engage in particular younger people in the anti-corruption dialogue and to provide Ministries of Education and teachers another tool to teach children and youths about rule of law related topics.

UN Resident-Coordinator Edward Kallon in his opening remarks stressed: “We need the power and innovation of youth; we need your strength and ability to not accept the status quo, if we want to tackle the immense challenges we are facing as a global community.

In his remarks, the Statistician General of the Federation, Dr. Yemi Kale, said “This film is a huge step forward in helping people see and understand the value and tangibility of data being produced in the country. Also, the animated nature of the movie makes it especially appealing to the younger demography, thereby helping to ignite their interest in data, and in the wider campaign against corruption in Nigeria.”

Playwright and scholar, Professor Femi Osofisan welcomed the animation film and noted the need for more such educational tools using real live examples of corruption incidents and their impact on people.

Award-winning screen and stage actor, Dakore Akande, stressed the power of film in reinforcing values and hereby changing the narrative of corruption in Nigeria. In order to reach

a broader national audience, she proposed to translate the film in other national languages, including pidgin.

Suggesting the use of the film by teachers, Anthonia Yetunde Alabi (Sasha P), added “that ethics education needs to start from primary and secondary schools.”

Lawyer and writer, Achalugo Chioma Ezekobe, highlighted the need to convince citizens to embrace due diligence when accessing public services and to shun a culture of the cutting corners.

While welcoming the film, CEO of Integrity Organisation, Soji Apampa, stated “many young people are at the border in which they can take to anger and frustration because of the current situation”.

The film, inter-alia, depicted.

Reacting to some of the stark differences between the experiences of women and men when it comes to corruption depicted by the movies, Carolyn Seaman, Founder of Girls Voices Initiative, underscored the need for gender mainstreaming in tackling corruption in Nigeria.

While expressing his dismay about the lack of patriotism, even among high level public officials, Rev. Fr. George Ehusani, said he remained hopeful due to the existence here and there of islands of sanity amidst the sea of corruption in Nigeria.

UNODC Country Representative, Oliver Stolpe, in his closing remarks reminded the audience “We will not talk corruption away. We will need to get engaged. We will need to act if we want to put an end to this corruption wahala so that we can create the Nigeria we want and the Nigeria you deserve!”.



FG Partners With Germany And UNODC To Stop Wildlife Crime

In spite of efforts by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), the Enforcement Authority responsible for the protection of endangered species of wildlife, in recent years, Nigeria has become a primary transit hub for several illicit wildlife and forest products, in particular for the global illegal pangolin trade, sourced primarily from Central Africa. UNODC’s recently launched World Wildlife Crime Report 2020 found that in 2019 alone, at least 51 tons of pangolin scales seized globally originated from Nigerian ports compared to only 2 tons in 2015. Indeed, more than half of all seizures of pangolin scales worldwide could be traced back to Nigeria in 2019.

To comprehensively tackle wildlife and forest crime, the Federal Government, the Government of Germany and UNODC came together on World Elephant Day to announce a new partnership aimed to strengthen Nigeria’s response to the trafficking of wildlife and forestry products. The partnership includes the Federal Ministry of Environment, the Nigeria Customs Service, NESREA, various law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations to improve data-collection capacity and understanding of the driving factors of these trends, enhance the relevant policy and legal framework, strengthen law enforcement and border control agencies in their capabilities to exchange intelligence on shipments, disrupt trafficking flows and networks, cooperate internationally with their counterparts

in source and destination countries, and to investigate and prosecute wildlife and forest crime offences.

Dr. Oliver Stolpe, UNODC Representative in Nigeria, stressed in his remarks the threat that wildlife trafficking poses to nature and the biodiversity of our planet. He observed that when wild animals are poached from their natural habitat, butchered and sold illegally, the potential for transmission of zoonotic diseases, such as COVID-19, from animals to humans - is increased.

H.E. Mrs. Birgitt Ory, Ambassador of Germany to Nigeria, remarking on the launch of the project stated: “Together with UNODC we seek to support the Nigerian government in the important fight against trafficking in illicit wildlife products. We have a shared interest in preserving nature’s riches for future generations”.

In his goodwill message, Prof. Aliyu Jauro, Director General/CEO of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), expressed optimism that “the successful implementation of the project will reduce the illicit trade in endangered species of wildlife to the barest minimum and Nigeria will regain her good image in the CITES community.”

The Honourable Minister of Environment, Dr. Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar, represented by the Acting Permanent Secretary, Dr. Bolatito Obisesan acknowledged in a keynote remark that the project “will further add value to government’s effort in combating illicit activities that are detrimental to wildlife conservation in Nigeria.”

Eid Al-Adha In Nigeria: 'We Have Never Experienced A Year Like This'



Many Muslim families were unable to buy a ram to celebrate the Eid al-Adha festival in Nigeria this year. Photo: WFP/Damilola Onafuwa

In Nigeria when Eid (or Sallah as it is called locally) comes around, it is usually marked by the scent of cooking wafting through narrow streets, coming from blackened pots perched atop smouldering firewood brimming with jollof rice and meat. There's often excitement in the air — from the murmurs of excited children showing off their best clothes, and the jolly chatter of extended families and neighbours visiting each other to share food. This year, the four-day festival, which ended on 3 August, was different.

In Kano, the capital of Kano State, the commercial nerve centre of northern Nigeria with 4 million, mostly Muslim, residents, the streets show no sign of the colourful festivities usually associated with Sallah celebrations.

With nearly 46,500 confirmed cases at the time of writing, Nigeria has the highest number of COVID-19 infections in West Africa. The country's federal and state-level authorities have rolled out measures to contain the spread of the disease.



Rukkaya Umar says 2020 has been difficult. Photo: WFP/Damilola Onafuwa

"We have never experienced this type of year," says 80-year-old Rukkaya Umar. "God knows we've never experienced it." Her meagre income selling soup spices disappeared because of lockdown. This left her unable to celebrate Sallah as she would have liked to.

In Lagos, nearly 1,000 km south of Kano, rams are around 30 percent more expensive than they were a year ago. Fatimoh, who lives in Makoko, Nigeria's largest floating slum, is left to reminisce about past celebrations.

"I enjoyed cooking and having people around to share our food with us, but now I don't have the money to slaughter a ram," says 60-year-old Fatimoh. "With the coronavirus, everything has become expensive and we basically eat whatever we can come by." A widow, she supports her family by selling cooked



Fatimoh rows her canoe to sell food but lockdowns mean fewer customers. Photo: WFP/Damilola Onafuwa

rice from the canoe she rows around the heavily populated and noisy waters of the neighbourhood.

For Sarimotu, an ideal Sallah would mean a trip to Cotonou in the neighbouring Republic of Benin to be with her extended family. Many from Makoko make this journey annually to commemorate with their families and friends.



Sarimotu's twins are colourfully clad to mark Eid even if the times are hard. Photo: WFP/Damilola Onafuwa

"All my siblings have travelled home to celebrate — if I had the money, I would have taken my children," says Sarimotu.

But not only can she not afford to travel right now, she's barely been able to feed her seven children since the death of her husband three months ago.

Sarimotu casts a sad gaze at her three-year-old twin daughters playing on the wooden floor of her house. In a sign of the happy festival that should have been, the children are wearing brightly coloured party dresses.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is scaling up its assistance to reach 3 million people in Nigeria including an expansion to support Government social protection systems in the cities of Abuja, Kano and Lagos where COVID-19 threatens to drive extreme levels of vulnerability.

WFP food and cash distribution in August will focus on assisting vulnerable people in urban hotspots that are hardest hit by the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.



WFP staff in Makoko, Lagos.



Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction

1. Flanking the cenotaph at the memorial in honour of fallen colleagues during the 2011 UN House bombing, are UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon (Left) and UNICEF Country Representative, Mr Peter Hawkins; while UNESCO Officer-in-Charge, Mr Lamin Sow stands on the right.. 26 August.
2. UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon (Seated left) paid a courtesy visit to the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu (Seated in the middle) and the management team of the Nigerian Police Force in Abuja. Mr Kallon was accompanied by UNDSS Chief Security Adviser and Representative to Nigeria, Robert MARINOVIC (Seated on the right)
3. The new Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Representative to Nigeria and to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Fred Kafeero (Left), presents his letters of credence to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Geoffrey Onyema (right)

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