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NEWSLETTER



Nigeria Adapts Strategy to End AIDS Epidemic

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UN, FG Meet, Underscores Media role in Agenda 2030



R-L: President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, and Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé.



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Muhammed (Right) receives Senior Special Adviser to the President on SDGs, H. E. Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire in New York

Nigeria has adopted its Revised National HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework 2019–2021 to guide the country's future response to HIV. It follows the results of a new survey that shows that HIV prevalence in the country stands at 1.4%. Previous estimates had indicated Nigeria's HIV prevalence at 2.8%.

The results of the Nigeria National HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAISS) were unveiled at a special event held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 14 March that was attended by the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, and the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé. During his speech, Mr Sidibé commended the president's leadership in guiding the country's response to the HIV epidemic. Nigeria has tripled the number of people on HIV treatment since 2010 and adopted a test and treat policy in 2016.

The improved understanding of the country's epidemic based on the survey results will allow for more efficient investments in the response to HIV and a more effective planning for the provision of HIV prevention, care and treatment services. It will permit the adoption of a population–location approach to deliver services to the people in the areas where they are needed the most.

During his three-day visit to Nigeria, Mr Sidibé met the Minister of Health, Isaac F. Adewole, to discuss progress, gaps and challenges in the AIDS response and pledged UNAIDS' support to Nigeria in the implementation of the new framework. This was further underscored when Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama, and Mr Sidibé signed a new cooperation agreement to strengthen the relationship between UNAIDS and Nigeria.

Mr Sidibé also paid a courtesy call on the wife of the country's president, Aisha Buhari, to formalize and extend her appointment as the UNAIDS Special Ambassador for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and the Promotion of Treatment for Children Living with HIV in Nigeria.

On the heels of the strategic importance of media in the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030, the Senior Special Adviser to the President on SDGs, H. E. Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire on 13 March 2019, met with the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina J. Mohammed in New York, to discuss the SDG Media Compact.

The meeting examined the role of the media in advocating SDGs and Agenda 2030. This includes providing information; monitoring progress; acting as watchdog to leaders; utilizing their social media reach to promote SDGs; among others. Nigeria's Nollywood and Radio/TV Soaps on SDGs were discussed as one of the effective media channels to promote the SDGs.

One Year On, Humanitarian Community Remembers Colleagues Killed in Rann

In loving memory of
Ibrahim Lawan

5 May 1988 - 1 March 2018



In loving memory of
Izuogu A. Onyedikachi

7 August 1984 - 1 March 2018



In loving memory of
Emmanuel Yawe Sontor

24 December 1989 - 1 March 2018



1 March 2019 marked one year since the deadly attack on Rann town in Borno State that claimed the young lives of three dedicated aid workers who were providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to thousands of internally displaced people there.

Doctor Izuogu Anthony Onyedikachi, Emmanuel Yawe Sontor, and Ibrahim Lawan were working in challenging and remote conditions in north-east Nigeria, just eight kilometres from the border with Cameroon, and faced personal hardship, living away from their families.

“The attack on 1 March 2018 sent shockwaves through our community of aid workers from the United Nations and non-governmental organisations; any time violence claims an innocent life, it affects us all,” said Mr. Edward Kallon, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, in a statement marking one year since the incident. The attack “robbed us of young and talented professionals, full of hope and promise, dedicated to serving their fel-

low countrymen and women; that is a shock that strikes at the very core of our humanity,” he added.

Non-state armed groups also kidnapped three female aid workers in this attack. Saifura Hussaini Ahmed Khorsa and Hauwa Mohammed Liman, both midwives, were executed by their captors in September 2018 and October 2018 respectively. Alice Lokshah, a nurse and mother, is still being held.

“The United Nations calls for the immediate release of Alice, and for her safe return to her family,” said Mr. Kallon.

Joining thousands of aid workers in saluting and appreciating the dedication and sacrifice of the departed colleagues, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator harped on resilience and courage: “we honour our departed friends for their sacrifice, courage and selfless service; the most meaningful tribute to the lives of these aid workers is to carry on their work with conviction in the humanitarian principles we stand for and uphold”.

Earth Hour: Lights-out at UN House Abuja, as Guterres Advocates Greener Future for All

To underscore the United Nations’ continued support for climate action, the United Nations in Nigeria on Saturday, 30 March 2019, participated in a global lights-off event tagged ‘Earth Hour’, by switching off the lights in and outside the UN House, Abuja from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, had in his message on the Earth Hour, noted that the Earth Hour was an opportunity to show support for ambitious climate action, by turning off your lights on Saturday, March 30th, at 8:30 p.m. local time.

He expressed optimism that “It is still possible to limit climate change, protect our planet and safeguard our future.” Guterres called on everyone to “Let’s build a cleaner, safer and greener future for everyone.” According to the Secretary General, “Technology is on our side. I am convening a Climate Action Summit in September. And I am telling global leaders to bring concrete plans.” He disclosed.

The Earth Hour event, which started as a symbolic lights-out event in Sydney in 2007, is now one of the world’s largest grassroots movement for the environment, inspiring millions of people to take action for our planet.



Lights-out at UN House Abuja in observance of the Earth Hour on Saturday, 30 March 2019, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Cameroonian Consulate, UN Mark Women's Day, Urge Removal of Barriers that Limit Women



Director of UNIC, Mr Ronald Kayanja (3rd from left); Consular General of the Republic of Cameroon, Her Excellency, Mrs Bessem Manga (4th from left) and other dignitaries and panellists at the Women's Day observance held at the Cameroonian Consulate General Lagos, on 16 March 2019.

The Cameroonian Consulate General Lagos and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nigeria on 16 March 2019, collaborated to observe the 2019 International Women's Day with series of activities including panel discussion, products exhibition, business networking and photo exhibition, involving women from all walks of life.

Held at the Cameroonian Consulate General in Lagos, and attended by over 300 women, the observance offered information on business start-up and development as well as empowerment opportunities.

Speaking on the theme, 'Think Equal, Build Smart and Innovate for change', the Director of UNIC, Mr Ronald Kayanja noted that there was need for innovations that would enable everyone move faster to remove those barriers that have limited women for ages. "We cannot have business as usual on gender equality. We must move faster this decade to achieve the SDGs", he said, "Gender equality is a priority for the United Nations and the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres has led well by ensuring gender parity at the Senior Management level"

Welcoming the participants, the Consular General of the Republic of Cameroon, Her Excellency, Mrs Bessem Manga, said that achieving equality and empowering women remained "an unfinished business", adding that there was need for women to put more efforts and reposition themselves for significant contribution to nation building. Manga, who is the first female Consular General of Cameroon in Nigeria, said women needed to be included in decision making as a part of the policy to increase women participation in nation building.

The high point of the event was the panel discussion on how women could start small businesses and become empowered. The panellists included the Managing Director of Goodware Stitches Limited, Mrs Matilda Taiwo, who spoke on Plastic Waste Recycling and the value chain and noted that 'waste is not waste unless it is wasted'; Dr Mrs Julie Momah, Zonal Director of Technology Incubation Centre, Lagos, who highlighted proper planning and discipline in starting and running a business; the Lagos State Coordinator of Raw Materials Research and development Council, Mr Tokunbo Habeeb who highlighted the various raw materials available in the different geo-political zones of Nigeria; among others.

Between 7 – 19 March, UNIC Nigeria collaborated with four Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) to organise Women's

Day events in four different locations and on different dates. The organisations were United Nations Association of Nigeria (UNAN) on 7 March; Warien Rose Foundation on 13 March; SOW&G Foundation on 14 March; and Luciano Global Development Initiative and the Igando-Ikotun Local Council Development Area (LCDA) Lagos, on 19 March.

Representing the UNIC Director at the event organised in collaboration with Luciano Global Development Initiative (LGDI), and Igando-Ikotun Local Council Development Areas (LCDA) Lagos, the National Information Officer, Oluseyi Soremekun, urged Nigerian parents to think equal and shun stereotypes that discriminate against girls and women by training their children to advance gender equality. "Promotion of gender equality should start from the family level. When parents think equal, boys and girls in the family would have equal opportunities to succeed in life."

Earlier, the Founder of LGDI, Mrs Lucy Olaniyi, had called for more active involvement of women and girls in innovation, Science and Technology to remove barriers and accelerate progress towards addressing the gender digital divide.

Similarly, at the event organised with Warien Rose Foundation, Soremekun quoted from the message of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that: "Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power and only when we see women's rights as our common objective - a route to change that benefits everyone, will we begin to shift the balance".



L-R: President of Warien Rose Foundation, Ms Efe Anauaghe; Renowned Singer, Yinka Davies and Information Officer, Giaba-ECOWAS, Mr. Timothy Melaye, during a panel discussion at the event held at UNIC on 13 March.

Reopening of Community Market Brings Hope to Locals in N.E Nigeria



The refurbished market is operations

On 10 March, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reopened a rehabilitated community market in Gwoza, Nigeria. 142 Gwoza residents participated in the rehabilitation of the market as part of a cash for work initiative aimed at strengthening the local economy through income opportunities and providing motivation for conflict affected individuals to invest in their community. The market was badly damaged as a result of the protracted conflict with non-state armed groups in north-east Nigeria and remained unused for many years.

“The reopening of the local market is an important part of IOM’s support to the transition and recovery process in Gwoza,” said Afra Ure, IOM Nigeria Project Officer. “Apart from reinvigorating the local economy, it is also an important step towards a return to the community’s pre-conflict way of life.”

Though many people have returned to their homes in Gwoza since Nigerian forces regained control of the town in 2015, humanitarian assistance remains critical. In addition to livelihood recovery assistance, IOM distributed 550 cash grants and shelter repair kits containing the necessary materials to rebuild homes.

“I have worked in an open space without shade in the old market for over four years,” said Modu, a local vendor. “But with the construction of stalls, I can comfortably display my fabric wraps and I believe even my customers will be more at ease to buy my products.”

Alongside Modu some 350 other vendors now sell cereals, vegetables, clothing and household items such as buckets, brooms and cleaning products in the new facilities.

As part of the efforts to improve the living conditions of people affected by the conflict, support their recovery and build their resilience, IOM has implemented livelihood projects consisting of community-level rehabilitation and vocational trainings across North-East Nigeria.

“I’m the leader of my household and I hope that working in the reopened market will help me get the necessary means to sustain my family... I’m optimistic,” said Fatima, who sells candy and other confectioneries at the market.

Thousands of Nigerians Displaced by Conflict Find Safe Shelter in New Camp

Following an attack on her village in late December, Hajja arrived on foot in Maiduguri, Borno State in North-east Nigeria where she found shelter with her family in Teachers Village camp. In October 2018, this camp housed 8,600 individuals. Six months later, it is 300 per cent over capacity with more than 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) crowded in the congested camp meant to house 10,000.

On Saturday morning (2 March), buses drove Hajja and hundreds of other IDPs to a new camp in Mohammed Goni International Stadium. Over the coming two weeks, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is leading relocating efforts – moving and securing new shelters for more than 10,000 IDPs to the safer, less congested site.

“A recent upsurge in displacement has prompted IOM to scale up its shelter and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) activities – providing shelter to newly-arrived IDPs in Maiduguri and ensuring their protection and dignity,” said Robert Odhiambo, Coordinator for CCCM, Shelter and NFI Sector.

Earlier, IOM staff conducted registration of IDPs. The Organization is working with the Borno State government and partners to relocate 200 households every two days for eight days.

“This type of support is but a speck in the overall response to the crisis. There’s over 1.8 million people still displaced and the situation remains dire,” Odhiambo added.

This multi-agency relocation effort focuses on people who recently fled hostilities in Kukawa and Monguno Local Government Areas. Beneficiaries have been selected by partners in coordination with the benefitting communities as well as the state emergency management agency (SEMA).

Teachers Village camp was set up in January 2014 in the capital of Borno State and was originally intended as accommodation for state teachers, hence the name. Yet this camp was never used for its original purpose and became home to thousands fleeing conflict the following year.



Frantz Celestin, IOM Nigeria Chief of Mission, assists families upon arrival at the Mohammed Goni International Stadium camp. Photo: Jorge Galindo/IOM

Today, more than 80 per cent of the population in the camp are women and children. All are in dire need of humanitarian assistance including food, shelter and protection services.

The new site was identified as an alternative location to decongest Teachers Village. By 18 February, 750 shelters and 26 blocks of latrines had been constructed.

On their way to their new homes on Saturday, IDPs cheered as they boarded the buses. Upon arrival, the new residents attended a welcome address and briefing before being screened by IOM staff who referred those with specific vulnerabilities to the appropriate agency for services.

Now in its tenth year, the ongoing conflict in the region continues to force thousands into displacement, overstressing existing resources in camps such as Teachers Village.

IOM Nigeria is requesting USD 66 million to provide multi-sectoral assistance to 2.9 million crisis-affected individuals in acute need of protection and life-saving assistance across the North-east.

Slavery: We Must Never Forget the Crimes and Impacts in Africa and Beyond – Guterres



Left: Students of Badagry Grammar School re-enacts Slave Trade on stage. **Right:** Tutor General/ Permanent Secretary of Lagos Education District V, Mrs Anike Adekanye, addresses the 1,200 audience capacity at the observance held on 25 March at Badagry, Lagos. Photo: Akinyemi Omolayo/ UNIC Lagos

“The transatlantic slave trade was one of history’s most appalling manifestations of human barbarity. We must never forget the crimes and impacts in Africa and beyond. We honour them by standing up against ongoing forms of slavery, by raising awareness of the dangers of racism,” said the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the 2019 International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the TransAtlantic Slave Trade commemorated in Nigeria on 25 March 2019 at Badagry, a Slave Trade port over 400 years ago.

The UN Secretary General, in the message read by the National Information Officer of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nigeria, Dr Oluseyi Soremekun, explained that the United Nations Remember Slavery Programme was aimed at ensuring that the lessons of Slavery were learned and heeded today. “We need to tell the stories of those who stood up against their oppressors, and recognize their righteous resistance.” He added, “On this International Day of Remembrance, we pay homage to the millions of African men, women and children who were denied their humanity and forced to endure such abominable cruelty.”

Organised by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nigeria and Lagos Education District V, the Observance held at Badagry Grammar School, was attended by 1,200 students, School Principals, Teachers, Traditional Rulers and some parents. The educational programme featured a visit to the Mobee Royal Family Slave Relics Museum, Badagry and the Badagry Heritage Museum; Poster Exhibition and series of drama presentations by the various schools in attendance.

Speaking further, the National Information Officer who represented the Director, Mr Ronald Kayanja, called on parents and guardians to shun all forms of modern day slavery including child labour and human trafficking. ‘The grass is always not green on the other side’, he added.

Slave trade, according to him, was racism and prejudice in practice as Africans were the main targets leading to an extensive exodus of Africans spread to many areas of the world over a 400-year period which was unprecedented in the annals of recorded human history.

Soremekun disclosed that in commemoration of the memory of the victims, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/122 of 17 December 2007, declared 25 March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, to be observed annually, to inculcate in future generations the “causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlan-

tic slave trade, and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice.

In her address, the Tutor General/ Permanent Secretary of Lagos Education District V, Mrs Anike Adekanye, noted that Slavery in any form was evil and should not be condoned in the modern society. She urged the students to be bold to report teachers, parents, uncles and anyone that attempted to subject them to any form of abuse or inhuman treatment be it in school or at home.

She, therefore, shared with the students and other members of the audience, the telephone numbers of the Police in the Badagry area and the Lagos State child protection office with the audience. The Observance of the International Day of #RememberSlavery at Badagry Grammar School was indeed a memorable one, as students highlighted the brutality of slavery, the harms of modern day slavery, human trafficking and forced labour through dance, music, poetry and drama.

In the exhibition of twenty-one posters titled, "Remember Slavery: Say It Loud", the students were briefed on the contribution of architects of African descent to various sectors of the American society and promoting their professional development. The various designs have also given voice to the African diaspora consciousness.

The students later visited the Mobee Royal Family Slave Relics Museum, Badagry, the Badagry Heritage Museum and the Royal Palace Mobee of Badagry Kingdom where they came into contact with the relics of Slavery. The visit to the museum was significant because Badagry was a slave trade commercial centre and a major port for the transportation of enslaved African people. Badagry is a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) designated Slave Trade Route and widely noted as a major port in the export of slaves to the Americas.



At Mobee Slave Relics Museum Badagry, National Information Officer of UNIC Lagos, Dr Oluseyi Soremekun, tries the neck shackles used on slaves

UN partners Facebook, Africa TeenGeeks to Organize Hackathon4Justice, as Students Develop Software to Unmask Traffickers



The winning team: David Popoola, Eyitayo Ogunbiyi and Chukwudumebi Onwuli of the University of Lagos

After 29-hours of coding marathon, three students of the University of Lagos have developed the software to unmask human traffickers, track, rescue and rehabilitate victims while also creating awareness about the odious industry. The students emerged winners of #Hackathon4Justice event organized in Lagos between March 22 and 23 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in partnership with Facebook and Africa TeenGeeks was designed to spark creativity in young people while pushing their coding capabilities.

The goal of the hackathon was for participants to leverage technology to find solutions to rule of law challenges in the areas of corruption, integrity and ethics; crime prevention and criminal justice; organized crime; human trafficking and terrorism and violent extremism. Beyond educating young people about the global challenges to the rule of law, E4J also seeks to inspire them to be part of their solution and become positive agents of change

in their societies. This goal is only attainable by giving youth a say in matters related to crime, justice and the rule of law.

The trio of David Popoola, Eyitayo Ogunbiyi and Chukwudumebi Onwuli of System Engineering and Computer Engineering departments of the University of Lagos led the pack of upcoming professionals with their web application design that helps both trafficked victims and their loved ones learn about human trafficking and access to tools that can potentially save them.

Tagged 'Let's Fight Trafficking' or 'LFT' for short, the key features of the product include an e-learning planning platform to help educate people on human trafficking; a facial recognition system that matches feed from webcams and other images to see if there already exists a reported case with a similar image in the database; a portal for victim's close friends to file reports about trafficking cases in their area and a heat map, generated from report data to let users know where trafficking is most prevalent and take preventive measures. The winners are expected to proceed to Global #Hackathon4Justice event, to be held at the Google Headquarters in Silicon Valley, California, United States, in August 2019, where they will participate as mentors.

The runners up were four students from Ladoké Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso who designed 'Athena', a mobile application that allows people to report crime incidents and gain information about their rights. People can also report emergencies with just few clicks, and the application automatically detects the location of the user and composes a report. It also provides anonymity and protects the identity of whistle-blowers.

Out of 400 applications received from university students across Nigeria, over 50 undergraduates from Caleb University, Covenant University, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ladoké Akintola University of Technology, University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Benin, Babcock University, as well as Yaba College of Technology participated in the event.

UN, Partners Observe Int'l Day of Happiness with Fun and Fanfare

It was all fun and fanfare on Wednesday, 20 March 2019, at Agidingbi Primary School, Ikeja Lagos, as the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Nigeria, WomanChild Wellness Foundation and Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board, jointly commemorated the International Day of Happiness with over 500 pupils, representatives of civil society organisations and the media.

Addressing the audience, the Director of UNIC, Mr Ronald Kayanja, explained that "the United Nations attaches so much importance to the well-being and happiness of people around the world hence the declaration of 20 March as International Happiness Day to encourage governments and partners to prioritise peoples' wellbeing and happiness in public policies. "People's wellbeing and happiness are universal goals and aspiration which therefore, should be part of public policy objectives." The Director, represented by the National Information Officer, Dr Oluseyi Soremekun, said.

He further stressed that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) boast of four key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness: End poverty, reduce inequality, promote good health, and protect our planet. The achievement of these four Goals, he continued, would make people happy and put smiles on their faces.

In her address, Ms Olabisi Okeh, President WomanChild Wellness Foundation, noted that in the spirit of creating happiness, everyone must contribute to engender happiness in Nigeria and around the world. Orkeh said that it was imperative for every



Day of Happiness: UNIC National Information Officer, Oluseyi Soremekun dances with some students of Agidingbi Primary School, Ikeja.

Nigerian to always prioritise children's happiness and well-being, because they were the future of Nigeria. "We strongly want to describe today as a special day to show love to these children. We are celebrating today with these children to give them hope and make them happy. We have decided to focus on children because they are the future of this country and the world," she said.

The children danced to pulsating music vibes, savoured different delicacies, and were on circus train rides, farmhouse obstacle course, bouncing castle, among others.

Women Health Champions Disseminate Prevention information in North-East Nigeria



Left: Female Community Health Champions during an outreach in Adamawa State. Photo: Chima Onuekwe.

Right: Female Community Health Champions meeting with families in Adamawa State (Photo: Chima Onuekwe, WHO Nigeria)

What do you do when you are a young health prevention champion speaking to rural communities during a cholera epidemic on safety measures and the beaming woman of the house hands you a glass of water from her well, similar to one you had just inspected and found of questionable security?

“We were told not to reject it,” 27-year-old Grace Hyeladi Durkwa says, with huge laughter. Diversion is the trick. “We get them talking and after studying their environment, we just bid goodbye and go, as if we forgot to drink the water!”

When she says questionable security, she means cows and other animals lingering near the water supply, flies around kitchen utensils or faeces found outside near the kitchen or house entrance.

Durkwa, who lives in Adamawa State in North-East Nigeria, volunteered for training as a health champion during the cholera epidemic in 2018, partly because she was idle. But she was also a just-graduated-mass-communication specialist not yet employed in communicating and this seemed unique. “I love communications, and you’re speaking in a language they understand,” she recalls a year later. “And there’s a joy in letting them know how to prevent themselves and their children from getting sick. It was joyful!”

In 2018, multiple cholera outbreaks occurred in the north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, affecting nearly 11 000 people, including 175 deaths, across 28 Local Government Areas (LGA).

Durkwa and around a hundred other young women in her state were trained specifically on the nature of cholera and how to prevent it. Over nearly a three-week period, she travelled about two hours each day to Mubi North LGA and back to Mubi town where she lives. In Mubi North, she and her group of about nine other young women travelled another hour to villages known to be at risk and where most women are illiterate. Typically walking or bicycling in due to the lack of a road, they reached out to them house by house.

The World Health Organization (WHO) trained and engaged more than 500 “community health champions” between May 2018 and February 2019 as part of its emergency response to the cholera outbreak, of which 454 were women.

Working in teams for a few weeks as volunteers, the women fanned out in Adamawa and Borno states to reach into some of the dustiest and remotest corners of North-East Nigeria to forge new paths to the doors of households at risk of many diseases. In some of the communities, the purdah system that secludes wom-

en is practised, making it difficult to educate them on health issues of relevance to them and their children.

The few such women in purdah whom she met, known as *matan kul’le* to Durkwa, seemed welcoming of the flip charts and posters that reminded them to keep their sick children away from where they wash and cook the family meals. “They opened up, especially when we talked about keeping the environment clean,” she says.

Female health champions are not only helping to break down the barriers of female seclusion, they are providing important information about immunization and other health-related interventions available at the health facilities during their interactions with caregivers in each household.

“It is much easier for a female health worker than a man to come to your home for a house-to-house vaccination or to sensitize you on a disease outbreak. Women are also generally more trusted with handling children than men,” says Dr Christopher Ugbo, Director of the Gender Adolescent School Health and Elderly Care Division within the Federal Ministry of Health.

Training only women to reach out to communities Durkwa believes has been a successful strategy: “People really responded to our lectures, and we were welcomed. We talked about awareness. We gave them tablets to purify the water. We gave them other options.”

In Borno State, 138 of the 150 trained community health champions were recent female public health graduates also targeting internally displaced persons in temporary camps.

“We believe that through these gender-sensitive interventions, we can ensure a balance and accuracy in the collection of data, investigation of cases and dispensation of health services,” says Dr Clement Peter, WHO Officer in Charge.

Durkwa says the learning wasn’t only one way. In reaching out to other women with valuable information, she realized, “When I sanitize my environment, I’m not doing it for my own good but for the benefit of people around me. If something happens to me, it can affect other people.”



World Health Organization

Climate Change: gods are not Angry, Change Your Ways – Student Poets Say, as UN Marks Poetry Day



Left: L-R: Director of Co-curricular, Science and Technology, Lagos Education District 1, Mrs Mary Oyetunde; National Information Officer, UN Information Centre (UNIC Nigeria), Dr Oluseyi Soremekun; Tutor General/ Permanent Secretary, Lagos Education District 1, Dr Mrs Olayimika Ayandele; Director of Schools' Administration at the District, Mrs Anna Ako and Head, Employee and Industrial Relation, Mrs Motunrolake Ishola.



Right: Basit Saba of Ikotun Senior High School, Lagos recites his poem

Sequel to the widespread misconceptions in the traditional African society that climate change and its impacts manifest only when the gods are angry, some students have, through poetry, debunked this and submitted that human actions and inaction were mostly responsible. “We made it happened, burning of bushes, felling of trees and we accused the gods of chiding us in wrath, clean the land, clean the earth, stop the smoke in every form. If we all turn deaf ears, where shall we go from earth?” said Basit Saba of Ikotun Senior High School Lagos, in his presentation at the Poetry competition on “Combating Climate Change and its Impact in Nigeria”, to commemorate the World Poetry Day.

“Mother earth sits quietly and in pains, suffering through high temperature, through global warming, through malnutrition, through heavy rainfall, through sea level rising, and through rising infectious diseases.”

The 2019 World Poetry Day observance held on Thursday 21 March 2019, was organised by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nigeria and Lagos Education District One. The poetry competition involved all the ninety-nine schools in the District. However, only fifteen finalists from fifteen schools made it to the finals.

In a highly poetic flow, Miss Saidat Lamina of Iju Senior Grammar School said, “What about our plants and trees? Mother earth needs some bees; on the trees and some honey bees. Global warming is everywhere; Climate change is already here; there is a lot of things we can’t bear. Let us save our mother nature; Let’s give it a perfect structure.”

In line with the objectives of the World Poetry Day, especially as related to restoring a dialogue between poetry and the other arts such as theatre, dance, music and painting, the fifteen finalists in their presentations, demonstrated the convergence of poetry, theatre, dance and arts to convey the message of climate change and its impact in Nigeria. Most of the poetic recital were preceded by dramatic introduction.

Speaking at the occasion, the Director of UNIC, Mr Ronald Kayanja, called on schools and stakeholders in the education sector to revive the oral traditions of poetry recitals.

“Climate change, who are you?” asked Miss Omoyemi Sodiq of Stadium Junior Grammar School, “You are a global challenge. You respect not all national borders. A threat to humanity! Your threat requires urgent climate action”.

Mr Kayanja who was represented by the National Information Officer, Dr Oluseyi Soremekun, explained that poetry not only unlocks the creative potentials in people, it also contributes to language skills development, builds confidence in public speaking and asserts people’s identity.

In her presentation titled, ‘Mother Earth’, Miss Bolanle Bolaji of Ijaiye Housing Estate Senior grammar School, noted that

Poetry, according to him, has no particular language. “Poetry is universal. It can be written and recited in any language, including indigenous languages.” He noted, “Poetry speaks to our common humanity and our shared values, transforming the simplest of poems into a powerful catalyst for dialogue and peace.”



Left: Tutor General/ Permanent Secretary of Education District 1, Dr Mrs Olayimika Ayandele gives the opening remarks at the World Poetry Day event

Right: UNIC National Information Officer, Dr Oluseyi Soremekun addresses the audience at the World Poetry Day event held on 21 March 2019 at Lagos.

Children Living in Conflicts-affected Countries are Three Times More Likely to Die from Water-related Diseases than From Violence – UN



A child drinks safe water from a UNICEF-supported water point in southern Nigeria. © UNICEF/2018/Esiebo

Children under the age of 15 living in countries affected by protracted conflict are, on average, almost three times more likely to die from diarrhoeal diseases caused by a lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene than by direct violence, UNICEF said in a new report.

Water Under Fire looks at mortality rates in 16 countries going through prolonged conflicts and finds that, in most of them, children under the age of five are more than 20 times more likely to die from diarrheal-related deaths linked to lack of access to safe water and sanitation than direct violence.

“The odds are already stacked against children living through prolonged conflicts – with many unable to reach a safe water source,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “The reality is that there are more children who die from lack of access to safe water than by bullets.”

“In Nigeria, conflict has created huge challenges for people living in the north-east of the country, where violence has affected their ability to access water and sanitation, leading to diseases

such as cholera,” said Mohamed Fall, UNICEF Nigeria Representative.

“More than 3.6 million people are in need of water, sanitation and hygiene services – 1.1 million of these are internally displaced (IDPs), having fled their homes due to violence and conflict. Many of them are out-of-reach, in remote areas still impacted by conflict. About 800,000 people are in hard-to-reach areas and 79 percent of these are children and women,” said Mohamed Fall.

In north-east Nigeria, 5,365 people were affected by cholera, with 61 dying in 2017, while 12,643 people were affected and 175 died of cholera in 2018.

UNICEF is working to scale-up lifesaving responses, especially in IDP camps, to ensure quality and sustainability of WASH services and facilities, minimize the risk of WASH-related diseases, and to provide preventive measures against cholera and other water-borne diseases.

Without safe and effective water, sanitation and hygiene services, children are at risk of malnutrition and preventable diseases including diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera and polio. Girls are particularly affected: They are vulnerable to sexual violence as they collect water or venture out to use latrines. They deal with affronts to their dignity as they bathe and manage menstrual hygiene. And they miss classes during menstruation if their schools have no suitable water and sanitation facilities.

These threats are exacerbated during conflict when deliberate and indiscriminate attacks destroy infrastructure, injure personnel and cut off the power that keeps water, sanitation and hygiene systems running. Armed conflict also limits access to essential repair equipment and consumables such as fuel or chlorine – which can be depleted, rationed, diverted or blocked from delivery. Far too often, essential services are deliberately denied.

“Deliberate attacks on water and sanitation are attacks on vulnerable children,” said Fore. “Water is a basic right. It is a necessity for life.”

A State of Emergency in WASH Sector Sets the Ball Rolling to End Open Defecation

In March, Nigeria joined the rest of the global development community to observe the 2019 World Water Day, with the theme of “Leave No One Behind”. Among the series of activities that took place in the country was the launch of the official website for the “Clean Nigeria Programme”, an ambitious national campaign to end open defecation in Nigeria by 2025.

The website www.cleannigeria.ng will serve as a visual advocacy and repository portal that will help manage data and track actions geared towards eradicating the practice. “The website was created for the audience we want to reach: government leaders and policy makers, development partners, sanitation advocates, researchers, youths, and change enthusiasts,” said Suleiman Adamu, Minister of Water Resources, during the formal launch.

Nigeria currently ranks second among countries that practice open defecation. According to the findings from the 2018 WASH National Outcome Routine Mapping (WASH NORM), a national sample survey that covered 36 states and the FCT, 47 million Nigerians practice open defecation. This places an economic, social, and health burden on the human capital in the country.

To quantify the rippling impact, it is estimated that about N455 billion is lost to poor sanitation. A third of the cost is as a result of open defecation. In November 2018, President Buhari launched the National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Action Plan and declared a state of emergency in the sector with a strong call to end open defecation in the country by 2025.

With the goal to leave no one behind, putting the national campaign to end open defecation at the front burner of the WASH sector in Nigeria is one step towards progress.

One inspiring observation during the launch of the website was the hall full of young people, development partners, government officials, the media, and members of the market women association. It was a convergence of both traditional and non-traditional partners – exactly the type of cross-sector collaboration needed to end open defecation in the country.



The Federal Ministry of Water Resources, with support from UNICEF, launches the “Clean Nigeria Programme”, a national campaign to end open defecation in Nigeria by 2025. Photo: Federal Ministry of Water Resources

PHOTO NEWS



Captions, from left to right and top to bottom:

1. Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, meets with the UN Country Team (UNCT) as part of activities during his recent visit to Nigeria. He attended the unveiling of Nigeria National HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAISS) at a special event held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 14 March .
2. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon (Left) welcomes the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, to the UN House, Abuja Nigeria.
3. Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé (3rd from the right) joins the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon (2nd from the right) and some Heads of UN Agencies for a photograph.



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