



**UNITED NATIONS  
NIGERIA**

# NEWSLETTER

**DECEMBER 2020**



## UN Commends FG On Katsina Schoolboys' Rescue, Calls for Safer School Environment



UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, of UN Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon

**F**ollowing the rescue of over 300 students who were kidnapped on 11 December 2020, from Government Science Secondary School, an all-boys boarding school, in the town of Kankara, Katsina state, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN system in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon, has commended the swift action taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria and called on the government of Nigeria to make schools across the nation safer for teaching and learning.

"I rejoice with the community and concerned families; and call on the authorities to make schools safer for teaching and learning." He said on his Twitter handle, @EdwardKallon, on 18 December.

In a statement, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated the solidarity and commitment of the United Nations to supporting the Government and people of Nigeria in their fight against terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime.

He stressed the importance of providing necessary health and psychosocial support to the released children and their families.



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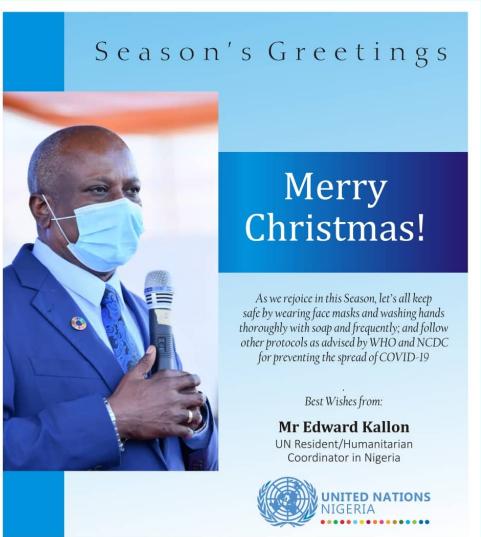
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**Wear Masks, Abide By Other COVID-19 Guidelines As You Celebrate - Kallon**



**T**he Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon has urged everyone to wear a mask and abide by all other guidelines on COVID-19 pandemic as advised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

"As we rejoice in this season, let's all keep safe by wearing face masks and washing hands thoroughly with soap and frequently." He said in his short statement on 25 December and released through his Twitter handle.

# Women On The Frontlines Of COVID-19: Spotlight On Women Health Workers In The UN SARI Treatment Centre



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed with women health workers and a few of their male colleagues at the UN Severe Acute Respiratory Isolation (SARI) Treatment Centre, Abuja.

A key feature of the COVID-19 pandemic is the paradox that although women make up most of the global health workforce they are too often, visibly absent from leadership positions in the sector. In Nigeria, women comprise an estimated 60% of health-workers yet women's representation in leadership in the health sector is low. Within the UN System, women make up the majority of workers in the newly established UN Severe Acute Respiratory Isolation (SARI) Treatment Centre, working day and night to ensure the health and well-being of UN Staff throughout the pandemic.

## Balancing Saving Lives and Care Duties

The UN SARI Treatment Centre is made up of a dedicated team of 19 health workers ranging from doctors, nurses, and medical scientists, including 14 women and 5 men. The nurses work in shifts, with the day shift from 8 am – 5 pm, and the night shift from 5 pm to 8 am. With only two doctors on-site, Dr. Ogenna Okeke and Dr. Boyiga Bodinga Nuga, they each need to take turns working 24-hour shifts.

With such unsociable and demanding hours, the challenge of balancing the duty of saving lives with care work in the home is one that comes to mind when speaking with the UN SARI team. "Those roles are still my roles", explains Dr. Okeke referring to the need to take care of her family and home. This view is echoed by the rest of the team, including Nurse Adenike Greene who recalls that, "lots of sacrifices were made on the first day of resumption in the facility. I had to call my husband to tell him I would not be home that evening to look after our baby".

When asked how her life has changed since the start of the pandemic, Nurse Brenda Ifeanyichukwu simply responds, "It's been crazy – having to deal with four boys at home and continue working. I don't know how we do it". The experiences of the women in the UN SARI team demonstrate that balancing care duties between men and women in the home is essential for a healthy and functioning society.

However, the fear of putting their children and other family members at risk of the both the virus itself, and fear of stigma within the community was mentioned as one of the most difficult parts of the job. Nurse Vivian Ifeoma did not tell her children

about her job for the first five months of working to protect herself and her family from potential backlash from the community. Concerned by news from across the globe of health workers becoming infected with the virus, Nurse Stella Anyakorah explains, "It has been so challenging being a mother and handling Covid-19 patients. I have to find ways to protect myself and my baby". To manage this, she takes extra precautions to ensure she has disinfected herself before interacting with their household.

## Key Achievements: 100% Patient Recovery and Strong Team Morale

Despite the initial anxieties of working on the frontlines of a new and deadly pandemic, the women in the UN SARI team have demonstrated commendable resilience and success in fulfilling their duties. The team are proud to boast 100% recovery amongst patients, with no infections recorded amongst the staff, attributed in part to strict adherence to infection prevention control (IPC) standards.

The success of the UN SARI team in taking care of their patients is further demonstrated by their consideration for their patients' mental health. "We reassure them and encourage them to call their families", said Nurse Winifred Aboki as she describes how many patients enter the facility feeling anxious and afraid. In coping with their own stress, the UN SARI team explained that a strong team morale helps them get through difficult times, which is further supported by the provision of recreational facilities and an in-house counsellor.

## Building Back Better: Capacity Development, Community Outreach, Adapting Work Cultures

Despite the tragic loss of life and devastating economic consequences, the Covid-19 pandemic is widely seen as an opportunity for governments to lead in "Building Back Better," and step-up efforts to address the inequalities that have been amplified. In their vision for a more equal future, the women health works at the UN SARI Centre would like to see increased investment in building the capacity of female health workers...Continue on the next page.

## Women On The Frontlines Of COVID-19...continued from page 2

This includes increased opportunities for women health workers to share best practices and to benefit from training workshops for career progression. Women health workers have demonstrated that they are our best bet for navigating future health crises and ensuring that their skills are further harnessed is paramount.

Communication channels should be provided for women health workers to ensure their experiences feed into community engagement and sensitization efforts, which is essential for maintaining an effective response to the pandemic. Persistent stigma coupled with growing laxness around COVID-19 measures pose a threat to progress. According to UN SARI staff, female health workers should be at the forefront of educating communities on the persistent risk due to their expertise and the roles they often hold as carers in their families. This must also be met by concerted efforts to shift cultural norms around women's leadership from high-level decision-making spheres to the grassroots.

Staff at the UN SARI Treatment Centre also note the invaluable need for balance at home to enable them to rest and fulfil their duties. In view of this, healthcare institutions should recognize the need for flexible work hours. On a wider societal level, advocacy for a balance in care work between men and women must be amplified by government, development partners, civil society, and the private sector. Building back better means a recognition that healthy homes are the responsibility of everyone, girls and boys, women, and men.

### Practice What You Preach: Gender Equality within the UN System

The experiences around the burden of unpaid care work and opportunities for career progression should also be considered as

the UN looks to advance gender equality inside the organization itself. Whilst the UN SARI clinic is made up of more women, male heads of agencies (HOAs) out-represent female HOAs in the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Nigeria. The UNCT has committed to mainstreaming gender equality and the upcoming UNCT SWAP Gender Scorecard process will further look at how gender equality and the empowerment of women is being mainstreamed by the UNCT in its policies and programs. This initiative is a key step in the right direction towards ensuring that the UN's efforts to advance gender equality in Nigeria are also reflected at the level of the UNCT.

### Conclusion

The female health workers of the UN SARI Treatment Centre continue to successfully serve in one of the most unprecedented health care emergencies of recent times. The gendered implications of working within such a challenging environment must be addressed to ensure the safety of healthcare workers and their patients. Furthermore, recognizing the achievements of female healthcare workers during this pandemic provides an invaluable platform to advocate for women's leadership in Nigeria, which faces a crisis in gender equality on several fronts. In the words of Dr. Boyiga Bodinga Nuga, the strides made since the Centre officially opened demonstrate that, "when women are given the opportunity to lead, they do so with excellence". Government and development partners, including the UN, can work to ensure that gender equality is placed at the centre of all Covid-19 response and recovery efforts, whilst drawing on women's abilities to accelerate progress.

## Respect For Rule of Law Needed To Recover Better From COVID-19 – UN



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at the centre of national strategies to combat the pandemic." He said at the observance of the International Human Rights Day organized by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Nigeria, in collaboration with Nigerian Youth For SDGs, on 10 December.

He emphasized that an effective response to the pandemic must be based on human rights. People and their rights must be front and centre of response and recovery.

Mr Ejidike advocated for an aggressive implementation of the call by Heads of

UN Agencies in Nigeria, to decongest the prisons in order to reduce the spread of contagion, which according to him, is an imperative in a country where the occupancy rate in Correctional Centres is 142% with over 70% of detainees on remand.

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December — the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

**T**he Senior Human Rights Adviser and Head, Human Rights Advisory Unit in the Office of the Resident Coordinator's Office, Martin Ejidike, has emphasized the importance of fairness, justice and respect for the rule of law in the efforts to build back better from the devastating socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

"The respect and enforcement of human rights remains a positive course of action for COVID-19 recovery and should be

# UN, FG, Switzerland Provide Assistance To People Hardest Hit By COVID-19



A group photograph of officials and representatives of the beneficiary communities

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD) to provide cash and food assistance to vulnerable people living in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCTA).

In coordination with FCTA, WFP has been working in communities across Abuja for the last three months to identify the most vulnerable. The intervention provides cash and food to cushion the harsh effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable members in the selected communities. The support covers households in three local councils of Bwari, Gwagwalada and the Abuja Municipal Area Council. The cash assistance was made possible thanks to the generous contribution of the Swiss Government and their timely support to WFP's COVID-19 urban response.

This is the first time WFP is expanding into urban locations in Nigeria to serve families affected by the social and economic impact of COVID-19. The programme is a part of WFP's mission to save lives and change lives in Nigeria, with the ultimate goal of achieving Zero Hunger by 2030.

At the distribution in Karmajji, Abuja, on November 20, WFP Representative, Dr. Paul Howe, said the approach adopted is COVID-sensitive, economically smart and sustainable. He noted that all of this could only be achieved in partnership.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and

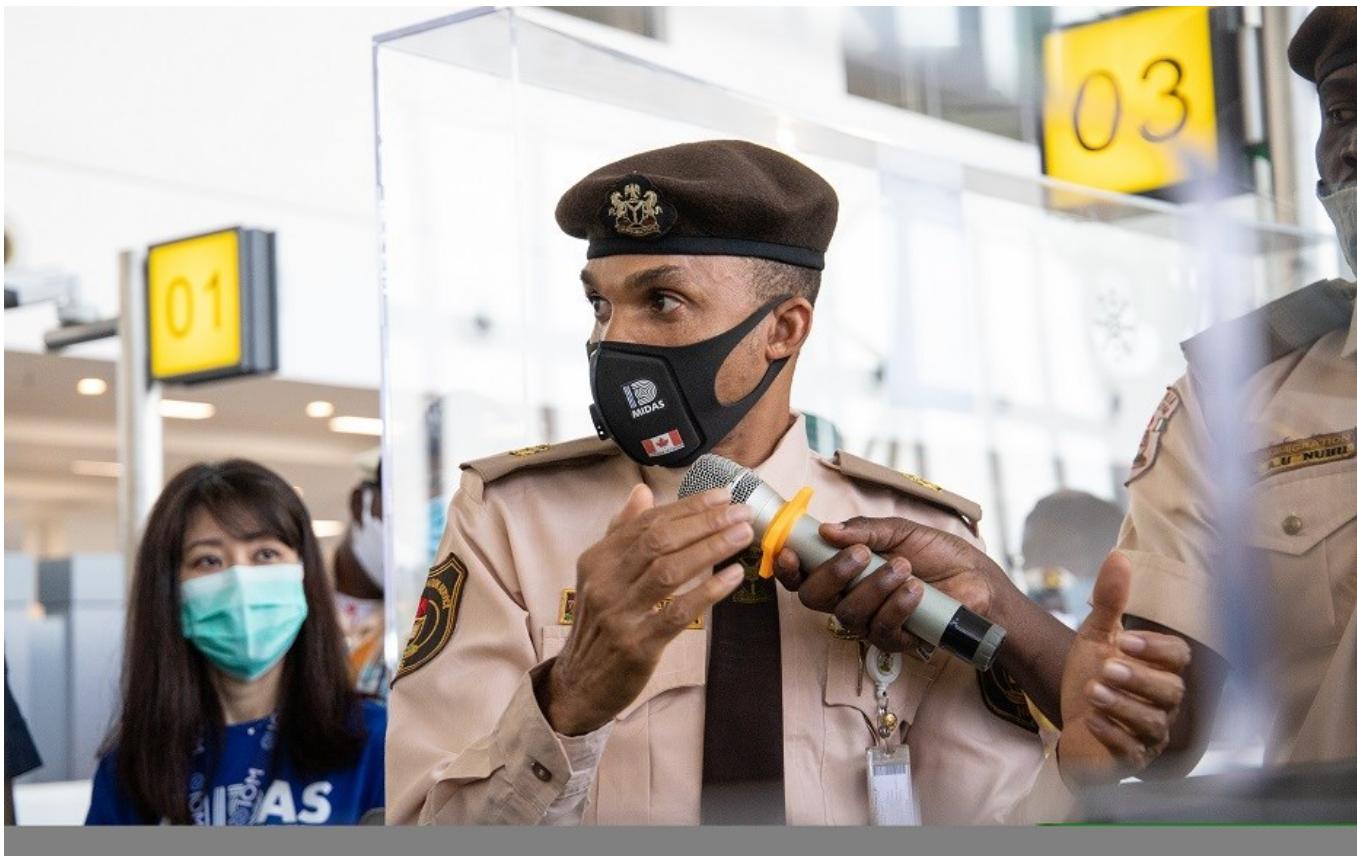
Social Development (FMHADMSD) to provide cash and food assistance to vulnerable people living in the Federal Capital Territory,

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THERE IS HUNGER. THIS  
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FOOD SECURITY, PEACE AND  
STABILITY GO TOGETHER.**

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# UN, Canada Hand Over MIDAS Equipment to Nigeria Immigration Service as International Travel Resumes



56 processing points will be supplied with MIDAS equipment in the two international airports, which will allow authorities to process travelers more rapidly and professionally. Photo: Jorge Galindo/IOM

On 4 December, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with support from the Government of Canada, handed over equipment to the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) to strengthen migration and border management capacity in the country.

The handover will enable NIS officials to deploy the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS). The system allows to collect, process, store and analyze traveler information and share data in real-time across an entire national border network.

The equipment includes 56 desktop computers, 50 sets of fingerprint scanners, passport readers and webcams, among other items which will be distributed among the international airports in Abuja, the country's political and administrative center, and Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital.

The event was held at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Airport in the Nigerian capital at a time when international travel continues to increase following a five-month closure of the Nigerian airspace due to COVID-19.

The Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos registers more than 6.3 million passengers every year, making it the busiest air travel hub in West Africa, and the fifth in all of Africa. However, half of its passenger processing points (PPPs) are not equipped with border management information systems such as MIDAS. Similarly, in Abuja, the second largest airport in the country, 50 per cent of the immigration booths lack this system. "We'll continue to ensure that investment in border management is effectively utilized and border officers are trained and accountable," said Muhammad Babandede, Comptroller General

of the Nigeria Immigration Service. "A safe border in Nigeria is a safe border in Canada and everywhere in the world," he added.

"Canada is proud to partner with IOM and the Government of Nigeria on the delivery of these MIDAS systems, which will support Nigeria's efforts to strengthen its border management, by providing it with greater control of migration movements into and out of the country," said Mr. Ryan Ward, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of Canada.

"Nigeria is the country with the largest and most complex deployment of MIDAS worldwide," said Yuki Daizumoto, IOM Immigration and Border Management Programme Coordinator. "This donation, which is made possible with the support of the Government of Canada, signals our sustained partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria to optimize the economic, social and political benefits of international mobility," she added.

Under this intervention, 56 processing points will be supplied with MIDAS equipment in the two international airports, which will allow authorities to process travelers more rapidly and professionally. It will also help curtail security risks by automatically checking all recorded entry and exit data against national and international watchlists from INTERPOL and other sources and achieve real-time synchronization of data between the international airports and the NIS Headquarters in Abuja.

Earlier this year, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari praised the installation of MIDAS—which officially launched in November 2019—in five international airports. This initiative is supported through the MIDAS Expansion at Air Borders in Nigeria project funded by the Government of Canada through its Department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

# UN, NAPTIP Kick-Off Process To Develop A New National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and funding from the Government of Switzerland officially kicked-off the process to develop a new National Action Plan against human trafficking in Nigeria. NAPTIP gathered over thirty stakeholders including ministries, law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations and international partners for a 3-day workshop in Abuja to set the priorities of the new national action plan.

The development of this strategic document is long overdue as the previous national plan expired in 2012, and is supported through the “Strengthening the policy framework and response to human trafficking in Nigeria” project, funded by the Swiss government and implemented jointly by NAPTIP and UNODC.

As a preliminary step, the project conducted between April and July 2020 a baseline assessment of the current situation of trafficking in persons in Nigeria. The report assessed the current responses to trafficking in the various fields such as prevention, protection, criminal justice response and international cooperation.

With the technical assistance of UNODC, NAPTIP will organize further consultations and technical meetings through the course of 2021, and establish a strong monitoring and evaluation framework.

“The approved document will become the blueprint for all interventions against human trafficking in Nigeria, ensuring efficiency and greater synergy”, said Dame Julie Okah-Donli, the Director-General of NAPTIP. “It is therefore, my desire that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the process of developing this Plan



UNODC Country Representative, Dr. Oliver Stolpe addressing participants during a workshop to develop a new national action plan against human trafficking.

of Action, so that it benefits from contemporary trends and good practices from around the world.”

“Despite progresses, further efforts are however needed to enhance the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons which remains a “high profit – low risk” crime”, said Dr. Oliver Stolpe, UNODC Representative to Nigeria. “The development of a new National Action Plan provides us all with an opportunity to identify and address the current challenges in effectively preventing and combatting human trafficking in Nigeria, while ensuring the rights and protection of victims.”

“The fight against human trafficking constitutes an important area of cooperation between Nigeria and Switzerland”, said Mr. Manuel Muehlebach, Migration Adviser at the Embassy of Switzerland in Abuja. “The development of the National Action Plan will serve as a strategic document that will guide stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria.”

## UN Trains Defence Lawyers to Become Human Rights Defenders

As we celebrate International Human Rights Day, we are also reminded of the work that human rights defenders do to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable are protected, and this includes the rights of those who find themselves within the criminal justice system.

Defence lawyers play a vital and irreplaceable role in the promotion and protection of human rights. The right to fair trial is fundamental to any democratic society, without the full enjoyment of this right the rule of law itself is meaningless, and without dedicated public defenders fully committed to the defence of their clients it is unattainable.

In January of this year, UNODC supported the deployment of 31 Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACON) defence lawyers to the Joint Investigation Centre (JIC) detention facility in Maiduguri to conduct pre-trial interviews of terrorism suspects and to ensure their constitutional right to a fair trial. This resulted in LACON being granted access to 314 detainees.

As Mr. Abdulfattah Bakre, LACON’s Deputy Director Criminal Litigation, subsequently observed: “The pre-trial interview exercise has in no small measure given meaning to the constitutional rights of the defendants by giving adequate time to prepare

for their defence, thereby enhancing the right to a fair trial, and ensuring the credibility of the upcoming hearings.”

Ensuring that terrorists are brought to justice can present many challenges. Investigators are often placed under tremendous pressure to get results, and in such circumstances it is all too easy to make mistakes.

A strong commitment to the application of the rule of law and adherence to the fundamental principles of human rights, provides powerful protection from such mistakes leading to miscarriages of justice. When the wrong person is convicted, two wrongs are committed, an innocent person’s life is ruined, and a guilty one is left to offend again.

Fraser Hirst, the UNODC expert delivering the training, took care to highlight the importance of ensuring that a gender perspective forms part of an effective counterterrorism response. Account must be taken of the multifaceted and distinct ways that women and men are involved in and are impacted by terrorist acts and counter terrorism responses.

Hirst noted that “many women caught up in the justice system may effectively be victims who are being re-victimised and re-traumatised by the system and the process, even if, on the face of it, they may appear to have committed an offence under the TPA as amended.”

The training covered a variety of human rights-related topics with participants drawn from different parts of the country.

# Global Recognition For Youths From North-East Nigeria

Four youths from Maiduguri, Borno State get global recognition for their innovative work in bridging literacy and numeracy gaps among conflict-affected children in North East Nigeria

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A team of young people providing basic education classes for vulnerable children and youths in Maiduguri, Borno State has won the Education Category of the 2020 Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge 2.0.

Team MUDA, one of two finalists from Nigeria, was announced overall winner in the Education Category. Haruna Ibrahim Ahmed, Jubilee Ayuba, Abdulkadir Ahmed and Shamang Deborah Chat won after emerging first in the national contest stage, which saw 60 creative young Nigerians aged 14-24 from conflict-affected communities in the north-east Nigeria and young people in Lagos (including Team ALPHA) sending in entries.

At the global stage of the competition, Team MUDA and Team ALPHA competed among 72 teams from 36 countries.

"Emerging as a finalist with another team of young people from Lagos was a 'wow' moment for us. We thought we would not stand a chance," said Abdulkadir Ahmed, team lead. "Winning the Education Category in the global stage of the competition is a great surprise. When you see Borno on the map, it is usually about bloodshed. This is an opportunity to rewrite the narrative and tell the world that positive things can also come out of Borno, especially from youths," he said.

The Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge is a global initiative that provides young people a platform to offer innovative and scalable solutions to the most pressing challenge affecting them. For the second edition, code-named Youth Challenge 2.0, calls for entries were made in the Education, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment and Employability categories.

A total of 72 entries from 36 countries made it to the finals of the award, hosted by Generation Unlimited, with support from the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, Plan International and the World Organization of the Scout Movement. Globally, over 15 million youths participated in the competition.

At the Teachers' Village Internally Displaced Persons Camp in Maiduguri, Borno State, Team MUDA supports conflict-affected

children from Kukawa and Ngala local government areas with a hybrid of online and offline learning opportunities. A total of 138 out-of-school children and youths between the ages of 13 and 20 years benefit from physical and online classes hosted in safe places and on WhatsApp. The team has the support of eight volunteer teachers to facilitate multiple classes and new enrolments.

"We are overjoyed with this announcement, but have always been determined to make an impact, whether we win or not. Our goal is to reach 2,000 out-of-school children in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States with basic learning and numeracy skills. With this award, we will be able to explore more digital opportunities that will help deliver to more children in larger communities," said Ahmed, 21.

The team and winners in other categories will be presented with \$15,000 each. The cash prizes will enable the winners to incubate and expand their programmes for greater impact.

**Schools must be places of safety for children and must never be attacked.**



# 'COVID-proofing' Lagos Public Schools

*As public schools in Lagos state reopen for in-person learning amidst a second wave of coronavirus in Nigeria, UNICEF is supporting the state to put in place protocols to mitigate the spread of the virus among students*



Taiwo and Kehinde Afolabi of Oregun Junior High School in Ikeja Lagos, wash their hands with soap and are excited to be back in school after six months stuck at home due to the COVID- 19 lockdown.

Twelve-year-old twins Taiwo and Kehinde Afolabi are excited to be back in school after six months stuck at home due to the COVID- 19 lockdown. While they were able to do homework thanks to broadcasts on Lagos State radio and television, they would have much preferred to be learning together with schoolmates and friends.

For Taiwo, the daily morning assembly where all students gathered to sing and receive information was what he missed most. "I love singing and we often learned new songs at the assembly gathering," he said.

According to Averting a Lost COVID Generation, UNICEF's report on the growing consequences of the pandemic on children, 572 million students across 30 countries have been affected by school closures - or about 33 per cent of enrolled students worldwide. This is a massive number.

And while the Afolabi twins are thrilled that their schools are reopening – along with about 449,444 other public primary school pupils across Lagos State – they have had to come to terms with the fact that they can no longer hug or huddle with schoolmates and friends like they did before the pandemic.

Like everyone else, their school has had to adopt guidelines and protocols from the state ministries of health and education, and this has changed the experience.

"We no longer hold the morning assembly because of social distancing guidelines, and school time has been cut to four hours a day, without extra-curricular activities," said Christiana Adesanya, principal of Oregun Junior High School, where the twins are students.

But this doesn't discourage the twins, who are excited to be resuming in-person education. "At least we are back in school and learning with friends, even though we've been asked to maintain social distance," said Taiwo.

Key to Lagos State's safe school reopening protocol is the proper wearing

of face masks, social distancing, proper and frequent handwashing, strengthening of referral systems and contact tracing.

The provision of a designated holding area for sick pupils to wait for their parents and the installation of handwashing facilities with soap and water at multiple locations is compulsory for any school to get re-opening certification.

"We kicked off with sensitization and capacity building for all stakeholders in education, especially teachers, parents and the school management boards," said Dr Abiola Seriki Ayeni, Director General of the Office of Education and Quality Assurance in the Lagos State Ministry of Education.

Teachers are expected to take an online certification course on government protocols and guidelines, and schools are required to register and get certified for re-

opening after meeting all conditions. About 29,000 registered teachers have so far passed the online school re-opening course, while 13,000 public and private schools have been registered and certified to safely re-open in Lagos, according to Dr. Ayeni.

UNICEF, with funding from the UN Basket Fund and European Union, has supported the stakeholder sensitization meetings and teacher trainings on how to demonstrate proper handwashing, the correct use of face masks, and the appropriate way to socially distance.

"It is our priority that key public services in Lagos - like education - have COVID-19-proof plans so that children can continue receive an education while lowering the risk of spreading this disease," said Dr. Charles Nwosisi, Health Specialist at UNICEF in Lagos.

Elated to be part of the training, teacher Boboye Olaitan described it as "instructive and valuable". For him and other teachers, it was clear the big picture was what mattered most.

"Reminding my students to properly wash their hands as I have learned here and to do it repeatedly will help keep the virus at bay – and ultimately ensure all children can learn," he said.



Temperature check at the entrance of Oregun Junior High School in Ikeja, Lagos



**Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction**

1. Physical distancing classroom arrangement at Oregun Junior High School in Ikeja, Lagos. UNICEF is supporting the Lagos state to put in place protocols to mitigate the spread of the virus among students.
2. Executive Director/CEO, National Primary Health Care Development Agency Dr. Faisal Shuaib (Right) and Country Representative of UNICEF, Dr Peter Hawkins (Left) at the UNICEF Office in Abuja during the former's courtesy visit .
3. Executive Director/CEO, National Primary Health Care Development Agency Dr. Faisal Shuaib (Left) and Country Representative of WHO, Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo at the UN House during the former's courtesy visit to WHO Representative.

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