



NOVEMBER 2020



UNITED NATIONS  
NIGERIA

# NEWSLETTER



## We Need An Engaged Youth And An Engaged Government – Amina Mohammed

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Listen To Us, Understand Our Concerns - Nigerian Youths ...P. 3
- Cash Transfers Boost Girls' Access To Education In Northern Nigeria...P. 5
- Returnees, Health Workers To Improve Psychosocial Well-Being ...P. 7

### Deputy UN Chief Launches #TakeTheBall Campaign



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed's (Left) discusses with President Muhammadu Buhari (Right) at the State House, Abuja Nigeria



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed takes the SDGs-branded ball

The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed, on Monday 9 November 2020, emphasized that there was the need for an engaged youth as well as an engaged government to bridge the communication gap between young people and the government.

She said this during a visit to President Muhammadu Buhari at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, while speaking in the context of the recent EndSARS protests by young people around the country.

"We need an engaged youth and an engaged government. The UN's response to the protests is that we must make sure that we are able to address those gaps and issues; and to begin the reforms needed to address many of these outstanding issues." Ms Mohammed said

The Deputy Secretary-General called on the government to build back the trust of the people for the social contract to be met.

In his response, President Muhammadu Buhari asked Nigerian youths to keep the peace, saying that it is in their own interest to do so.

"It is in the interest of the youths to keep the peace. They want jobs, infrastructure and development," President Buhari said.

He disclosed, "I have sent a team led by the Chief of Staff (Professor Ibrahim Gambari) to go round the country, talk to traditional rulers, who will then talk to the youths. The views of the youths have been heard."

While noting that the current administration inherited severe infrastructural deficits, the President explained that the Federal Government is doing its best within the available limited resources on the ground.

The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed has on 9 November 2020, launched the #TakeTheBall campaign in Abuja, Nigeria.

She thanked the Prime Minister of Norway and SDG Advocate, H.E. Erna Solberg, for initiating the #TakeTheBall campaign to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"I #TakeTheBall for a Decade of Action to deliver on all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Together we will raise ambition and scale up actions #ForPeopleForPlanet." She said as she took the ball from the Special Representative of Secretary General (SRSG)/Head, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel - UNOWAS, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas. Continue on page 2

## Deputy UN Chief Launches #TakeTheBall Campaign...continued from page 1



*Special Representative of Secretary General (SRSG)/ Head, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel - UNOWAS, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, throws the ball and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed gets ready to #TakeTheBall at the launch in Abuja.*

In his commitment, Mr Chambas took the ball and said that he would work to deliver peace, justice and strong institution—SDG 16.

The Assistant Administrator and Director United Nations Development Programme - UNDP Africa, Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, made a commitment that she would work to ensure all 17 sustainable development goals are well-integrated.

The Deputy Secretary General also take the ball from some young Nigerians who in turn also “Take the ball” and made commitments to promote their priority SDG. Mr Fuad Abdulazeez went for Quality Education (SDG-4); Ms Janet Matthew opted for Clean water and sanitation (SDG-3) while Mr Sahad Abdulazeez committed to working to deliver Zero hunger (SDG-2). (SDG-5)

Ms Ladi Apeh said she would work to deliver on gender equality.

This initiative is part of a communication campaign spearheaded by UN SDGs Advocate and Prime Minister of Norway, H.E. Erna Solberg, aimed at raising awareness of

the SDGs using a very universal and popular educational tool: UN SDG branded footballs.

Ms. Erna Solberg, had received an extension of her position as co-chair of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocate group. The reappointment was endorsed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.



*UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed throws the ball to a youth participant, Janet Matthew, who positions herself to #TakeTheBall at the launch in Abuja.*

## Listen To Us, Understand Our Concerns And Aspirations - Nigerian Youths

*In a dialogue with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, Nigerian youth pressed for opportunities to be part of the solutions that can address the challenges they face. The Minister of Youth and Sports Development as well as the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development joined the discussions.*



On the heels of global demands by youth for structural socio-economic transformation, improved governance and intergenerational dialogue, young people in Nigeria have urged for their voices to be heard, to meet their concerns, needs and aspirations.

The dialogue titled, “From protests to constructive engagement – conversations with young Nigerians about Nigeria”, involved more 2,700 online and onsite participants representing various youth organisations in Nigeria.

“Government, donors, international organisations must listen more to young people, and not the other way around. You cannot create a future for people, if you do not understand their needs, their aspirations and goals.” Said a youth participant during the dialogue session with the UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, on Tuesday 17 November 2020, in Abuja.

The urgent need for robust disaggregated data about young people to better understand and meet their needs was highlighted. Participants called on the United Nations, Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and other partners to commission urgent data collection to understand the ‘pulse’ of young people.

The participants also called on the government to create sustainable and decent jobs that lead to economic growth and increased GDP. The issue of gender equality in the economy, formal and informal was highlighted, with many advocating for quality education as a first step in reducing unemployment. As one participant said, “In reducing unemployment, you have to think of education first, both formal and informal and if a woman is not safe, her sexual and reproductive health and rights are not in good state, and therefore, cannot flourish productively.”

On the issue of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions, participants called for schools to be a safe teaching and learning space. “When we clamour for youth, especially girls, to get educated, we need to ensure that space is safe and ensure adequate support for them (anyone who faces) sexual harassment.” One participant added, “It is important that we diversify power between lecturers and the students. Because there is power imbalance.



We need to empower more students to step forward to speak up and take power from those who abuse them.

On the issue of political participation of young people in the democratic process, youth called on their peers to be active in the electoral process. They pointed out the importance of stakeholders in politics. That numbers matter - thus urging their peers to keep advocating together and to leverage their numbers to drive change. “Politics is a game of numbers. Politicians may not respect anything else but they respect stakeholders who have the number required for them to win elections, and for them to further their political aspirations,” summed up one participant.

In her response, the Deputy Secretary-General acknowledged that the conversation with the young people was one of the best and the most constructive she has had this year. That the conversations gave her huge hope. “These kinds of dialogues must continue all the time. The conversations need not wait till there is a crisis. We need to keep engaging.” She said, “You are not alone, Nigerian youths. What is happening in this country is also happening across the world. You never get everything. You get some, you keep asking, and getting more and more until you are handed the baton.” ...continue on page 4.

## In northern Nigeria, Volunteer Drivers Save Children’s Lives

*Thanks to support from the EU, there is now a corps of 900 trained volunteer drivers transporting children who need urgent medical attention to hospitals in Kebbi State*



*A volunteer gets a child attended to by a medical practitioner in Kebbi State*

When two-month-old Balkisu Aliyu got very ill and needed to be rushed to a clinic, her mother Baliratu didn’t know what to do. The health clinic is located about ten kilometres away from her home in Kebbi State, northern Nigeria, and she had no means of transport.

Then Baliratu remembered she had heard about volunteer drivers and quickly contacted her nearest clinic, the Dumbegu Primary Healthcare Centre, to see if they could help. A driver soon arrived and transported the sick Balkisu and her mother to the clinic.

Balkisu arrives at the Dumbegu clinic very ill. Her mother rushes to hand her over to the health workers to check what is wrong. Mustapha Jega, a healthcare worker at the Dumbegu Primary Healthcare Centre, suspects it could be malaria, but needs to conduct a test to be sure. Mustapha appreciates the role of the volunteer drivers. “They have helped save the lives of scores of

children by transporting them here, sometimes in the nick of time,” he says.

Balkisu undergoes a malaria test at the clinic’s laboratory, with equipment supplied by the European Union. The test is positive for malaria.

Balkisu’s mother winces as the little girl receives the first jab of an injection that will treat her malaria. Thanks to EU support, there is now a corps of 900 trained volunteer drivers transporting children like Balkisu who need urgent medical attention to hospitals in Kebbi State.

Thanks to the volunteer drivers, more pregnant women and children in emergency health situations can get to hospitals quicker. In the fourth year of the EU- supported project in Kebbi State, volunteer drivers have transported some 1,617 pregnant women and sick children to referral health centers.

---

## Listen To Us, Understand Our Concerns—Youths ...Continued from page 3

...On education, the Deputy Secretary-General asked participants: “What kind of education and skill sets does this generation need to drive markets and create opportunities?” She noted that the education of today would not take care of tomorrow, “We need to do something about education for sure, but it is not going to be done in Abuja. We have to ask the State and Local Governments, because they have constitutional responsibilities for the foundation of education.”

Minister of youth and Sports Development, Mr Sunday Dare noted that the major lesson for him was the move from protests, to guided action, and developing opportunities to listen and engage on solutions.

“For the Ministry, there is a care paradigm shift from youth empowerment. The focus now is on youth investment. The time

of just mere empowerment is over. Empowerment is not enough. Empowerment just puts stipends in the pockets of our youth. It is not sustainable. We need to invest in them as wealth creators and employers of labour that can contribute to national development while meeting their aspirations”. Said Mr Dare.

Mr Dare shared that the government has keyed into the idea of setting up a Nigeria Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) with N75 billion.

The Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen, called on the youths to have faith in the country. “There is no country without problems and issues. You must first love your country. You must have faith. From most of the comments I see online during this dialogue, a lot of youths have lost hope in the country. They have lost hope in the leadership.” She observed and appealed for peace.

## Cash Transfers Boost Girls' Access To Education In Northern Nigeria

UNICEF, in partnership with Educate a Child (EAC) – Education Above All (EAA), is helping to drive children's enrolment in school through a cash transfer programme for families



A schoolgirl in a classroom

Sometimes Farida Adamu can't help but lament the opportunities lost to her two eldest daughters.

"My first daughter got married uneducated and the second is only attending Islamiya (Quranic school)," said Farida, a widow and mother of five, who lives in Kawara - Manu in Nigeria's Kebbi State, in the far north.

However, thanks to a cash transfer programme, Farida's three younger children are now enrolled in school and Farida has been able to set up a business to improve the family's standard of living, while her children are in school.

Farida receives 24,000 naira (about 60 US dollars) per school term for her three children, which allows her to offset the cost of sending her daughters to school. The money has also helped her establish a groundnut processing business and has given her the means to enrol her second-eldest daughter in public school as well.

"Honestly, this money has broken the chain of poverty in my house, as I can now buy books, school uniforms and feed my children easily," she said.

It is an unfortunate reality that while access to education is recognized globally as a basic right for all children, financial and socio-cultural barriers - particularly for girls - make realizing that right difficult for many. In Nigeria alone, it is estimated that some 13.5 million school-age children are not enrolled in education. Those numbers are particularly high in northern states like Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara.

UNICEF, in partnership with Educate a Child (EAC) – Education Above All (EAA), is helping to change that situation through the cash transfer programme for families, which aims to get more out-of-school children into school. Launched in 2017, the programme was conceptualized to expand the reach of the Girls Education Project Phase 3 (GEP3) project implemented by UNICEF, with funding from the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO). It has already had a significant local

impact, with 38,160 families receiving cash transfers in three local government areas in Kebbi State.

The programme provides 8,000 naira (about 20 US dollars) per child to a mother or caregiver for each school term, helping to meet basic school needs, with enough left over to finance a small business. The objective is to help sustain the family and provide an income-generating platform as a longer-term solution to keeping children in school.

The programme aims to return about 501,574 children to school who are currently missing out on an education. While a challenge throughout Nigeria, resistance to sending girls to school is more prevalent in the north due to religious and socio-cultural beliefs, including a general mistrust of the intent and value of western education. Poverty is also a crucial factor.

There is evidence the intervention has already changed the lives of many families in the targeted states, and the expectation is that many more will benefit.

"I am optimistic that for those families who use the funds well, the sky is the limit," said Usman Isa, UNICEF Education Consultant in Kebbi State. "The aim is that they will be lifted out of poverty for the rest of their lives."

Aisha Ibrahim, a 30-year-old mother of three, said that before her involvement with the programme, she could not afford to give her two daughters an education.

"Before the cash transfer programme, it was only my son who was going to school," she said. "My husband died two years ago, and I didn't have a business. I therefore couldn't afford to send all my children to school."

The payments she has received have allowed her to both enrol her daughters in school and start a livestock trading business.

"I now buy and sell goats and sheep," said Aisha. "I sold two goats last year for 25,000 naira. I used the money to buy the children school uniforms and textbooks, and to ensure they have good food, so they can learn."

## Decongestion Efforts Begin In Displacement Camps In North-East Nigeria Amid Growing Humanitarian Needs



Gubio camp hosts more than 30,000 internally displaced persons in north-east Nigeria, where humanitarian needs have significantly grown in 2020. Photo: Jorge Galindo/IOM

Unrelenting violence in north-east Nigeria has prompted new waves of displacement to congested camps in 2020. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has begun rolling out a new decongestion strategy in collaboration with humanitarian partners that aims to reduce overcrowding in over 55 per cent of the camps in Borno State – where four out of five internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently live in overcrowded sites.

Overcrowded conditions in camps with makeshift and temporary shelters built near each other make physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 impossible, in addition to increasing risks of fire outbreaks and reduced accessibility.

“Displaced populations in the north-east are facing severe hardship due to increased insecurity, disrupted livelihoods and ongoing risks of transmission of COVID-19,” said Jeffrey Labovitz, IOM Director of Operations and Emergencies, during a visit to camps in Borno this week.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has grown by 3.5 million – from 7.1 to 10.6 million – the largest number since the joint humanitarian response began five years ago.

The number of IDPs in Nigeria’s worst-affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe rose from 1.8 to 1.9 million in 2020, according to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix. The majority live in precarious, makeshift shelters which expose inhabitants to harsh weather conditions as well as gender-based violence and other security threats.

Decongestion efforts in overcrowded sites are a temporary yet timely measure to better the living conditions of displaced families.

In the town of Dikwa, IOM has relocated 899 individuals from a projected total of 1,235 to improved shelters at the recently established Umarti camp following the approval of local and State authorities.

The relocation efforts in Dikwa, where 17 camps host 60,848 individuals, will provide better living conditions for the popula-

tion and lessen protection, disaster and health risks while bringing them closer to key services and facilities such as health and food distribution.

The precarious security situation has also created obstacles for humanitarians providing assistance in remote locations. Since 2019, three out of nine IOM-managed humanitarian hubs – sites where humanitarians work and live – in Banki, Ngala and Monguno towns have been targeted during attacks by non-state armed groups.

“Greater financial support is needed to strengthen the security measures for these hubs and ensure the safety of aid workers. Without these facilities, essential services in conflict-affected areas would come to a halt,” added Labovitz.

The eleven-year conflict in the north-east has spread to areas surrounding Lake Chad, prompting one of the world’s most severe and complex humanitarian crises.

Less than two months before the end of the year, aid actors have received less than half the funding needed to assist the 7.8 million people targeted.



## Returnees, Health Workers Join Hands To Improve Psychosocial Well-Being



Returnees during the mentoring activity in Benin City, Edo State, the main place of origin of Nigerians returning from Libya. Photo: IOM/Elijah Elaigwu

COVID-19 continues to put a strain on public health systems, as well as on the livelihoods and purchasing power of people around the world. But as the pandemic shows no signs of abating, the impact on the mental health of the most vulnerable—including migrants returned to their communities—becomes more visible. As part of the response to address this challenge, from 16 to 19 November, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) hosted in Benin City, Edo State, a series of modules to train 20 returnees in a community-based approach to psychosocial reintegration.

Under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, IOM conducted in May a COVID-19 assessment to measure the impact of the pandemic on returnees in various countries in West and Central Africa. Among 518 people surveyed, 63 per cent reported that their emotional wellbeing had deteriorated since the outbreak of COVID-19, including 90 per cent of respondents from Edo and Delta States.

The impact of the pandemic adds a layer of vulnerability to returnees, some of whom had already started rebuilding their lives, and who were experiencing high levels of psychosocial distress or severe disorders, both pre-existing or due to potentially traumatic life events along their journey.

Yet, many areas with high numbers of returnees may lack specialized mental health care and psychosocial services and have a limited number of professional staff such as psychiatrists and psychologists.

The training conducted in Benin City aims to build a mentorship network and create supportive relationships between two peers with similar experiences, such as a newly arrived returnee and a mentor from the same location or a group of peers within a community.

Returnees with experience in community engagement, or those with specific backgrounds such as social workers or teachers, have been selected as mentors. They can help new arrivals navigate the difficulties of the return and reduce the social barriers to reintegration by providing emotional support, helping solve practical problems and sharing information about services that provide mental health and psychosocial support in the country.

“This training will help me use my own story to be able to support Nigerians who have just returned because they need someone to confide in. As a mentor, I should be able to listen to them and advise them, and tell them that they should not give up on life,” said Kenan Osagie, a returnee and one of the female participants.

The initiative followed a four-day training for primary healthcare professionals on the management and treatment of mental disorders. The training was conducted in coordination with the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health.

This instruction was based on the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (MHGAP), a protocol developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as on additional IOM tools and international guidelines to identify and respond to mental disorders, which were adapted to the Nigerian context. The training sessions delved into migration and mental health with a focus on the return journey, as well as an overview of MHGAP’s principles of care, depression, suicide and self-harm, psychoses, epilepsy, alcohol, and substance abuse.

The event gathered 20 participants from primary healthcare centers from the localities in Edo State, the main place of origin of Nigerian returnees.

“This marks a key step in strengthening the national mental health care system in Nigeria,” said the lead trainer, Dr. Funke Ogunderu, IOM Nigeria MHPSS Senior Project Assistant. “As a pilot project, this training will help reduce the gap for migrants and their communities gaining access to mental healthcare and psychosocial support,” she added.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is a fundamental part of sustainable reintegration. It aims at protecting and enhancing migrants’ psychosocial wellbeing, as well as at supporting people with pre-existing and emerging mental disorders.

Strengthening the mental healthcare system and enhancing the skills of returnees to provide community-based psychosocial support signal IOM’s holistic approach to MHPSS in Nigeria. The mentoring project and training for primary healthcare workers are funded by the European Union under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

## National CSO Consultation On Women's Political Rights In 1999 Constitution



A L-R, Mrs. Felicia Onibon, President, 100 Women's Lobby Group, Barrister Hauwa Shekarau, Executive Director WOLDI, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Barrister Ebere Ifendu, President, Women in Politics Forum, H.E Dame Pauline Tallen OFR KSG, Honorable Minister of Women Affairs, Prof. Taiye Okoosi-Simbine, INEC National Commissioner, Honorable Aishatu J. Dukku, Chair House of Reps Committee on Electoral Matters, Prof. Joy Onyesoh, President WILPF and Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu, INEC Deputy Director for Gender

In February 2020, an electoral and constitutional review was officially announced in Nigeria, which presented a unique opportunity to bridge the gender gap in political representation, through the adoption and implementation of affirmative action principles that will promote equal representation in political decision-making processes.

It is against this backdrop that UN Women supported CSOs under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs to hold a National Consultation on November 2-3, 2020, to review women's rights in the 1999 Constitution. Notable dignitaries in attendance include, Honorable Minister of Women Affairs, H.E Dame Pauline Tallen, National Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) represented by the National Commissioner Professor Taiye Okoosi-Simbine, Chair of the House of Representative Committee on Electoral Matters, Honorable Aishatu J. Dukku, President of Women in Politics Forum (WiPF), Barrister Ebere Ifendu, Country Director of Plan International, Dr. Husseinu Abdu and Country Director McArthur Foundation, Dr. Kole Shettima.

The overall objective of the National Consultation was to review a draft amendment recommendation for increasing women's political participation and representation with a view of civil society presenting its recommendations to the National Assembly's Constitutional Review Committee.

The Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline K. Tallen, described the consultation as a great stride in levelling the playing field for women in politics. In her statement, she stated that "there is need to sustain the advocacy to demand for short to medium term strategies such as statutory quotas and reserved seats to be applied across board, for example from the candidate list to the parliament, to increase women's political representation. Constitutional provision exists for federal character representation, while zoning for political and elective positions have become a norm of our participatory democracy, we believe that the time is right for this to be extended to women."

Some recommendations from the meeting include constitutional reforms to expand Section 42 provisions on grounds of non-discrimination, inclusion of gender, youth and disability as diversities to be represented in the composition of government and

the need to abolish first-past-the-post basis of win. Other recommendations made include youth inclusion in the women's movement, INEC to hold parties accountable and the need to harmonize the work of all CSOs on women's political participation relating to the Constitution review.

In her goodwill remarks, UN Women Country Representative, Comfort Lamptey, stated that "it is critical that the affirmative action stipulated by International and Regional Instruments ratified by Nigeria such as the Convention to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter's Protocol on Women's Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are upheld within Nigeria's legislative frameworks."

Stressing the need for a constitutional review, convener of the CSO's consultation meeting and National President of WIPF, Ebere Ifendu, stated that, "the 1999 Nigerian Constitution which supposedly speaks to the rights of women and men is filled with male ideologies. It is, therefore, imperative to come up with an amendment of the Constitution to include gender."

The INEC Chairman Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, who was represented by the INEC National Commissioner, Prof. Taiye Okoosi-Simbine, highlighted that to ensure sustainable democracy and good governance, it is imperative that women have fair, equal and unrestricted access to participate in elections and political decision-making. "the Commission aligns with the belief that the rights of women to participate fully and on an equal basis with men in a country's political and electoral processes are basic human rights," he added.

A key outcome following the National Consultation meeting is that CSOs adopted the recommendations put forward and have begun to engage key stakeholders in the review process advocating for adoption of the reforms. For instance, CSOs had a meeting with the Chief Judge in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, seeking for a broader conversation around section 42 of the Constitution. Similarly, CSOs presented amendment recommendations to the Chairman of the Senate Constitutional Review Committee seeking adoption of affirmative action principles in the ongoing Constitution review process.

## Africa Industrialisation Day 2020 : Nigeria, Africa Must Industrialise To Maximise Potentials Of AfCFTA

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission For Africa and the African Union Commission have called on countries in Africa to begin a process of massive industrialisation to be able to maximise the potentials of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

The UNIDO Regional Representative to ECOWAS and Regional Director, Nigeria Regional Office Hub, Jean Bakole, while reading the joint statement at an event to commemorate the 2020 Africa Industrialization Day in Abuja, said that the AfCFTA would open up opportunities for African countries to diversify from commodity dependency towards increased intra-African trade in manufactured goods. The AfCFTA which was signed last year and was supposed to take off on July 1, this year, had been delayed due to the coronavirus disease outbreak that has set back negotiations on the protocol for trade in goods, including tariff concessions. Based on projections by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the AfCFTA is expected to boost intra-African trade by between \$50bn to \$70bn in monetary terms, with a 40 per cent to 50 per cent increase over the first 20 years of its implementation.

Bakole said the structural transformation, has the potential to facilitate quicker recoveries of African economies, most of whom are currently undergoing a recession triggered by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Against this background, Bakole who was represented by the National Programme Officer, UNIDO Regional Office Hub, Nigeria, Dr. Osu Otu, said this year's commemoration presents a unique opportunity to consolidate the continent's vision to build a self-resilient and self-reliant Africa using the platform of continental economic integration. He explained that the pact would ensure the opening up of economies of scale for member countries as well as attract increased investments from both small and large-scale enterprises.

According to him, the operation of the AfCFTA also signals Africa's commitment to preservation of the multilateral trading system. He said the event with theme, "Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization in the AfCFTA era," provides a renewed opportunity to re-affirm the commitment of African Union Member States and that of the international community towards accelerating the inclusive and sustainable industrial development of the African continent. Bakole said the choice of this year's theme for AID, could not have been more appropriate, given the fact that trading is expected to commence under the African Continental Free Trade Area on 1 January 2021. As the AfCFTA comes into operation, he said lurking on the horizon is the challenge for African governments and entrepreneurs to create decent jobs for the 170 million African youth set to enter the jobs market between 2020 and 2030, adding that industrial skills development becomes critical in this regard.

He said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of African health systems and economies. The agenda ahead is to transform these vulnerabilities to strength and resilience. The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic have further presented an opportunity for our institutions to forge a more collaborative relationship toward shared objectives through a mutually agreed division of labor. The approach towards developing institutional collaborative linkages aligns with the development agenda of Africa.

"Among the strategic partners industrialization and its contribution to the structural transformation of economies are top priorities of our respective institutional programming activities. While previous approaches for supporting industrialization were done in silos, the AID has been instrumental in building up a noticeable shift towards collaborative and less of institutional-



(L-R) UNIDO Representative to ECOWAS & Regional Director, Nigeria Regional Office Hub, Jean Bakole, and Minister of Industry, Trade & Investment, Otunba Niyi Adebayo, at the Minister's Office, in Abuja.

specific approaches." He said through partnerships, geographically dispersed initiatives have become functionally integrated and organized in complex inter-institution support networks.

Moving forward, Bakole said implementing the agenda for Africa's industrialization will require new way of looking at Africa's unique position and potential to engage and effectively insert itself in regional and global value chains.

"Without a transition from commodities to value addition and economic diversification, including tradeable services, as well as embracing the rapidly evolving technologies, African economies will have limited room to grow national incomes, or expand fiscal space. Thus the greatest prospect for Africa's accelerated pace to industrialise, rests on the development of regional value chains, to inform viable cross border investment decisions. "That way, the pace and impact of regional, and continental integration can become a reality, strengthening the continent's SMEs, and large-scale enterprises' capacities to plug into global value chain production systems," he added.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Mrs Mariam Katagum said the role of African countries in the global economy has gone beyond provision of raw materials to other continents, adding that time has come to boost production in order to stimulate growth. She said with the ratification of the AfCFTA by the Federal Government, the ministry and all stakeholders will ensure the smooth implementation of the agreement. This, she said, would be achieved by ensuring that the manufacturing sector plays a leading role in ensuring the diversification of the economy away from oil to non oil.

She said, "The AfCFTA will help to attract investment into our economy particularly where we have competitive advantage. "The AfCFTA is one of the biggest market in the world with one billion people and it will increase competitiveness of African products by enhancing economies of scale, better allocation of resources, reduce price differential among African countries, development of specialisation, reduce vulnerability of African countries to trade shocks and reduce external borrowing.

Katagum explained that with the plan to commence the implementation of the agreement in January next year, the ministry would accelerate investment to have a strong response as a buffer to complement the government intervention in the aftermath of the covid 19 pandemic.

The AfCFTA will bring together all 55 member states of the African Union covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people, including a growing middle class, and a combined gross domestic product of more than \$3.4trn.

## Nigeria Not Lowering Guards Against Polio, Vaccinates Over 23 Million Children In High Risk States



WHO personnel supervising polio campaign at Layin Kuka of Yindiski, of Potiskum, Local Government Area, Yobe State

To buoy up the immunity of eligible children, the Federal Government of Nigeria supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners vaccinated over 23 million children in October as part of the Sub-National Immunization Plus Days (SNIPDs) campaign.

The intervention, conducted in respective states from October 31 to November 24, reached 23,041,255 eligible children (0 -59 months) in eleven states namely Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kwara, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara with the Oral poliovirus vaccines (OPV).

The mass vaccination campaign which was the first since the outbreak of COVID-19, followed a protocol for safe implementation in the COVID-19 context, whereby personal protective equipment (PPE) and enhanced infection prevention control measures have been assured by a collaborative initiative and agile support of the State Ministries of Health, NPHCDA and WHO field offices.

Mrs Maryam Haruna, a mother of an infant in Layin Kuka of Yindiski, Dogo Nini ward of Potiskum, Local Government Area, Yobe State said despite the fear of Covid-19, she was not dissuaded from taking her daughter to the health facility for vaccination.

"I have seen the benefit of immunization as all my children grew up healthy and strong that now I have considered family planning" says Mrs Haruna, whose other children had also benefited from the previous polio campaigns. Expressing her joy that wild poliovirus has been successfully eradicated from the country through vaccination, she said, "many children now live without the parents having fears that they could suddenly get paralyzed".

A traditional ruler in the Fika Emirate Council, the Maki Dubun Fika in Potiskum Local Government Area, Alhaji Baba Hardo said the traditional council is channeling all its energy towards the campaign to ensure that polio is gone and it is gone forever. Alhaji Hardo who is also the PHC focal person, Fika Emirate council said "we will continue to support all efforts of the government and health authorities to ensure that we contribute to tackling other health issues that affect our people, such as malaria, adulteration of food items, fake drugs and quacks in our community"

### Sustaining polio gains

Although the WHO Africa region was certified wild polio-free in August 2020 by the Africa Regional Commission for Certifica-

tion of Polio Eradication (ARCC), the Nigerian government, WHO and partners have continued to prioritize immunization by implementing various campaigns across the country with a bid of sustaining polio immunity and reducing deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.

In Yobe State, for example, four days' the subnational polio immunization campaign to sustain population immunity post-polio certification was conducted with a total of 1,101,936 children under five vaccinated with bi-valent Oral Polio Vaccine (bOPV).

The Commissioner for Health Dr Muhammad Lawan Gana said during the planning of the campaign that "while celebrating the certification of polio eradication in the Africa region, we are still mindful of the challenges of strengthening the health system, especially at the primary care level."

Dr Gana said the state has not relented in its effort to eradicate all forms of polio as active surveillance on acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) is conducted by the state epidemiologists. There is a need to sustain immunity against polio through the strengthening of global polio eradication strategies of a robust routine immunization system, polio SIAs and mops ups and certification level AFP surveillance indicators.

The state is gradually recovering from the post insurgency attack and more recent, the scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in a significant number of children unprotected against vaccine-preventable diseases and declining coverage of other essential PHC services. We will strategize to bridge access gaps in underserved communities, hard to reach areas displaced populations to strengthen PHC services".

### Continuous vaccination campaigns

The WHO Country Representative (WR), Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo, buttressing the importance of immunization and the supplementary campaigns, says high population immunity through vaccination is necessary to sustain gains of polio eradication and prevent future outbreaks.

"Booster doses given through campaigns reach more children and offer protection to a wider age group to close immunity gaps. Also, all children should receive at least four (4) doses of routine OPV before the age of one", he added.



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

1. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed's (5th from left) and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo (6th from left) are joined by other dignitaries to launch the 'UN-Plus Offer'
2. UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon displays his 'commitment placard, a shield and a decorative scarf after his investiture as a #HeForShe by the Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen.
3. The UN House, Abuja lit in orange as part of the 'Orange the World' campaign; and activities marking the 16 Days of activism to end gender-based violence. 20 November .

**Editor:** Oluseyi Soremekun (UNIC)

**Editorial Team:** UNCG members— Ronald Kayanja (Chairman) - UNIC; Charity Warigon (WHO); Eliana Drakopoulos, Geoffrey Njoku & Oluwatosin Akingbulu (UNICEF); Rupa Bhadra (UNAIDS); Ngele Alli & Rejoice Emmanuel (UNDP); Vanessa Curney & Kori Habib (UNFPA); Pius Udo & Wura Ladipo-Ajayi (ILO); Roland Schoenbauer & Gabriel Adeyemo (UNHCR); Mercedes Alfa & Maimuna Aboki (UN Women); Jorge Galindo & Mariam Owoeye (IOM); David Tsokar (FAO); Olushola Macaulay (UNESCO); Sylvester Atere (UNODC); Chukwuemeka Ezekiel (UNIDO), Eve Sabbagh & Abiodun Banire (UNOCHA); Chi Lael, Kelechi Onyemaobi and Adedeji Ademigbuji (WFP); Katrien Nollen (UNMAS); Oluwatobiloba Moody (WIPO); Vera Onyeaka-Onyilo (IFAD).

**Advisory:** United Nations Country Team (UNCT)

All correspondence should be directed to **The Editor, UN Nigeria Newsletter. United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) c/o United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), Lagos. E-mail: lagos@unic.org**