

Federal Government, UN Convene National Dialogues on Food Systems



National Convenor, Nigeria Food Systems Summit Dialogue, Mrs Olusola Idowu (middle) and participants in the virtual planning meeting

The Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with the United Nations system in Nigeria, has announced plans to organize series of dialogues across the country towards ensuring resilient, inclusive and sustainable food systems in Nigeria by 2030. This was preparatory to the September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (FSS) convened by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The National Convenor of Nigeria Food Systems Summit Dialogue (FSSD), and Permanent Secretary, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Olusola Idowu, disclosed this in Abuja on Monday 1 February 2021, during a multi-sectoral, inter-Agency planning meeting for the dialogue.

According to her, the food systems dialogues, the first of which holds on 23 February, are based on five action tracks which align with the current developmental priorities of Nigeria, and therefore, immensely contributory to an improved food systems in the country.

"The five action tracks", Mrs. Idowu explained, "include to ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all; Shift to sustainable Consumption Pattern; Boost nation Position Production; Advance equitable live hood; and build resilience to vulnerabilities shocks and stress."

The National Convenor emphasized that the Nigeria FSSD would be organized at three levels: The Inception National Dialogue, aimed at identifying food systems challenges from multiple perspectives; the Exploratory Dialogues, planned to hold in the six geopolitical zones and major cities in Nigeria to harness promising approaches from diverse stakeholders that contribute to food systems in the country; and the Consolidatory Dialogues, aimed to exchange views on the pathway towards sustainable national food system, identify intentions and commitments of different food system actors. *Continue on page 2.*

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Building A Resilient Education System, the way Forward – Gov. Uzodinma



Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State addresses the virtual meeting on the International Day of Education.

The Governor of Imo State, Senator Hope Uzodinma has emphasized that the way forward in the face of COVID-19 is building a resilient education system that can be sustained in the face of any infectious disease of global proportions.

He said this during the observance of the International Day of Education organised by UNESCO, United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) and Geehz Zillion Empire.

"There is no doubt that Covid-19 is a major threat to education world over. However, I think that the major challenge and lesson to be learnt from the Covid-19 threat to education is how the world can evolve a resilient and sustainable education system." He explained.





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Providing some insights, Mrs. Idowu explained that in Nigeria, the Food Systems Dialogue would create more inclusive, healthier food systems, and encourage a collaborative approach towards building a sustainable food systems and enhance the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Edward Kallon, observed that the COVID-19 pandemic had worsened the Nigeria food systems and the food systems dialogues would provide a critical opportunity to tackle the weaknesses that were exposed by the crisis.

"We must mobilise human and material resources across the country, and come together to dialogue on how to build back better, the ailing food systems." He emphasized, "We are all members of the global food system, and we all have a responsi-

bility to act."

Mr Kallon informed that the UN Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit was designed to galvanise new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems. "It will also enhance food security and sustainability of eco-based Agriculture and food systems around the world." He added.

In November 2020, the Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Food Systems Summit, Amina J. Mohammed, had invited all Member States to engage in the preparation of the Summit through encouraging action-oriented Dialogues, discussing ways to achieve sustainable food systems by 2030.

Understand Causes Of Holocaust, Reflect On Its Consequences To Avoid Repetition – UN



The Senior Human Rights Adviser, United Nations in Nigeria, Martin Ejidike, has called on everyone to reflect on the consequences of the holocaust in order to avoid a repetition.

He said this at a webinar organized by United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Nigeria, in collaboration with the Initiative for Information, Arts and Culture Development (IACD), on 28 January 2021, to commemorate the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

Discussing the theme, 'Addressing Rising antisemitism, Disinformation and Hate Speech in Nigeria', Ejidike advised that the moral commitment of all peoples and the political commitment of government must be strengthened to ensure future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust, and reflect on its consequences in order to avoid a repetition.

The Senior Human Rights Adviser further stated that violent ethnic and religious rhetoric that has become recurrent in the Nigerian society must be urgently addressed and "we must push back the rising tide of hatred, intolerance, injustice, stereotypes and inequality. We as a people must stand up together against the normalization of abuse and human rights violation." He said. In his keynote address, the Head of Department of Journalism, Lagos State University, Dr Jide Jimoh, highlighted the role of the media in conflict resolution and noted that the media as an institution must act as arbiters, through accurate, balanced and fair reporting, and use language that brings resolution and the voices of peace.

He advised that Communication and Information Literacy education be used to address the spate of disinformation, fake news and hate speech for media and increased level of education, persuasion and enlightenment for people in the society.

Dr Jimoh decried the influx of hate speech and fake news in the social media, which he said had contributed to ethnic tension and threat to peace and development of the country.

He urged everyone to rise up to their social responsibilities by ensuring that only content that promote love and peace are disseminated. Dr Jimoh therefore, emphasised the need to verify information before sharing on the social media.

The event moderated by Ms Adefemi Bucknor of IACD while the film, 'Path to Nazi Genocide' and the video message of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres were screened.

Stories of Hardship And Hope: Nigeria Migration Reporter Awards Celebrate Outstanding Journalism



Oyinkan Adekunle (right) took home the prize in the TV broadcast category for her report titled 'The Risky Pursuit'. Photo: IOM

igeria continues to be a country of origin, transit, and destination of migrants where the media has an influential role in shaping public opinion about migration. Fake news, misinformation and stigmatization have been witnessed before and during the pandemic. As no country is impervious to this 'infodemic', fact-based journalism in Nigeria is critical.

On 18 December, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) awarded the winners of the first-ever Migration Reporter awards in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria.

The Migration Reporter competition, funded by the Government of the Netherlands, aims at increasing awareness and improving access to trusted sources of information, and promoting informed decision-making for Nigerians exploring migration opportunities. The competition also aims to showcase rigorous reporting on online and print platforms, as well as video and radio.

"The media has a vital role to play in dispelling myths about migrants and returnees and rebuilding the social fabric in their communities of origin and destination," said Jorge Galindo, IOM Nigeria Public Information Officer. "The works we are celebrating today remind us that migration is not a one-sided story, and that the testimony of each migrant in Nigeria is as diverse as the country's multi-ethnic palette," he added.

The competition follows the ongoing engagement between IOM and media practitioners in Nigeria, which began in July 2018, when 45 Nigerian journalists gathered for the first Media Workshop on Migration hosted by IOM in Benin City, Edo State.

To select the winners, a jury composed of some of Nigeria's renown journalists and authors, as well as IOM experts, was established.

Three winners under each category were selected. The first prize consisted of 300,000 naira (approximately USD 780) and a laptop, while the second and third winners received 150,000 and 100,000 naira, respectively.

The winners were selected among close to 40 entries featuring stories ranging from the nostalgia of the Nigerian diaspora in

Cote d'Ivoire to the struggles of cross-border trade along the Nigeria-Benin border, and the impacts of COVID-19 on mobility.

"A report commissioned by the Netherlands last year revealed that media such as radio and TV are among the main sources that potential migrants use to gain knowledge on migration," said Ceciel Groot, Migration Policy Advisor from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Nigeria. "As journalists you therefore have a big responsibility to improve access to reliable information and promote informed decision making."

Chinedu Ekeja, a radio host from Benin City, Edo State, took home the prize under the radio category for his reportage on the socio-economic drivers of migration of Nigerian youth and the pioneering vocational training projects to engage youth at home and abroad.

Oyinkan Adekunle from Lagos won the prize under the TV category for his report titled 'Risky Pursuits', which looks into the perils along irregular routes.

In the online/print category, Olatunji Ololade, a journalist from The Nation Newspaper, took the prize with an investigative piece titled '21st Century Slaves' about Nigerian victims of trafficking and the role played by their families in their recruitment.

"This award is an encouragement to engage in more humane and public service journalism to reorientate our youth on the dangers of irregular migration so they don't fall victim to these criminals," said Ololade after receiving the award. "The laptop will be instrumental for me to continue working on my writing."

The award ceremony coincided with International Migrants Day, the UN-wide celebration of migrants and their contributions to their communities of origin, transit and destination. The theme of this year's International Migrants Day, Reimagining Human Mobility, is a call to view the current global health crisis and other pressing challenges as opportunities to build more inclusive and resilient societies, where well-managed migration allows states and individuals alike to maximize the benefits of human mobility.

This initiative was funded by the Government of the Netherlands through the Trusted Sources project.

COVID-19 Impact On Education – A Wake-up Call, Says UN



(The COVID-19 impact on education is a wake-up call to make

education system more resilient to crisis, more inclusive, flexible and sustainable. It also highlights the need for government and all stakeholders to support measures for addressing all marginalized students' learning gaps and socio-emotional impact during educational disruption.

This was stated by Mr. Mamadou Lamine Sow, the Senior Education Specialist and Officer-in-Charge of the UNESCO Regional Office Abuja who delivered a keynote address at a Webinar organised by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC); UNESCO; Office of the Education Quality Assurance Lagos State;



and the Nurturage Charity Foundation, to commemorate the International Day of Education.

Mr Lamine-Sow further called on stakeholders including the government to work together to narrow the digital divide that have prevented majority of learners from accessing education during school closures.

The Director General, Office of the Education Quality Assurance Lagos State, Mrs Abiola Seriki Ayeni stated that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in the education sector that must be addressed and recovery efforts must develop social, emotional and play-based curricular while focusing on innovation, re-enrolment and safe return to schools.

Other speakers in their presentations highlighted the need for government to engage more with the private sector and make free and open source technologies available to teachers and students, and the need to consider establishing a COVID-19 Education Fund.

The theme of this year's International Day of Education -Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID19 Generation: Learning, Innovation and Financing.

The International Education Day occurs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to a global learning disruption of unprecedented scale and severity. The closure of schools, universities and other learning institutions, as well as the interruption of many literacy and lifelong learning programmes, has affected the lives of 1.6 billion students in over 190 countries.

As a new year begins, now is the time to step up collaboration and international solidarity to place education and lifelong learning at the centre of the recovery and the transformation towards more inclusive, safe and sustainable societies.

The right to education is enshrined in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration calls for free and compulsory elementary education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, goes further to stipulate that countries shall make higher education accessible to all.

Help For Nigerian Small-scale Farmers To Improve Food Security And Combat Poverty In The Face Of COVID-19



Asabe Danjuma, an IFAD beneficiary in Nigeria State, displays her quality local rice

The Federal Government of Nigeria and the International Fund for Agricultural Development of the United Nations (IFAD) are working together to lessen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on small-scale farmers' activities and domestic food supply in northeastern states of Nigeria.

IFAD has provided a first grant of US\$900,000 through its Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) to support the worst affected smallscale producers and rural households in the North through the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to rebuild and recover in the post-crisis period. The grant agreement, signed by Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, Minister of Finance, budget and National Planning and Nadine Gbossa, IFAD's Regional Director for West and Central Africa, will help vulnerable small-scale farmers in seven northern states (Borno, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara).

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, more than 8,000 vulnerable smallholders in Northern Nigeria will receive an agricultural stimulus and resilience package composed of climate resilient seeds; these are high yielding, and high nutritional value varieties that will help farmers achieve good production and secure their incomes. IFAD's support complements the United Nations Nigeria COVID-19 Basket by earmarking resources to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on smallholders' farming activities and domestic food supply.

"We both recognize and appreciate IFAD's support to our quest to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy, particularly on the agricultural sector," said Mohammed S. Nanono, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nigeria. "This support strengthens my Ministry's COVID-19 Agricultural Mitigation and Sustainability Plan, which aims to address the impact of the pandemic on Nigerian agriculture and food security." The government will procure 80 metric tons of seed – maize, rice and vegetables – and 722 metric tons of fertilizer that will support the most affected small-scale farmers. About 50 per cent are women, 25 per cent men and 25 percent young farmers who are already participating in the ongoing IFAD-funded Climate Adaptation and Agribusiness Support Programme.

"I am very happy to be among the beneficiaries who will collect rice seed and fertilizer. This will enable me to cultivate the half hectare of rice I have under irrigation for this year's dry season. I will be able to increase my income and food security despite the COVID -19 pandemic," said Ige Abdullahi Yarkofoji, a farmer from the Rini Community, Bakura area in Zamfara State.

There will also be training for communities on improved food production practices, including effective application of fertilizer and agro-chemicals, farm management and climate-smart agriculture. These activities are intended to safeguard smallholders' pre-COVID gains in food security, better market access and increased income. Activities would also sensitize small-scale producers to COVID-19 security measures they should follow to stay safe during their farming activities.

"This funding from IFAD's Rural Poor Stimulus Facility will ensure that farmers have timely access to inputs, information, and markets. By supporting smallholders to mitigate this crisis through a market-led approach, basic farming activities will be sustained, facilitating post-COVID-19 crisis recovery and resilience," said Nadine Gbossa, IFAD's Regional Director for West and Central Africa. "IFAD is committed to leave no one behind and will ensure that women and youth in Nigeria have an equal opportunity to benefit from this funding."

Since 1985, IFAD has financed 11 projects in Nigeria for a total of \$1,136.8 million, including \$ 510.5 million from IFAD's own resources, directly benefitting nearly 3.9 million Nigerian rural households.

Zainab's Second Chance

Thousands of conflict-affected youths in Borno are receiving literacy, numeracy and vocational skills

The 25-year-old woman who sat at the back of an informal learning centre in Kusheri community, Maiduguri in Borno State had a simple wish: to be able to spell her name and help her four oldest children with their homework.

"My parents never believed in education," said Zainab Muhammed Bukar, a mother of six - including eight-month-old Muhammad, who was sleeping outside the learning centre under the careful watch of a childminder.

"Instead, I learned tailoring and became a seamstress in my village. I migrated to Maiduguri two years ago, after my husband was killed in an armed attack. I remarried here in Maiduguri, but I have always wanted to go back to school," she said.

The informal learning centre, built in 2019, is a European Union (EU) and UNICEF-supported project carried out by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to equip conflict-affected adolescents and young people with numeracy, literacy and vocational skills needed to support themselves and their families. Over 3,800 young people between the ages of 15 and 25 are benefiting from the project across Monguno, Gwoza, Jere and Maiduguri, in Nigeria's conflict-affected north-east state of Borno.

At the Kusheri learning centre, more than 100 adolescents and young people who have never been to school or whose education was truncated by poverty or conflict are enrolled. There are two teachers at the centre, and the project team constructed two toilets, two classrooms and supplied handwashing stations for the learners. Face masks and learning materials were distributed, and a childminder takes care of children of learners while they are in class.



A childminder tends to learners' children at the centre. @UNICEF/Adebayo/2020



Lami Danladi. @UNICEF/Adebayo/2020

"We have 12 mothers here, so there are 12 babies," said Rhoda Haruna, one of the teachers deployed to the centre. "But our childminder takes care of the children so that they don't disturb the mothers while they are learning. Some of the mothers are teenagers and they need to be supported if we want them to concentrate in class. It is a three-hour class, but the students are attentive. They want to learn as quickly as soon as possible," she said. Bukar, who has been attending classes in her neighbourhood for three months, comes to class every day with her young son.

"I regret not going to school earlier, but this is my second chance. I would have loved to be a teacher. I hope to still pursue my dream if I can continue in schools close to my house. That way, there will be no conflict with my domestic duties," she said.

While Bukar is concerned about proximity to her house, poverty is proving to be a strong barrier for Hadiza Adamu, 19. Originally from Ngala, Adamu dropped out of school when she was only 15 years old, when she had to flee with her family to Maiduguri.

"My father was a carpenter in Ngala and he paid for our education. But when we relocated here in 2015, he started working as a labourer and was not earning as much money as before. I did not enrol in public schools because the classrooms were overcrowded. It would have been a waste of time. That is why I have been out-ofschool for four years. I spent time knitting caps for men, which I sell for N4,000 (about \$10 USD) each, to support my family.

"I want to go back to school and hopefully become a nurse. That is why I am here," said Bukar.

UN Food Systems Summit: Nigeria Set For National Dialogues

head of the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) convened by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and scheduled to hold in September 2021, the Government of Nigeria is set to roll out the National Food Systems Dialogues (NFSD) across the country.

In line with the guidelines for UN Member States dialogues and to ensure robust, inclusive and coordinated dialogue series in Nigeria, the Federal Government has, therefore, appointed Mrs. Olusola O. Idowu, the Permanent Secretary, Budget & National Planning in the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning as the National Convenor of the Nigeria National Food Systems Dialogue 2021.

A webinar for journalists holds 9 February, while the inception dialogue holds on 23 February 2021 in Abuja.



Sadiya Goes To School

Displaced and living with physical disability, a little girl takes her first steps into the future, with support from UNICEF and Education Cannot Wait.



Sadiya on the way to a community classroom. @UNICEF/Adebayo/2020

n the eastern wing of Bakassi IDP camp, Maiduguri, northeast Nigeria, the soft sound of Sadiya Ali's crutches is a familiar rhythm.

Two months earlier, the six-year-old girl had no crutches and had to crawl on the floor to reach her destination, including a community classroom for out-of-school children established by UNICEF in the camp.

Sadiya's family had fled conflict in Gwoza, soon settling into a new routine at the Mairi Kuwait community in Maiduguri, where Sadiya was born in 2014. But a near-fatal road accident involving vention, funded by the Education Cannot Wait (ECW), ensures children can continue to learn despite school closings due to COVID-19, and provides education supplies and school bags for the children. Ali Mohammad, a volunteer teacher paid by ECW, teaches Sadiya and 199 other children in four shifts.

Sadiya, who had never been enrolled in any formal learning before, attended either limping or riding on Adamu's back.

But the little girl maintained her quiet disposition, talking only when spoken to.

"I discovered Sadiya when I went to monitor how the project was going," said Phillip Gana Malgwi, a community mobiliser. "One day, I saw her limping to class. When she got tired, she sat on the bare road to rest before proceeding. I decided to get her a set of crutches, to encourage her. Schools in Borno will reopen next week, and I know that without help, Sadiya might not attend because it is a little further than the community classroom near her house," said Malgwi.

Malgwi approached Benjamin John, programme manager at Restoration of Hope Initiative, who contacted a carpenter to design simple wooden crutches for Sadiya.

"Sadiya has improved. She is willing to learn. Now she is talking to other children in the class and responds to questions," said teacher Ali Mohammad.

Since July 2020, UNICEF and the Restoration of Hope Initiative have established 97 temporary classrooms across 10 IDP camps in Maiduguri. All the learning points across the city operate in four shifts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infection and accommodate more children. A total of 16,224 children (9,254 of them girls), including Sadiya, access education in these learning points, facilitated by 150 volunteer teachers. Before the programme began, UNICEF organized intensive capacity building for the teachers on lesson delivery, COVID-19 mitigation, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and where to refer children experiencing challenges. The teachers receive a small monthly stipend, thanks to ECW.

Sadiya's stepmother Mariam said that when schools reopen in Borno, her daughter will be enrolled formally. "Sadiya is like my child because she lives with me. Her mother does not live with us. She would like to be a medical doctor and I pray that it happens so that she can help others."

a sand truck in 2016 shattered Sadiya's left leg, which had to be amputated. Sadiya was only two years old at the time.

"She has remained quiet since then. She chooses her friends carefully and does not talk much. She has come to rely only on Adamu, her stepbrother, who is now her best friend," said Mariam Ali, Sadiya's stepmother. Sadiya's mother is separated from her father.

When UNICEF and the Restoration of Hope Initiative established 14 community classrooms at the camp in July 2020, Sadiya and Ali were among the



Nigeria's Early Adoption Of Differentiated Services Delivery Model Buffers Effect Of COVID-19 Pandemic Among People Living With HIV



A patient showing her ART drug – Photo credit – WHO/Tom Saater

s the COVID-19 pandemic gained momentum across the world with many countries, including Nigeria going on lockdown, there arose fears that the people living with HIV (PLHIV) might not have access to Antiretroviral (ARTs). The fears of the outbreak disrupting ARTs supplies to PLHIV in Nigeria was, however, not as devastating because the country had already adopted the Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) model in December, 2019. The gains of the model became noticeable during the imposed lockdown by the government.

The DSD model is a client-centred approach that simplifies and adapts HIV services to reflect the preferences and expectations of various groups of people living with HIV (PLHIV) while reducing unnecessary burdens on the health system. Nigeria approved the DSD policy in 2019 and currently implemented in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The gains of the model became noticeable during the imposed lockdown by the government.

"All we had to do during the lockdown was improve communication and mobilize some community volunteers to take supplies to others who needed the drugs within their vicinities," says Obatunde Oladapo, the co-founder and Executive Director of PLAN Health Advocacy and Development Foundation (PLAN Foundation).

Mr Oladapo said Nigeria's earlier adoption of DSD in 2019 was helpful during the lockdown as many PLHIV had enough drug supplies. The DSD model tailor's HIV package of care toward individual needs using facilities and community-based approaches. The model was quite helpful in solving the issue of access which would have been encountered during the lockdown and ensuring that no one is left behind during the COVID-19 crisis.

"Some female PLHIV served as community distributors - taking drugs to the doorstep of the clients and providing excess supplies to last them for months. They also visited hard to reach semiurban and rural areas to facilitate the home delivery of HIV treatment and medicines for those in need of supplies" Oladapo said.

Implementation of DSD

The implementation of the DSD model has been all-inclusive comprising of stakeholders from the Network of People Living with HIV to Civil Societies Organization, donors, implementing partners, community service provides and private health sector providers among others.

To ensure the smooth running of the DSD model during the lockdown, the World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Federal Government through the National AIDS and STIs Control Programme (NASCP) in developing and disseminating a guideline on Continuity of HIV services in the context of Pandemics and ensured HIV is well captured in the wider Health sector continuity of essential services guidance. Also, WHO provided technical assistance in setting up and running national and state HIV situation rooms to ensure that antiretroviral ART (drugs) get to the end-users- PLHIVs.



PHOTO NEWS



Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction

- 1. Deputy Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Usman Kadafur, addresses the people at the hand-over of 48 rehabilitated classrooms and 24 toilets, built with support from UNICEF and the EU in Nigeria. Children in 6 LGAs can now have classes in conducive classrooms with furniture, fans, good lighting and well-trained teachers.
- 2. Lagos State Government, in partnership with UNDP, has kicked-off the cash for work programme for vulnerable people in the State with the aim of cushioning the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. WHO Country Representative, Dr. Walter Kazadi Mulombo (Right), meets with H.E. Amb. Nicolas Simard, Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria, to discuss the COVID19 situation and the support of the Canadian government for frontline health workers.

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