

ACTIONAID NIGERIA TRIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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*(R-L) Catriona Laing, British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Ene Obi, Country Director ActionAid Nigeria and the Gender Advisor of the Nigeria Police Force, AIG Aishatu Abubakar during a two-day intergenerational consultative and strategic dialogue titled: **Paving the Path: Forum for Women's Participation in Political Leadership in Nigeria; Past, Present and Future.***

Credit: ActionAid Nigeria | Stephen Odekunle

act:onaid



WHAT'S NEW?

1

The last day of September 2021 is etched in the history of Kebbi state as it marked the passage of the Violence Against Person's Prohibition (VAPP) law by the State House of Assembly. The rigorous process involved many stakeholders including the First Lady of Kebbi state, Her Excellency Dr. Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu, as well as Kungair Tallafin Mata Development Initiative (KTMDI), ActionAid Nigeria subgrantee in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and other NGOs in the state to achieve this feat.

2

Ahead of the 2023 general elections, ActionAid Nigeria with funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has launched a Women-Youth (We-You) project to campaign for the inclusion of women and young people in political and governance processes in Kaduna and Kano States. The project seeks to mobilize a critical mass of young people and women leading disruptive campaigns towards translating citizens demands into policy actions in both states.

3

To advance SDG 2, Zero Hunger, ActionAid Nigeria is currently implementing its first direct food and nutrition distribution project. The project aims to improve the food consumption and nutritional situation of targeted households by facilitating regular access to food for IDPs, returnees and host communities, while also reducing the prevalence of acute malnutrition in children between the ages of 6-23 months in Busari LGA of Yobe State. The project is funded by the World Food Programme (WFP) and implemented in collaboration with Yobe state government and UNICEF.

4

Also in the news, in response to the recurring communal crisis in Agatu LGA of Benue State, ActionAid Nigeria provided cash for food and dignity items worth N7.9M to 350 women headed household who were most hit by the conflict. The intervention was implemented in partnership with the Justice Development and Caritas Foundation (JDCF), in collaboration with Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in six communities: Okokolo, Oshigbudu, Odugbeho, Adana, Aila, and Olegomakwo.

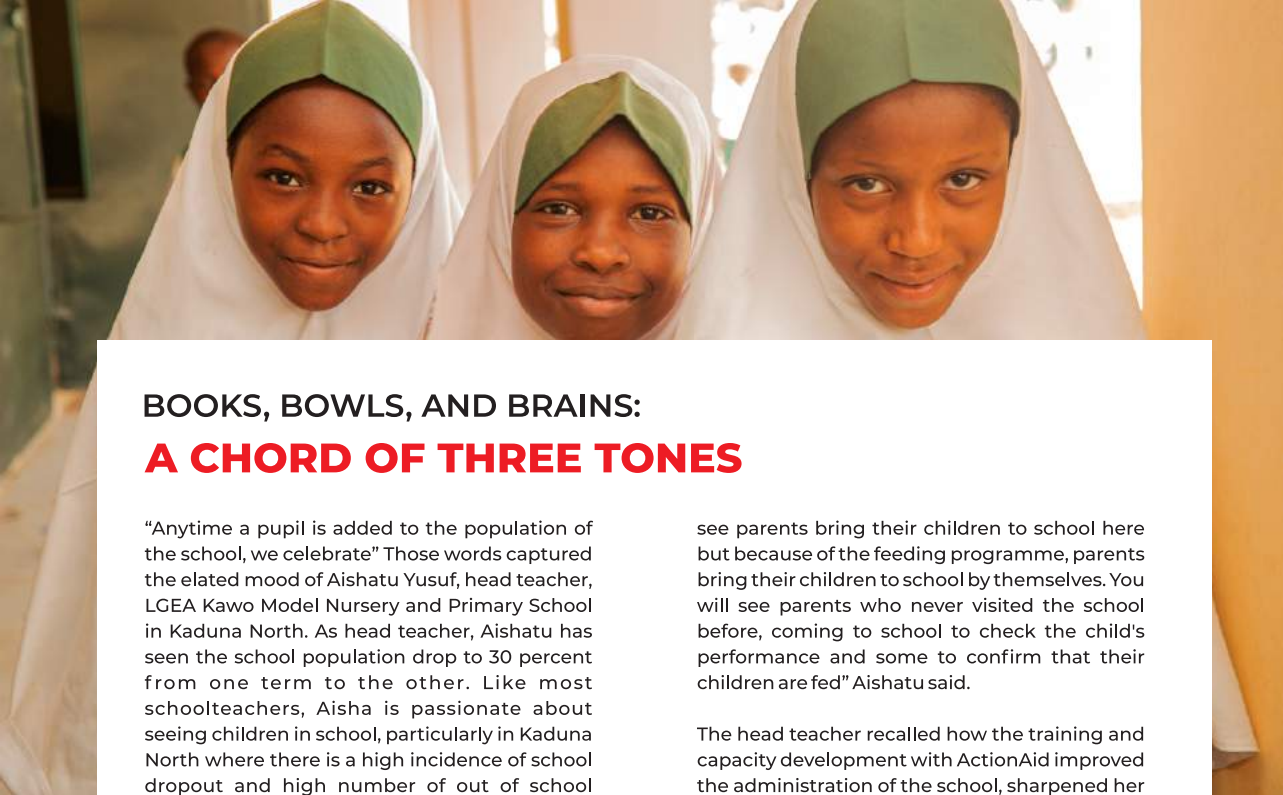
Welcome to another exciting edition of SWIFT!

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BOOKS, BOWLS, AND BRAINS: **A CHORD OF THREE TONES**

“Anytime a pupil is added to the population of the school, we celebrate” Those words captured the elated mood of Aishatu Yusuf, head teacher, LGEA Kawo Model Nursery and Primary School in Kaduna North. As head teacher, Aishatu has seen the school population drop to 30 percent from one term to the other. Like most schoolteachers, Aisha is passionate about seeing children in school, particularly in Kaduna North where there is a high incidence of school dropout and high number of out of school children.

In a policy response to address the alarming number of out of school children, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2017 launched the Homegrown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP). Anchored on the two-prolonged pillars of education and health, the programme was designed to launch an onslaught on the incessant issues of school dropout and school absenteeism on the basis of hunger as well as address the issues of child malnutrition.

However, when the programme commenced, it was initially fraught with multiple challenges: lack of transparency, corruption, mismanagement, and political interferences. It was against this backdrop that ActionAid began the implementation of the Promoting Accountability and Transparency in the School Feeding Programme (PATS-F) project to monitor the execution of the laudable initiative for optimal success.

At the start of the programme, LGEA Kowa had a fluctuating population of about 2,810 pupils. The school population as at the last count in October 2021 was 4,077 pupils. Though the population is now stretching hard on the school's infrastructure, the head teacher is glad that children are now trooping to school: “It is hard to

see parents bring their children to school here but because of the feeding programme, parents bring their children to school by themselves. You will see parents who never visited the school before, coming to school to check the child's performance and some to confirm that their children are fed” Aishatu said.

The head teacher recalled how the training and capacity development with ActionAid improved the administration of the school, sharpened her skills and enhanced the effective and efficient delivery of the HGSFP in her school: “ActionAid introduced the accountability board in schools and built the capacity of the School Based Management Committees and Cooks to identify discrepancies and ensure the right quality and quantity of food is served to the pupils timely. As an individual my report writing, and monitoring skills was also improved” the head teacher said. PATS-F adopted the system strengthening mechanism through building the capacities of the several stakeholders in the scheme as well as ensuring its core objectives: uncovering and erasing corruption, instituting transparency, and promoting accountability. It was discovered that the programme suffered set back partly due to lack of capacity on the side of the implementing officers from the local government as well as the Cooks.

Aishatu emphasized the relevance of the HGSFP: “When a child is well fed, the level of concentration is usually above average. You cannot succeed in making a hungry child learn, no matter how hard you try. Hence, the HGSFP should be institutionalized and strengthened to end hunger in schools and enhance concentration in learning”.

PATS-F is funded by MacArthur Foundation and is scheduled to close out in December 2021.



Etinosa Yvonne, Nigerian photographer worked on the Women by Women campaign.



WOMEN BY WOMEN: SHATTERING STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN IN FRONT OF AND BEHIND THE LENS

Grace, 43 has an inspiring story. The mother of 4 hails from Enugu state where she lived and enjoyed a peaceful time with her family until her husband's passing in 2009 after a brief illness. Plunged into widowhood with no dependable source of income, Grace tried her hands on the menial jobs she could find including peasant farming on her late husbands' land. As she picked up the pieces determined to give her children the good education she never had, her in-laws began mounting pressure on her to give up her husband's house and all his assets. The constant harassment which was sometimes physical soon took a toll on her health, but she stood firm until 2016 when she contacted Women Aid Collective (WACOL), one of ActionAid's local partners. WACOL's lawyers mediated the dispute and helped reach an agreement that allowed the property to be divided amicably. Grace's courage to speak up and seek justice has inspired other women in her community; she is now a member of WACOL's survivors forum and has attended training sessions on women's rights.

In recognition of Graces' resilience, ActionAid documented her story as part of the Women by Women campaign initiated by ActionAid UK. Women by Women is a unique photographic campaign that champions the inspirational stories of women and girls, and the incredible talent of women photographers in the countries where ActionAid works. The campaign aims to shift the power of the

storyteller to local women and girls living in poverty and shines a spotlight on local women photographers and videographers who are often overlooked and under-represented, while promoting anti-racist approach to storytelling.

Speaking on her experience as one of the muses of the women by women campaign "I have never been photographed by a woman and this experience is really unique. The photographer was patient, she took time to direct me to pose right and even tied my head gear and arranged my clothing to come out nice. My experience with male photographers is usually hurried. Truth be told, when women learn a skill, they have no limits to what they can do. I enjoyed the photoshoot, and I am happy and humbled by the experience".

As an organization, ActionAid Nigeria is committed to moving away from traditional charity imagery that depicts people as helpless, desperate and without dignity. Our images will represent people in an authentic way, with their full consent and our intention is to never tell a single or stereotyped story about a person or a place to elicit pity. We therefore call on civil society, NGOs, INGOs, the media and other stakeholders to join us. Empathy should be prioritized above pity. It is high time we recognise and amplify this vital perspective.

Read more:
<https://voices.actionaid.org.uk/women-by-women/>



IKOT AKAMA:

LOCALIZING LAW AGAINST RAPE, ENDING ENDEMIC TEENAGE PREGNANCY.

Benson Ofon, a member of the Ikot Akama village council, a community of about 800 inhabitants in Oruk Anam LGA of Akwa Ibom state recalls how there was previously no school and health centre in the community. Parents had to withdraw their wards from school when reports of rape and theft on the bush path to school became a regular occurrence. It was a hard choice sending children to the neighboring community where they trekked 2 hours to school and back.

Joy Bassey, 18 (not real name), was in Junior Secondary School when she was raped. Her parents sent her out of the house and withdrew her from school, and it took the intervention of ActionAid's partner African Human Development Centre (AHDC), to reunite her with her family. However, incidences of rape and lack of school and healthcare facility are now a thing of the past in Ikot Akama.

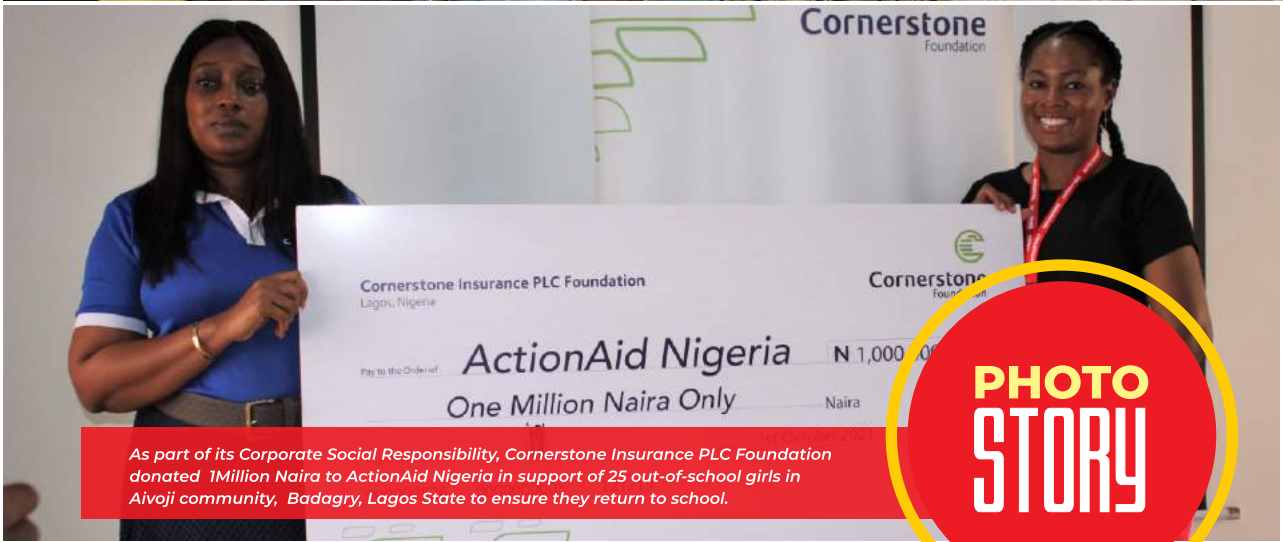
Recounting how the new law against rape was initiated: "During our engagement with the community council and a team from ActionAid and AHDC, we recommended that there should be a strict penalty for rape offenders. We even recommended that parents of the man or boy who rapes anyone will be excommunicated from the community. It is now a law in this community. No such law existed before, and the impact has seen a complete stop to rape incidences in this community", Ofon said.

Conversely, Peace a peer educator for the Sexual and Reproductive Health Club supported by ActionAid admits that some of the girls in the community learn about menstrual hygiene and self-esteem for the first time in the club: "About 15 years ago, when you walk into this community, you will see children of ages 10 to 15 years already pregnant. Some of them were pregnant for the second time and this negatively impacted on education of the girls. We decided to start a campaign to address this, and girls are now able to openly discuss issues of sexual reproductive health during the weekly club meetings".

ActionAid Nigeria kicked off the Local Rights Programme (LRP) in Akwa-Ibom in 2007. The main objective of LRP is to improve the socio-economic status of poor women, men, and children by mobilising communities and building their capacities to implement people centered development programmes using the Human Rights Based Approach to programming. This is done through a three-pronged approach; Empowering grassroots community through rights consciousness and supporting locally initiated projects, capacity building of local institutions and supporting policy and advocacy initiatives that ensure that the voices of people living in poverty are listened to and their rights respected. Ikot Akama's successes is one of many triumphs of the LRP in Akwa Ibom state.



ActionAid Nigeria Board Chairperson Dr. Jummai Umar-Ajijola (2nd right) during the commissioning of the Green Lounge at ActionAid Nigeria Head office in Abuja. The Green Lounge is a destressing room to enhance wellness of staff at the workplace.



As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, Cornerstone Insurance PLC Foundation donated 1 Million Naira to ActionAid Nigeria in support of 25 out-of-school girls in Alvoji community, Badagry, Lagos State to ensure they return to school.



Lola Ayanda



Omolola Oladimeji



Oba Adeoye



Ladi Bala

Mainstreaming Gender Policy in the newsrooms in Nigeria was a key recommendation during the 2nd edition of ActionAid Nigeria National Media Convening themed "Actioning Protection and Safety of Women Journalists. The meeting held virtually in commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists



ActionAid Nigeria's Country Director with the FCDO representative during the MOU signing of the WE-YOU project. The new project aims to campaign for inclusion of women and young people in political and governance processes.



Director VAT, Federal Inland Revenue Service, Chairman Fiscal Responsibility Commission, ActionAid team and other stakeholders during the 2021 National Tax Conference aimed at proffering solutions to emerging tax issues in Nigeria.

**PHOTO
STORY**



To demand real climate action, ActionAid Nigeria joined 32 other countries who signed on to the Earth Walk campaign to walk 40,000km; the circumference of the earth. By walking together, we jointly demanded that world leaders should step up for climate justice at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.



THE SWITCH:

A COMMUNITY MOBILISING FOR PEACE

Despite appeals to the government for over eight months to repair the 11KVA step-down transformer that supplies electricity to the people of Laminga community, efforts proved abortive, and this negatively affected the socio-economic activities and undermined the security situation of the community. Criminals seized the gloomy night-time to unleash criminal activities. Women who mainly sell ice candy, cold sachet-water, and some businesses that required electricity were no longer thriving. Majority of the women could not afford to use a gasoline generator due to the cost of fuel and this had rendered many youths unemployed.

Laminga is in Nasarawa local government area of Nasarawa state, about 91 miles (147 KM) away from the capital, Lafia. The community has diverse ethnic and religious groups and have managed to live in peace and harmony with one another. Farming and animal rearing is the mainstay of economic revenue in the community; however, they experience perennial clash with herdsman, especially during the rainy season.

As the lack of electricity loomed, Suleiman, the secretary for the Community Action and Response Team (CART) became worried about the increased youths' restiveness and conflict which often occurred at night. Lack of electricity meant streetlights were not functional and made it difficult to trace the perpetrators at the time of the incidence. It became unsafe to move around in the community when it is dark. Suleiman saw the need to act quickly and fix the power supply which will brighten the streets and popular criminal hideouts in the community.

At the next CART meeting, the group agreed to pay an advocacy visit to their state house of assembly and engage their constituency representative, about their current situation. The house member took the case forward, mobilized support from the state government and successfully installed a new transformer in the community which now supplies power to every household. Now the streets are light up again and many businesses restored. To complement the government's effort, the community members further mobilized funds on their own to charter for the transformer servicing and fencing.

"Light is life. When the light went off, most of our businesses collapsed and this fueled crimes and violence in the community. But now even our women and young people have means of livelihood to keep them engaged," said Suleiman

CART consists of selected community members whose responsibility is to detect early warning signs of conflicts and address the issues before they escalate. The group has remained a vital active community policing group and has since worked closely with the traditional leaders and other community stakeholders to keep the community safe. *The CART is an innovation of ActionAid Nigeria as part of the implementation of the System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism Project, SARVE II. The project is currently implemented in Nasarawa and Kogi state with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).*



Bose Ironsi is not your regular sexagenarian; she wears many caps and value her role as a mother, wife, trained nurse, mentor and one of the leading voices and campaigners against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria.

Despite her humble beginnings and personal experiences of violence as a teenager, Bose determined early enough to make the most of every opportunity and contribute to ending Gender Based Violence in Nigeria. In 2008 she founded the Women's Rights And Health Project (WRAHP) to respond to the growing issues of GBV and the first official case was that of a 14 year old girl who was gang raped by 7 boys in 2009. Recounting WRAHPs' journey "We started with 2 staff, but now we have 30 staff and over 300 mandated reporters (trained volunteers) across communities in Lagos. In my quest to contributing to ending GBV I have been threatened and blackmailed on several occasions".

Not deterred by the setback, Bose is motivated to see each case of violation of women and girls to a logical conclusion: "I am most happy when we get justice for survivors/ victims of GBV. Albeit, the wins are low, compared to the number of cases. The day to day living as an activist working to end GBV is very challenging. There are happy

times and cry times. What makes me cry is the length it takes to get justice for survivors. At what point can we have a system that works for GBV survivors? If we leave each case to see how justice will flow, it doesn't always turn out right and this is why I wake up every day".

Since inception, WRAHP has handled more than 500 cases of GBV. Bose outlined some of the achievements over the years "We recently commissioned Ireti Resource Centre to specifically provide integrated legal and psychosocial support in a safe space for women, survivors of domestic violence, and other vulnerable persons across communities in Lagos state. We have produced and disseminated 50,000 simplified version of the Domestic Violence Law of Lagos state and various information on domestic violence and GBV. WRAHP has active presence in more than 30 communities, 12 Local Government Areas and have reached over 11276 youths, trained 527 community volunteers on rights and health issues; and conducted referrals for follow-up services on human rights issues in collaboration with relevant Government agencies."

Describing her typical day "My daily schedule is often unpredictable. I can wake up with plans to get administrative work sorted but end up attending to distress calls on GBV which I see as paramount. A good example was when I clocked 60 on October 1st last year (2020) and had planned to spend a quiet time with family but was awoken by a distress call by one of the community mandated reporters notifying me of an 11-year-old girl who was gang raped to death in my neighborhood. I spent my birthday making calls to the Police and relevant responders. I also visited the family to get more information to pursue the case. We immediately began an online campaign #Justice4Favour while also coordinating some offline engagement with the police and relevant stakeholders".

WRAHP is one of the 100 Local Women Rights Organisations receiving grants from ActionAid Nigeria to respond to issues of women's rights violations as part of the implementation of the Women's Voices and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N Project); the project is funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC). *Though not keen about the spotlight, Bose's firm commitment to contributing to ending GBV in Nigeria earned her the SWIFT Woman accolade for this edition of SWIFT.*



One More Thing!

ONE CAT (Community at A Time).

ActionAid Nigeria in partnership with DAAR Communications, owners of Africa Independent Television and Raypower FM have launched a first of its kind fundraising TV programme; One Community at A Time (1CAT).

The partnership seeks to foster public-private partnership by mobilizing resources and donations to complement Government's effort and ActionAid's work in poor and excluded communities across Ondo, Taraba, Ebonyi, Niger, Kebbi, Cross River and the FCT.

The 30-minutes weekly programme which will air on AIT focuses on the peculiar challenges of the people while fundraising to address their pressing needs based on hierarchy of needs as identified by the people.

To sponsor the programme, a community, or partner with us on the 1CAT project, please call ActionAid Nigeria community sponsorship desk on 07007070700 or 08091114690.

INTRODUCING

ACTIONAID NIGERIA



SWIFT

Get a glimpse of the fun side of ActionAid Nigeria, behind the scenes, voices from the streets, insightful conversations and more.



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