

# SWIFT

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ISSUE 9



▶ Mariam Ibrahim, one of the beneficiaries reached with palliative in Abuja.  
Photo credit: Lola Ayanda/ActionAid Nigeria

## What's New?

In the period under review, ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) provided funds to 27 Local Women's Rights Organisations (LWROs) to focus on mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in 7 states; Bauchi, Cross River, Enugu, Kebbi, Kwara, Lagos, Kogi. AAN specifically funded 14 LWROs to respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV) during the lockdown; 299 survivors of GBV had

access to toll-free lines, psychosocial counselling, temporary shelter, and referral linkages - this intervention was made possible with funding from Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

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▶ Asibi James, mother of 7, demonstrate how to use the improvised water system constructed to aid handwashing in Ningo Community, Nasarawa State.

Photo: ActionAid Nigeria.

To assuage the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown in communities where ActionAid Nigeria is implementing its Local Rights Programmes (LRP), AAN reached 2,027 households, with palliatives in 70 communities in 10 states; Akwa-Ibom, Lagos, Ebonyi, Ondo, Kogi, Kwara, Bauchi, Delta, Kaduna, Kebbi and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The distribution prioritised women headed households with children under 5 who are severely malnourished or with more than 1 child who is moderately malnourished; child headed household, pregnant and lactating mothers in vulnerable communities, households with more than 8 dependents with 4 children under the age of 5 and households with terminally ill relative. A total sum of N24,000,000 (\$ 62,000) was utilised for this intervention.

To further strengthen key stakeholders in tackling Gender Based Violence and other social ills heightened by the COVID-19 lockdown, in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, Kogi and Nasarawa state command, ActionAid Nigeria trained 54 police officers on community policing, 39 Journalists were also trained on Humanitarian Crisis Reporting.

Through its LRP, SARVE II (System and Structure Strengthening Approach Against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism) and Women's Voice & Leadership – Nigeria project, AAN sensitised 1,296 households in 98 communities across 65 LGAs in Nigeria on prevention of COVID-19. The messages were contextualized in local dialects.

In addition, 60 community

facilitators were trained virtually on demystifying the myths of COVID-19 in 48 communities.

Also, in the news, in furtherance of ActionAid Global Climate Justice campaign, AAN won a tree planting challenge and received a grant from Global Shapers to plant 205 economic trees in five communities in the FCT. The trees were planted in commemoration of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in Kilankwa (Kwali), Kayeche (Kuje), Jiwa Tsoho (AMAC), Tungan Ashere (AMAC) and Pasepa (Bwari) communities and it provided an opportunity to engage communities on their roles in combating desertification and drought.

**Welcome to another exciting edition of SWIFT!**

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▶ Bashirat

## COVID-19: A “Blessing” In Disguise?

“ I have been covering up his abusive ways and lack of financial commitment to me and my children so much that I had to change my children's school to a less expensive one because of my inability to keep up with their fees. Not long after this, our house rent was due with threats of eviction from the landlord. I had no choice but to move myself and my four children into my small shop because at this point, my husband had already left and abandoned us to our fate. ”

This was the plight of 37-year old Olatundun Bashirat. A low-scale fashion designer and mother of four who had endured seven years of marriage characterized by constant physical, emotional, and psychological abuse perpetrated by her husband. Having found herself in a situation where the supposed source of income of her spouse turned out to be false, she had been shouldering family expenses to save face with family and friends up to the point where she was abandoned with four children and became homeless.

“ pandemic has further affected my business because of the lockdown and subsequent restriction of movement. I do not get much patronage like before. It has not been easy living and working in just one small room with four children. ”

Little did Bashirat know that the COVID-19 pandemic will shine a spotlight on her situation to change her story. Recognizing the potential negative impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, ActionAid Nigeria through the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N) project incorporated COVID-19 relief support into her programmes with special focus on women and girls.

the COVID-19 relief fund awarded to OCDI was diversified to provide financial support towards getting a new accommodation for Bashirat. As of today, Bashirat and her children live in a newly secured accommodation and she also benefited from nutritional support made available through the intervention. She is grateful to have found support during this difficult period of her life. OCDI have also provided hotlines for cases of violence for effective linkages and referrals to relevant partners to provide protection services for victims of violence.

“ I use the proceeds from my business to support household expenses but as the number of my children increased, I started spending more money. I could not upgrade or improve my skills, and this has affected the growth of my business as I have lost many customers. For close to one year now, my children and I have been living in the shop but the COVID-19 ”

Led by Olive Community Development Initiative (OCDI), one of ActionAid Nigeria WVL-N partners in Kwara state, Bashirat was selected to be among the 50 beneficiaries of COVID-19 palliative targeted at survivors of violence. Seeing how critical her situation was,

“ Only God can help me thank you. When I have lost hope, you came along and helped me out. My God will reward you. ”





## CORONAVIRUS: THE RACE TO SAVE OUR OWN

When the pandemic hit, and Lockdown announced, ActionAid Nigeria's immediate effort was focused on ensuring that vulnerable persons, women, and children are protected and provided with first-hand information and precautionary measures, away from the rumoured misconceptions and myths in circulation. So, the sensitisation began! from FCT to Nasarawa to Kogi to 20 other States across the 6 geopolitical zones, it was a race to save our own; people living in poor and excluded communities, the almajiris, pregnant women, vulnerable children, people with disabilities and the sick.

With an extension of the initial two weeks lockdown, and interstate travel bans in place, both occasioned by the pandemic and with no assurance of receiving palliatives from the Federal Government, communities increasingly became resistant to sensitisation on COVID19, without food or financial support. Concurrently, the smallholder women farmers of Nigeria revealed the looming food crisis, following their post-harvest losses.

*In Lagos, we met Awonronso Maumeh, a divorced mother of 3 with severe physical disability lamenting how she'd survive the lockdown since her children who were daily income earners would no longer be able to*

*support her, saying.*

“

*Now, I must rely heavily on handouts from people in the community, because my disability has restrained me from being able to work. Please speak with them (referring to the villagers) to help me when I come for help.*

”

*She told ActionAid team during a needs assessment.*

Acknowledging that People could be safe from COVID-19 but still die of malnutrition or hunger, ActionAid Nigeria began the distribution of food and non-food materials to cushion the effect of lockdown on the most vulnerable families. Aivoji and Wesere are the 2 communities in Lagos funded by ActionAid Nigeria's local fundraising initiative, Community Sponsorship. Wesere community is far from the city centre and is closest to Benin Republic. Before the pandemic, residents of Wesere access basic facilities like health care and market in neighbouring country, Benin Republic. However, with the closure of the border, they have been unable to access markets for purchase and sales.

The 2 communities were provided with the food ration of 5kg of rice, 10kg of beans, 10kg of roasted cassava grain, half crate of egg, and other food condiments like a roll of tomato paste and seasoning. Maumeh

was one of the beneficiaries of the two-weeks food ration; plans are also underway to reach 2500 vulnerable households in Kaduna State with hygiene kits with support from McArthur Foundation.

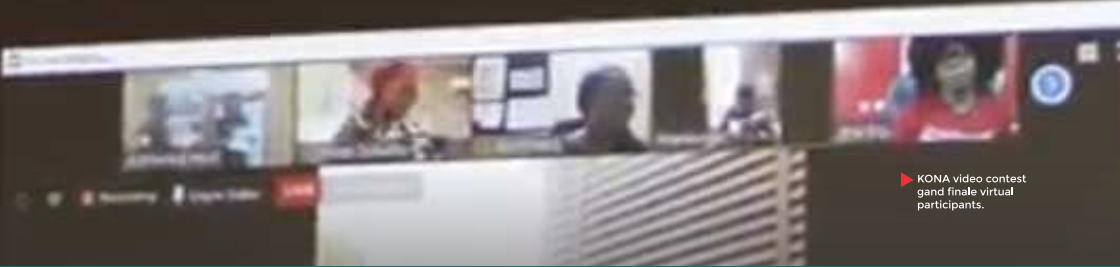
*Women and children remain at the core of ActionAid's humanitarian response, however in Akwa Ibom, visually impaired 31-year-old male Udosen Akpan caught our attention, and while interacting with him he shared his struggles on how feeding has been difficult for him and his mother*

“

*My mother whom I depend on has been critically ill since the lockdown began. She has been my carer but now I must care for her too. We are now surviving on the goodwill of family and extended relatives, but they are also struggling to feed. The church would have helped me, but church gatherings have been banned. Please help my family, we are hungry.*

”

Thankfully, Udosen benefitted from the palliatives distributed in Akwa Ibom State. Despite the eased lockdown, life is far from returning to normal; ActionAid Nigeria however remains committed to empowering and supporting its communities to get their lives back on track during and after the pandemic.



▶ KONA video contest grand finale virtual participants.

## EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN A GLOBAL CRISIS

While the world diverts attention to the economic and health implication of COVID-19, the threats from violent extremist groups targeted at vulnerable people, especially young people and communities remains and has been at its peak as extremists leverage on the new opportunities such as physical isolation and weakened social cohesion created by this global health crisis to appeal emotionally to new members.

In a bid to sustain the gains already recorded on the System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism, SARVE II project, ActionAid Nigeria took lessons from its baseline which evidenced idleness and lack of sense of purpose as drivers of violence. This has now been compounded with lockdown and movement restrictions. To further its #Togetherforpeace campaign which already gained momentum amongst young people before the pandemic, ActionAid Nigeria opted to keep young people engaged through online entertainment and it was against this backdrop that the KONA Video Contest was launched.

The KONA (Kogi and Nasarawa)

video contest which targeted young people between the ages of 18-29 aimed to engage youths on their role in peacebuilding processes especially during the COVID-19 #StayHome. The competition also sought to engage youths creatively through online platforms while formal and informal schools were closed as a result of the pandemic; participants were required to create a 90 second video skit on their role in peacebuilding with the goal of winning a cash prize and other consolation prizes.

Exactly 150 youths registered for the competition while 26 entries were submitted and shortlisted for the contest. Five finalists emerged after a series of public votes on Facebook and scoring high points on the judges screening criteria of clarity, creativity, suspense and persuasion. The competition ended with an online grand finale which held via zoom and was livestreamed on Youtube. ActionAid Nigeria's brand ambassador and comedian, Mark Angel; Social justice influencer and actress, Hilda Dokubo and the Director of Organisational effectiveness, Funmilayo Oyefusi featured as Judges, while Communications Coordinator, Lola Ayanda and Resilience Programme Coordinator, Anicetus Atakpu

hosted the show.

27-year-old David Augustine from Nasarawa State emerged the winner with a total of 174 points and received the N200,000 (\$500) grand prize "I am excited to get this form of recognition for my creativity. More of such initiatives should be organised in the country for young people" Augustine said as he received his e-cheque. The 1st and 2nd runner up, Oreofe Johnson and Shekwoyemi Ibrahim received N60,000 (\$ 150) and N40,000 (\$100) consolation prizes having scored 173 and 151 points respectively. All contestants were also offered an invitation to participate in the next edition of ActionAid Nigeria's annual peace camp scheduled to hold in 2021. Looking at the buzz and level of engagement from the competition, ActionAid Nigeria hopes to expand the initiative and make it an annual competition.

*For partnership or sponsorship of the next edition of ActionAid Nigeria's Video Contest scheduled for February 2021, please email: [communitysponsorship.nigeria@actionaid.org](mailto:communitysponsorship.nigeria@actionaid.org) or call +234 (0) 700 7070 700*

# #StandToEndRape Join Us!



ActionAid Nigeria Board Chair Dr. Jummai Umar-Ajjola during the #StandToEndRape rally in Abuja following the increased cases of sexual gender based violence during COVID-19 lockdown.



ActionAid Nigeria male staff join women to call for maximum sentence for rapists during Nigerian Women Lives Matter Rally in Abuja.



To further strengthen key stakeholders in tackling Gender Based Violence and other social ills heightened by the COVID-19 lockdown, in collaboration with Kogi and Nasarawa state Police Command, ActionAid Nigeria trained 54 police officers on community policing.





▶ Farida

# DEMYSTIFYING COVID-19

## Myths One Community at Time



*Even in my community Agbaja, so many people do not still believe that COVID-19 is real*



said 21-year-old Farida, one of the 396 local volunteers trained by ActionAid Nigeria. Before the COVID-19 pandemic. Farida had just been admitted into the Federal University of Yola to study Biochemical Engineering. She had made new friends and was already adjusting appropriately to her new environment when her school and all other colleges and tertiary institutions in Nigeria were ordered by the federal government to shut down in a bid to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Like many youths, Farida is disappointed that her academics has been put on hold

and unlike her counterparts in urban areas, Farida is literally cut off from the rest of the world for lack of access to internet and cannot engage in online learning. She relies solely on radio for information and other educative programmes to keep tab; She had even heard the COVID-19 awareness jingle produced by ActionAid Nigeria in her local dialect from radio Kogi.

As community transmission of COVID-19 continued to rise, ActionAid Nigeria began to intensify actions for community awareness. Despite being a very shy person, Farida jumped on the call from ActionAid to volunteer in her Community as a door-to-door sensitisation campaigner. Agbaja is at the outskirts of the state capital Lokoja and located on secluded hill. The rough, lonely, zig zag road leading to the community is surrounded by thick forest

trees that often consumes an hour full ride.

After the community awareness training by ActionAid Nigeria, Farida received a protective tool kit which she used as she moved door-to-door demystifying some of the already existing myths about the Coronavirus in Agbaja; one of such myths is the use of garlic and eating of raw vegetable for cure and prevention. She is happy to use her time productively and remains hopeful that she will go back to school soonest.

In addition to the 7 COVID-19 awareness jingles airing in 10 states across Nigeria, ActionAid Nigeria has also engaged security agencies to ensure that the safety of vulnerable communities like Farida's is continuously sought and prioritised, during and after COVID-19.



▶ Virginia

# SWIFT WOMAN

Spotlight on local woman and GBV survivor championing the fight on violence against women in her community

Mrs. Virginia Nevo is a trader in Nkanu west local government area in Enugu state, Nigeria. Virginia as she is fondly called was married off at age 15 and had suffered 7 years of physical and emotional violence in her 25 years of marriage. Surprisingly, the perpetrators are her brothers' in-law; her husband seems helpless.

An instance that could not be easily forgotten occurred in 2012. One of her brothers' in-law had met her on her way back from the market with her daughter and started questioning her whereabouts. Without giving room for a response, he pounced on her and beat her up severely right in the presence of her daughter and passers-by. This was not the only occurrence; she had been beaten up on several occasions with threats of ejection from her matrimonial home. Unfortunately, and like many women in her shoes in the community, she did not know where to get help.

In March 2020, the 40-year old's search for help came to fruition as she was selected to participate in a Town Hall

Meeting in her community focusing on Ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Gender-based Violence (GBV). Discussion at the 1-day meeting centred around increasing women's knowledge on violence against women and girls, women's right to protection, laws that promote and protect women's rights such as the 2019 Enugu State Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, and where GBV survivors can seek help.

At the end of the event, Virginia was very excited and became determined to protect her home:

“ Now I understand so many things. I now know my rights, and nobody can throw me out of my husband's house. Anytime anybody threatens to throw me out of my husband's house, I will call WINET or any of the women organizations to help me. ”

Virginia, a petty trader and farmer, was not ready to keep her newly acquired knowledge to herself. In the local market

where she sells her wares, Virginia has been educating fellow women who were not able to attend the meeting on the new information she was exposed to as regards violence against women and girls. She regularly cites herself as an example and shares information on where to seek help in cases of violation. For her courage and zest to see an end to GBV in her community, Virginia earned the SWIFT Woman accolade for this edition.

*Women Information Network (WINET), one of WVL Nigeria partners working in Enugu state of Nigeria, works with women and girls through information dissemination on all issues relating to the advancement of women's rights in the society, and trainings with a view to promoting gender equality and women's rights. The town hall meeting on Ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) was organized by WINET as part of the implementation of her WVL Nigeria year one project activities.*



# #SwiftTalk



“ Working from home helped discover multitasking abilities I didn't know I had: the act of negotiation with my toddler, taking care of the household while delivering on assignments. Being an octopus is an understatement ” ... *Osamudiamen Owens-Akinwale*

“

I would like to reiterate that, family members, traditional and religious institutes, and schools must see themselves as partners in this struggle, the effort to end GBV particularly RAPE, and child abuse will continue to be horrific and debilitating scourge of lamentation if we remain silent and shield perpetrators in the name of culture and family fraternity ” ... *Zara'u Ahmad Program Manager, Kungiyar Tallafin Mata Development Initiative (KTMDI)*



“ Initially, I thought working from home was going to be much easier, I was totally wrong! The only ease that came with working from home was the fact that I was saved the long time I spent in traffic commuting to work and back home. My workload increased within those periods, working early and late, no boundaries of closing time, juggling deadlines with support to my young children who couldn't understand why I must work myself out when everyone was on holiday ” ... *Nkechi Ilochi-Omeke*



How are you coping in the new world of work?  
Are there opportunities for Nigeria in this global crisis?

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND THOUGHTS WITH US ON

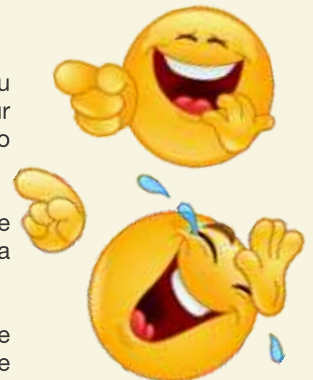
Twitter @ActionAidNG  
with hashtag #SwiftTalk.



## ONE MORE THING!

Laugh and Learn! Answers to a millennial Work from Home (WfH) questions

- Will there be a baby boom in ActionAid in the next 9 months? You may ask the Resource Mobilisation and Innovation Unit.
- Must I wear a trouser when video conferencing? Just Don't Stand Up!
- Oh no! I forgot to turn off my camera when going to the toilet. What do you think is going on in the mind of everyone who saw me? Next time turn off your camera and mute your mic if you need to do something private during a video or audio-conferencing call.
- My partner walked in improperly dressed and everyone saw her during the video conference, what do I do? Next time remind everyone you are on a video call, so he/she can also get dressed OR remain unseen!
- I watch the playback of my virtual TV interview and I found that the background was totally inappropriate, how can I correct this? Next time carefully pick the background where you have your meeting and ensure the wall art is appropriate.



ActionAid Nigeria appreciates the little you can afford. A one-off donation is a fantastic start, but the kind of extreme poverty that children are facing are long term problems, and they need long term solutions. ActionAid is committed to making a sustainable difference and changing lives for good. **JOIN US!**

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