The 2016 International Women’s Day, on the theme “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality” was marked by the United Nations system in Nigeria with a wide range of activities in Abuja and Lagos and for the purpose of reinforcing commitments towards gender equality in the next 15 years.

A weeklong live radio discussion featuring UN agencies and the European Union (EU) as well as other partners, aired on Nigeria Info (95.1 FM) Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, from 7-11 March, raising public awareness on critical gender issues.

Led by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the office of the Resident Coordinator of the UN System in Nigeria, UNHCR and EU, a National Stakeholders Consultative Forum was convened on 8 March 2016 in Abuja, with funding from the EU programme on Promoting Women’s Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria.

The Abuja event had in attendance a total of 569 stakeholders drawn from Government, Development Partners, CSOs, Academia, Community Leaders, Gender Advocates, Women Groups, Internally Displaced Women and Children and Security Agencies.

In her speech, the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Senator Aisha Alhassan pledged to promote the effective implementation of the National Gender Policy and other initiatives aimed at enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. She also delivered the message from the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari who affirmed the government’s commitment to sustainable development.

Speaking, the UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Dr. Grace Ongile noted, Continue on page 2.
Regional workshop discusses UN ‘delivering as one’ as team-Nigeria develops roadmap to UNDAF IV

A regional workshop for countries that will soon develop new UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) was held in Malawi on 14 – 18 March 2016. Organized by the Regional-UNDG and UN Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO), New York, the workshop discussed the concept and implementation of ‘Delivering as One’ (DaO) and attracted 78 participants who were UN Country Team (UNCT) representatives from seven countries, two from West Africa (Nigeria and Ghana) and five from other regions (Cape Verde, South Sudan, Lesotho, South Africa, Rwanda and the host country, Malawi).

During the workshop, the team from Nigeria developed a roadmap to the new UNDAF, with activities starting in 2016. Nigeria is among the 38 UNCTs globally that are scheduled to start UNDAF cycle preparations in 2016. The country’s current UNDAF ends in 2017.

The workshop also emphasized the role of a Business Operations Strategy and its linkages to programmatic priorities. It was an opportunity to share success stories and identify potential areas for South-South cooperation.
The Sokoto State Governor, His Excellency, Alhaji Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has assured the World Health Organisation (WHO) that the state government would continue to collaborate with WHO and other development partners to expand access to immunization in the state.

The Governor who gave this assurance while receiving the WHO Country Representative (WR), Dr Rui Gama Vaz, during an advocacy meeting at the Government House, Sokoto, added that expansion of access to vaccines would ensure rapid reduction in cases of child and maternal mortality in the State.

Speaking, Dr Vaz appreciated Governor Tambuwal for creating conducive working environment for WHO personnel in the State and positively changing the health sector landscape since assumption of office in May, 2015. He acknowledged that “it is gratifying to note that with the advent of your leadership, release of counterpart funding for immunization activities has been timely and adequate. Records have also shown that areas with habitual non-compliance to supplemental immunization have fallen drastically. This was not the case in the recent past”.

Consequently, the quality of polio SIAs continue to improve in the state since the last quarter of 2015.

Notwithstanding, the WR encouraged His Excellency to further support outreach services and institute an accountability framework among health workers, which the WHO has already articulated for its staff, to ensure that service delivery matches demand created for immunization among vulnerable populations.

Briefing the Sultan in his palace, Dr Vaz acknowledged the role played by His Eminence in interrupting polio virus transmission in Northern Nigeria through his influence on the National Traditional Leaders Council and religious groups and further solicited his support to utilize the machinery at his disposal to involve communities on safe deliveries.

The need for military personnel to prevent violations of human rights, respond against violations of human rights and act to restore human rights in accordance with the Constitution of Nigeria and the directives issued by the Commanding Officer was recently highlighted at a workshop.

The workshop was aimed at reviewing the Code of Conduct (CoC) and Rules of Engagement (RoE) for Operation Lafiya Dole and proffer recommendations for integrating human rights and strengthening the legal framework for response to violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law in counter-insurgency operations.

In his submission, the Human Rights Adviser to the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team, Mr Martin Ejidike, noted that Military personnel must at all times respect the following non-derogable human rights: life, prohibition of torture, prohibition of slavery, non-discrimination, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, recognition of person before the law, prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, humane treatment of detainees, no taking of hostages and abductions, protection of minorities, no deportation or forcible transfer of population, no advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred, and fundamental fair trial guarantees.

He said further that military personnel must also observe the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant and applicable treaties.

‘Military personnel are forbidden to engage in acts of sexual, physical and psychological abuse, exploitation or liaison with vulnerable persons and must promptly report through the chain of command any observation of human rights abuse, including of human trafficking, sexual exploitation of vulnerable persons (women, children, internally displaced persons and elderly). Particular duty of care must be extended towards women and children. They shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected particularly against rape, prostitution and any other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse’; he added.
The Governor of Borno State, His Excellency, Alhaji Kashim Shettina, has commended the United Nations System in Nigeria for its support to local authorities’ response to the North-East challenges. He emphasized that urgent support was needed in rebuilding Borno State, especially as regards primary health care, water and sanitation, employment opportunities and education.

The Governor made these comments during a courtesy visit to the Government House, Maiduguri, by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms Fatma Samoura. While acknowledging the support being provided by the Federal Government and humanitarian actors in the State, he said a huge gap still remains. “I have the firm intention to reinvigorate the agricultural sector and I want to invest in the whole value chain of the sector because I strongly believe that this will help create employment opportunities for my people.” He stated.

In her remarks, Ms Samoura stated that “The UN System in Nigeria is encouraged by the State Government’s commitment to supporting the return of IDPs in a voluntary and well informed manner, where conditions for a safe return are guaranteed.” She continued, “I have also spoken to officials from National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the State Emergency Management Agency SEMA on their capacity to respond to the most urgent needs. They are urgently appealing to the humanitarian community as well as the international community to support them as their capacities have been outstretched already.

For us in the UN we remain fully committed to delivering all projects articulated under the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan.”

Subsequently, Ms. Samoura handed over to the Governor, 10,000 female dignity kits and 144 comprehensive reproductive health kits for the benefit of some survivors of Boko Haram insurgency and communities in which they live.

However, she noted that a lot of attention was being given to victims sheltered in formal IDP camps. This, she said, was at the expense of the more than 90% IDPs who are being looked after by host families and communities. “The level of assistance needed by host families and communities has not been met by the international community and humanitarian actors on the ground. There are discrepancies in the treatment being received by IDPs in camps and those in host families – this is further consigning the already vulnerable people to more suffering,” she stated.

The situation, according to her, required urgent attention as it might get worse when the rainy season sets in. Close to 2 million people are still residing in host communities and their coping mechanisms have begun to be eroded. While women are engaged in knitting, men are engaged as labourers in the city. “These people are in urgent need of support to rebuild their livelihoods,” Ms. Samoura emphasized as she called for enhanced presence of NGOs in the area to help with provision of food supplies, primary health care as well as shelters, water and sanitation.

Within the region, close to 4 million people are food insecure, 2.5 million are malnourished, 3.6 million have no access to safe drinking water, close to 2 million have no access to adequate sanitation, more than 3.5 million are in urgent need of healthcare and over 2 million are still leaving in makeshift shelters.

The Resident Coordinator was accompanied to Maiduguri by Mohamed El Munir A. Safieldin, Deputy UN Humanitarian Coordinator (DHC); Vincent Lelei, Head of Office OCHA Nigeria; and Koffi Kouame, UNFPA Deputy Representative.
CSOs support government anti-corruption efforts

A group of Nigerian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have reaffirmed support for the Federal Government’s anti-corruption efforts and commended the political will as well as the tenacity of the Government in fighting the menace of corruption. In a statement in Abuja at the end of their fifth session, the organizations, meeting under the auspices of the CSO Advisory Committee for the EU funded Project “Support to Anti-Corruption in Nigeria”, which is being partly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), expressed their readiness to support the Government’s efforts through advocacy, citizens’ mobilization and partnership with anti-corruption agencies.

The CSOs at the meeting included, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC), Muslim League for Accountability (MULAC), Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Civil Society Network Against Corruption (CSNAC), Centre for Social Justice (CENSOJ), Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC), Action Aid Nigeria (AA), Publish What You Pay (PWYP), and Integrity.

Institutional members include the Technical Unit on Governance and Accountability Reform (TUGAR), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the European Union (EU), UNODC and UNDP.

Sultan accepts to support UN efforts to reduce infant and maternal deaths

The Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Sultan Sa’ad Abubakar III, has accepted to explore avenues to reduce the alarming infant and maternal deaths due to unsafe delivery practices that are prevalent in the state. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Country Representative (WR), Dr Rui Gama Vaz, who disclosed this, acknowledged that His Eminence Sultan Sa’ad Abubakar III accepted to initiate sensitization of heads of households on safe health delivery practices. He further solicited the support of the Sultan of Sokoto to bring his influence to bear on the communities to ensure safe deliveries.

The need to train local midwives who could be incorporated into the healthcare delivery system due to cultural beliefs in most parts of the north was stressed. Dr Vaz, who was briefing the Sultan in his Palace during an advocacy visit, acknowledged the role played by the Sultan of Sokoto in interrupting polio virus transmission in Northern Nigeria through his influence on the National Traditional Leaders Council and religious groups.

UN and NIIA organise Nigeria’s first photo and book exhibition on SDGs and Women

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos and the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) have staged Nigeria’s first book and photo exhibition on ‘Women and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’.

The exhibition, held at the NIIA, was part of the activities marking the International Women’s Day in Nigeria, and was declared open by Her Royal Highness, Erelu Abiola Dosumu.

Featuring forty-eight (48) books, seventeen (17) pictures for the 17 SDGs and thirty (30) newspaper clippings that establish, depict and explain the centrality of women and gender equality in the SDGs, the exhibition was attended by women-related NGOs and a few members of the public.

Speaking, Erelu Dosumu commended the managements and staff of NIIA and UNIC Lagos for their commitment to the issues that affect women. Gender parity in all sectors, she added, would promote socio-economic inclusiveness that would engender national development.

In his brief remarks, the Director of UNIC Lagos, Mr Ronald Kayanja, noted that the exhibition provided another dimension to appreciating the role of women and the importance of gender equality to sustainable development.
UN calls for speedy trial of human traffickers

The Country Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Nigeria, Ms. Cristina Albertin, has called for speedy trials of suspected human traffickers to ensure justice for the victims. She is also recommending the imposition of stiffer penalties on convicted members of criminal gangs, as a means of deterring intending traffickers.

Ms Albertin spoke last week in Benin City, Edo State, during a courtesy visit to the State Ministry of Education as part of a week-long advocacy visit to schools in the capital, aimed at raising awareness on the issue of trafficking in persons (TIP). The advocacy mission is coming under the European Union funded “Promoting Better Management of Migration in Nigeria” project being implemented by UNODC in support of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and other critical national stakeholders.

While noting Nigeria’s status as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Trans-National Crime and its Protocols, especially the Palermo Protocols on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), the UNODC Representative commended the establishment of NAPTIP and its “mandate on prevention, law enforcement and protection of the rights of the victims of trafficking,” as well as its achievements since it was established.

Ms Albertin expressed satisfaction with the achievements of NAPTIP and the level of awareness shown by staff and students in the public schools visited, urging that all hands must be on deck as vulnerabilities remain a concern in the endemic communities visited.

She commended the efforts of NAPTIP in creating awareness on the high incidence of trafficking in persons (TIP) in Edo State, saying “I have seen that good progress has been made. I have seen that school teachers are very committed to the cause. I know that NAPTIP has gone many times to give talks about human trafficking. The school children already know what is human trafficking. I am very pleased with the progress made so far.”

In his response, the Commissioner for Education, Mr. Gideon Obahakhan, pledged the Ministry’s commitment to partnering with all critical stakeholders to ensure that school pupils received quality education in all ramifications, while the scourge of human trafficking is curtailed in the state.

The Commission for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Anena Jemitolu, in her remarks, lamented that human trafficking now constitutes an embarrassment to Edo State as it is not part of the culture of the people.

IOM helps relocate 189 displaced families living in a school building

As part of its overall support to families displaced by violence in Northern Nigeria, in partnership with the government and other agencies, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), has relocated 189 families from a school to Bakasi camp. Each family was provided with a newly built shelter by IOM along with a non-food item (NFI) package. This voluntary relocation is part of a government-led drive to vacate schools where internally displaced persons (IDPs) were initially settled in order to be able to reopen them for classes in April.

Richard Danziger, the IOM Regional Director for West and Central Africa (WCA) who was on an official visit reassured the IDPs of IOM’s commitment to providing shelter and NFIs to alleviate their plight. He stated that “providing assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North-eastern part of Nigeria is imperative as a first step toward long-term stability in Northern Nigeria and the entire Lake Chad sub region.” Justus Zare, Permanent Secretary to Borno State Ministry of Education who is also the secretary to the Relocation Committee explained that efforts are being made to improve the situation of the camp. He said “shelters are being provided, drilling for water is completed, solar panels are installed and we are happy with IOM and other partners for assisting us.” IOM is also conducting baseline assessments and registration for IDPs living in camps and host communities under the Displacement Tracking Matrix project.

In addition, psychosocial services are provided to the IDPs and referrals are made for appropriate treatment where applicable. Two years ago many displaced people were housed and shielded in school facilities when schools were shut down due to Boko Haram offensive.

Surviving family members were scattered across various schools used as temporary camps in the state. With the relocation and provision of shelters by IOM many families are now reunited.

The humanitarian crisis in Northern Nigeria continues and yet the aid community is facing significant funding gaps to sustain interventions. IOM is appealing for USD 15 million for continued shelter support, displacement tracking and biometric registration, camp management and camp coordination (CCCM) and psycho-social support.
From knowing about modern contraceptives to learning about healthy relationships, young people have a right to access comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education. However, they are prevented from accessing information on their sexual and reproductive health needs because of the stigma, cultural taboo and discrimination they may face. This is where ‘Da Subject Matter’ comes in.

‘Da Subject Matter’ is a mobile technology supported by the United Nations Population Fund and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. It is an innovative way to reach young people with the much-needed accurate and comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health. The m-health innovation here is the use of an interactive platform that young people are savvy with, and whose data on usage demonstrates the huge potential for reach, that not only informs the youth but also refers them to quality, youth-friendly health centres.

“Adolescents and young people are the business of UNFPA” said Ratidzai Ndhlovu, UNFPA representative during the launch of the mobile platform; “the development of Da Subject Matter is a demonstration of youth participation ‘for us, with us’ which complements efforts to develop their knowledge and to support them with the much needed resource to make informed decisions about their bodies and their lives”.

“In Nigeria and around the world, young people are the future. They need our help to grow into the healthiest generation ever,” said Thank-God Okosun, Acting Country Director, Nigeria, Planned Parenthood Global. “Da Subject Matter gives them what they need”.

To view ‘Da Subject Matter’ website, visit https://www.dasubjectmatter.org/

Let’s work together for equal opportunity and justice for people of African descent – Ban Ki-moon

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on everyone to work together for equal opportunity, justice and sustainable development for people of African descent. Africa’s influence and legacy, according to him, are plain to see in the vibrant music, bold art, rich foods and inspiring literature that infuse modern culture.

Delivering the Secretary General’s message on the 2016 International Day of Remembrance of the victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Lagos, the Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos, Mr Ronald Kayanja noted that the theme of this year’s observance was “Remember Slavery: Celebrating the Heritage and Culture of the African Diaspora and its Roots”. “Less recognized, perhaps, are the contributions that the people of the African diaspora have made to medicine, science, government and general leadership in society,” he added.

The activities marking the day, held at Southfield Academy, Bariga Lagos, included screening of the film, ‘Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieflainess’; briefing and quiz on the ‘The Ark of Return’; a WebEx interlink with students in Accra, Lusaka and Nairobi; and a Poster Exhibition on ‘Africans in India: From Slaves to Generals and Rulers’ curated by UNIC Lagos National Information Officer, Oluseyi Soremekun.

Recalling lessons learnt from the exhibition, 17-year old Chisom Maduba of Southfield Academy Lagos, said she learnt that ‘we should not deny our roots. We should be proud of our African heritage’ while 15-year old Emmanuel Udeaja, acknowledged that he had learnt to say ‘No’ to any form of slavery, racism and human trafficking and added that the film taught him courage and morals.

Earlier, the Proprietress and Administrator of Southfield Academy, Mrs Chioma Dawodu noted the impact of UNIC’s educational programmes and urged the students to seize the opportunity of the UN observance to learn about Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.
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Australian High Commissioner to Nigeria (designate), Paul Lehmann (seated, centre), met with the UNAIDS Country Director for Nigeria, Dr Bilali Camara on 3rd March 2016 at the UNAIDS office, Abuja.

UN Resident Coordinator, Fatma Samoura (standing, centre), at the UNAIDS Country Office in Abuja to add her voice to this year's Zero Discrimination Day.

A cultural display at the International Women's Day observance in Abuja.

UNODC Country Representative, Ms. Cristina Albertin during a working visit to Benin City, Edo State.

UNIC Director, Mr Ronald Kayanja presents the message of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the 2016 World Water Day organised by UNIC and Nigeria Environmental Society, Lagos State Chapter.

Persons with down syndrome conditions display their artworks during an event organised by UNIC in collaboration with Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria to mark the 2016 World Down Syndrome Day.