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International Mother Language Day 2009 celebrated in Nigeria

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) proclaimed 21 February as International Mother Language Day in 1999, and since 2000 this day is celebrated all over the world every year.

In Nigeria, International Mother Language Day 2009 under the theme “Languages matter” was celebrated in a workshop held in Abuja on 23 February by the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, the Linguistic Association of Nigeria and UNESCO. Participants in the workshop were drawn from secondary schools, universities, diplomatic community, legislature, private and civil society organisations. The workshop focused on the need to domesticate the national language policy, the need for people to speak at least their mother tongue, and the relevance of teaching children indigenous languages at an early age.

Mrs Iyabo Fagbulu, National Programme Officer for Education, who represented the UNESCO Director and Country Representative, read the goodwill message of UNESCO Director General



School children on a dance drama performance in indigenous languages

Koichiro Matsuura. The UNESCO Director General underscored the importance of a symbiotic relationship between culture and education. In his words, “languages, which form part of the identity of individuals and peoples, are key to the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals”. He thus urged governments to “introduce in their...education systems... measures to secure the harmonious and fruitful co-existence of the languages of each country”.

The

Honourable Minister of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, represented by Mr George Ufot, the Director of Culture, recognised the dire

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International Mother Language Day 2009 celebrated in Nigeria

need of promoting indigenous languages, and informed the participants that the Ministry had established a national committee on indigenous Nigerian languages. He said further that it was also in the process of mapping and documenting indigenous languages in Nigeria in order to know the accurate number of languages in the country. This will help to ascertain the number of endangered Nigerian languages. Other speakers drew the attention of the participants to the following points:

1. Indigenous languages in Nigeria will expire within the next 50-75 years;

- 2. Non domestication of the national language policy is challenging the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages in schools;
- 3. More subjects need to be translated into Nigerian languages; and
- 4. There are presently 6,500 languages in the world. By the end of the century, only 600 languages will survive, and it is only through technological documentation that this can be achieved.

The representatives of Microsoft Corporation informed that before the end of 2009 Microsoft Windows and

Microsoft Office would be launched in Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa languages, which are the three major languages in Nigeria.

Schools enacted in drama presentations conveying the message that the heavy influence of foreign cultures on Nigerians was threatening the existence of indigenous languages and cultures.

Prizes were also presented to secondary school students across the Federation who performed very well in indigenous Nigerian languages in their examinations.

UNICEF to scale up Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy (IMNCH) to reduce maternal and newborn deaths in Nigeria

The 2009 State of the World's Children's Report was launched at the UN House in Abuja on 16 February 2009. The report pointed out that maternal and newborn deaths in Nigeria should be reduced drastically, if Nigeria was to meet the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 which relate directly to mothers' and children's health. The State of the World's Children Report is UNICEF's annual flagship publication on how the world treats her children.

The report was launched by the First Lady of Nigeria, Her Excellency Hajia Turai Yar'Adua, with the Honourable Minister of Health, Prof Babatunde Osotimehin, as Chairman. Also present were the Honourable Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Development, Dr Salamatu H

Suleiman, UN Resident Coordinator Albéric Kacou and UNICEF Representative Suomi Sakai, among others.

The report noted that the earliest

of life when an estimated 25 - 45 percent of new born deaths occur. The report also highlighted the firm link between the health and survival of a mother and the survival of her newborn. Newborns are unlikely to survive if their mothers die at child birth.

Most of the conditions leading to death in the mothers are complications of pregnancy and delivery, anaemia made worse by malaria, and HIV. Whereas problems in the newborns such as severe infection,

breathing difficulties and premature delivery are preventable or treatable with basic measures.

These measures include quality reproductive health services, antenatal care, skilled health workers assisting at birth, access to



■ First Lady of Nigeria Turai Yar'Adua launching the 2009 State of the World's Children Report in Abuja.

days of life were the most vulnerable for a child. Almost 40% of under five year olds' deaths take place during the first 28 days of a child's life and most of these (75%) during the first seven days. The risk of death for a child is highest on the first day

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UNICEF to scale up Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy (IMNCH) to reduce maternal and newborn deaths in Nigeria

emergency services and after delivery care (postnatal) for both mother and newborn, adequate nutrition, and education to promote healthy practices for newborns and their mothers.

Sadly, according to the report, women in the developing world like Nigeria are 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than their peers in the developed world.

Nigeria ranks second with the highest number of maternal deaths in the world after the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The estimated national maternal

mortality ratio (MMR) in Nigeria is 800 per 100,000 live births, resulting in 47,000 maternal deaths each year. For every woman who dies of maternal causes, at least six newborns die and a further four babies are stillborn. About 5.9 million babies are born every year in Nigeria, and over one million of these children die before the age of five. In Nigeria alone, 284,000 newborns die every year, 778 deaths each day. Many of these deaths occur at home and are therefore unseen and uncoun­ted in official statistics.

“The good news is that these needless deaths are preventable.

Scaling up the implementation of the integrated maternal and newborn child health strategy is key to this prevention”, said Dr Suomi Sakai, UNICEF Representative. “This strategy provides a continuum of health care starting before pregnancy through pregnancy, childbirth, after delivery (postnatal) and through childhood. What is urgently required is a scale up coverage of more than 70%”, Dr Sakai concluded.

Currently in Nigeria, almost all key packages along the continuum of care have coverage of less than 50 percent.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Public Information Kiyo Akasaka visits Nigeria

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr Kiyo Akasaka, toured West Africa from 2 to 7 February 2009, and visited the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) in Dakar, Senegal, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Accra, Ghana and Lagos in Nigeria. The primary purpose of the brief mission to West Africa was to visit and consult the Information Centres in the selected countries on their work and outreach, their partnership activities, and to meet with the media, local NGOs and young people.

During the visit to Lagos from 4 to 7 February, Mr Akasaka attended special outreach activities to promote the views, activities and concerns of the United Nations to the Nigerian public that were held at the United Nations Information Centre.



Under-Secretary-General Kiyo Akasaka speaking to the media in Lagos.

Furthermore, the Under-Secretary-General met with Nigerian journalists in a media dialogue at UNIC and paid a courtesy call on the Director General of the Voice of Nigeria (VON) Alhaji Abubakar Jigiwa. He also had a live radio interview, both in English and French, at the VON studios in Lagos. Similarly, Mr Akasaka visited the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) where he met the staff of the station, saw the production studios, and had a one-hour TV interview on broad issues on the UN

agenda.

On the third day of his stay, the Under-Secretary-General held dialogue sessions separately with the leaders of NGOs that are working closely with the UN Information Centre and selected Nigerian university students.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information is the head of the Department of Public Information in UN Headquarters in New York. He is responsible for the strategic communications and public advocacy of the work of the UN so that the accurate information concerning the work priorities and responsibilities of the Organisation and the UN system of organisations is conveyed to the media, civil society, academia and the general public.



UNODC launches 2008 World International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) Report

The 2008 INCB Report was launched at the UN House, Abuja, on 19 February 2009. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions. It is saddled with the responsibility of cooperating with Governments to ensure that adequate supplies of drugs are available for medical and scientific uses and that the diversion of drugs from licit sources to illicit channels does not occur.

Based on its activities, INCB publishes an annual report that provides a comprehensive survey of the drug control situation in various parts of the world. The 2008 INCB report launch was adjudged unique as it coincided with the 100 years of international drug control. Some of the highlights of the launch of the 2008 report included a welcome address by Mr Oliver Stolpe, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), who noted the increasing level of drug seizures particularly in the West African sub-region. He also noted the corresponding increase in the use of the region as a transit areas for the smuggling of cocaine, and called for decisive action to be taken in order to curtail the possible rapid spread of cocaine abuse in the region. Stolpe revealed that Nigeria now has the most effective law enforcement agencies in the entire

sub-region.

The launch also featured presentations by Minister of Justice Michael Aondoakaa, Executive Secretary of NAPTIP Mrs Carol Ndaguba, and the Director of



■ From left to right: Mr Oliver Stolpe, Officer-in-Charge of UNODC, Mr Otunba Lanre Ipinmosho, Director General, NDLEA, Mrs Carolyn Ndaguba, Former Executive Secretary NAPTIP, and Mr Olaokun Soyinka, Health Promotion Officer of WHO.

Narcotics of the National Agency for Food, Drugs and Administration Control (NAFDAC).

The high point of the event was a power-point presentation by Dr Ufot Inyang, Director General of the National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research (NIPRD). He gave a general overview of the 132-page report focusing on the regional highlights with specific attention to the West African region and Nigeria in particular. In line with the theme of the 2008 report entitled “The International Drug Control Conventions: History, Achievements and Challenges”, he noted that one of the achievements that have been made in the past century is the high degree of acceptance enjoyed by the three drug control treaties. Over 95% of UN member states are parties to the international drug control conventions. In addition, all major drug manufacturing, exporting and importing countries are parties to the conventions.

Conversely, Dr Inyang observed that some of the challenges faced by the international narcotics control board were the inconsistent implementation of cannabis control provisions throughout the world and inadequate primary prevention systems. The launch also featured a “question and answer” session where the participants of the event raised some questions and made some suggestions during the event.

Some of the dignitaries present were Director General of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Alhaji Lanre Ipinmosho, Mrs Carol Ndaguba, former Executive Secretary of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Mr Bassey Etim, Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Drugs, Narcotics and Financial Crime, and Dr Ufot Inyang, Director-General of the NIPRD, who reviewed the report.

Also in attendance were the Ambassadors of Belgium, Switzerland, and representatives of the French, German, Japanese and US embassies. Numerous government counterparts from the Federal Ministry of Justice, Independent Corrupt Practices and other related crimes commissions, National Agency for Control of AIDS, Nigerian Prisons Services and NAFDAC were also represented. In addition, representatives of UN agencies as well as civil society organisations were present in the launching ceremony.

UNDP holds orientation meeting with Federal Implementing Partners

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held an orientation meeting with Federal Implementing Partners on 19 February 2009 to sensitise them on the main planks of the 7th Country Programme (CP). The one-day meeting which took place at the UN House, Abuja, apprised participants of the key components of the 7th CP as outlined in the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP).

Welcoming the participants drawn from fifteen federal agencies, the Executive Secretary of the National Planning Commission (NPC), Prof Sylvester Monye, who was represented by Mrs Amina U Ibrahim, acknowledged the efforts of the UN system in the achievement of the previous Country Programme and its support towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. She reminded that the Country Programme Action Plan was a joint programme aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) II which incorporates the 7-Point Agenda. She stressed that "sharpening our programme instruments for use in the current programme cycle 2009-2012 will reduce the constraints we experienced during the last cycle".

UNDP Country Director Turhan Saleh welcomed participants and said that the meeting was an opportunity to understand the 7th

Country Programme and in particular the CPAP. He encouraged participants to raise questions on the content and substance of the CPAP. He highlighted some of the key considerations for the development of the 7th CP. These included stronger cooperation and mutual accountability, closer integration with the rest of the UN system, coherent thematic approach, sharper focus (substantive and geographic),

four programme theme groups to discuss more in-depth critical elements of the CPAP. The programme themes are:

- 1) Economic Governance and Private Sector Development;
- 2) Capacity for Political Governance and Conflict Prevention and Management;
- 3) Governance of Environmental Resources and Risks; and
- 4) Governance of the Country Response to HIV/AIDS.

At the close of the day-long meeting, the National Planning Commission noted that there were a number of expectations to be met at the outcome level through effective planning. In that regard, the MCF is an essential tool. Mr Saleh expressed satisfaction with the high level of participation at the meeting. He emphasised that the issue of sustainability was crucial and encouraged participants to engage in a continuous productive dialogue in order to have a successful 7th CP.

Representatives who attended the meeting came from the National Bureau of Statistics, Central Bank of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Finance, National Planning Commission, Bureau for Public Procurement, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, Ministry of the Niger Delta, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, Energy Commission of Nigeria, and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, among others.



■ Ms Amina Ibrahim, Representative of the NPC Executive Secretary Prof Sylvester Muonye, delivering the opening address at the meeting.

greater emphasis on technical depth, clear, meaningful and demonstrable results, improved programming instruments and M&E and tighter management of resources.

Adiya Ode, UNDP Poverty Alleviation Team leader, presented the Medium-term Cooperation Framework (MCF) which will facilitate monitoring and evaluation activities. The MCF to be signed with major implementing partners makes provision for more focus on the outcome level rather than the previous output level results.

After a questions and answers session, the participants broke into

IOM targets mobile populations to prevent Avian and Human Influenza

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Nigeria, under its Avian and Human Influenza (AHI) pandemic preparedness for migrants and mobile population project, embarked on social mobilisation activities in four target states as a measure to check the avian and human influenza pandemic.

The one-week IOM awareness campaign was held between 16 and 19 February 2009 for migrant poultry workers, traders and transporters in south-eastern Anambra State.

The activities, which included one-on-one contacts with livebird sellers and mobile populations and the distribution of information, educational and communication materials, kicked off in Afor-Nnobi and Afor-Agulu fowl markets before reaching out to six other locations in the state, including the Ogidi community.

The campaign, which is part of IOM's AHI pandemic preparedness for migrants and mobile population project, was carried out in close collaboration with key partners from government ministries and the Avian Influenza Control Project (AICP) at the federal, state and local government levels.

Addressing journalists at the Afor

Nnobi Fowl market, Idemmili South Local Government area, IOM Programme Assistant (AHI) James Atusue said the overall objective of



■ IOM team addressing members of the Target Group at Eke Ekwulobia Market, Anambra State.

the project was to encourage behavioral changes among migrants and mobile population. He added that the project was also aimed at strengthening the capacity of target groups through the implementation of activities that provide avian influenza and pandemic preparedness information for behavioral change. In view of the low level of change witnessed during the campaigns, he pleaded with members of the target group to reconsider their ways to handle poultry and birds to avoid a pandemic.

In his own contribution, the AI Human Health Component Desk Officer, Dr C J Okoye, of Anambra State described the programme as yet another life-changing process,

noting that humans and livestock cannot be detached in the day-to-day activities of a man. He expressed satisfaction with the

fact that the campaign had so far yielded tremendous results, although it would not be enough for IOM to relax.

Both Anambra State AI Desk Officer for Animal Health Dr Dan Obele and his communications counterpart, Mr Emma Udeagha, decried the lukewarm attitude of the poultry dealers in the state on the realities on

ground about the disease, and called for more advocacy to raise awareness of the people about its inherent dangers so that they would exercise restraint.

Prior to the commencement of the social mobilisation activities, orientation workshops were held in project target states late last year for leaders of the target group, community and religious leaders, states and local government AI desk officers, development partners and the media.

The project, which is funded through the UN Central Fund for Influenza Actions (CFIA), is part of IOM's efforts to encourage behavioural change among at-risk mobile communities.

Gender audit of UN System in Nigeria launched

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as Chair of the UN Team Group on Gender in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN Country Team (UNCT) - consisting of all heads of

UN agencies operating in Nigeria - officially launched the UN Gender Audit Exercise at the UN House in Abuja on 11 February 2009.

Prior to the launch, pre-audit training was organised in Jos, Plateau State, from 5 through 10

October 2008 for the eight participating UN agencies and their partners including government ministries. Follow up to the training, an audit exercise was organised from 9 to 20 February 2009, and it was during this period that the UN

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Gender audit of UN System in Nigeria launched

system-wide Gender Audit Exercise was launched.

The overall aim of this audit is to promote organisational learning on implementing gender mainstreaming effectively in policies, programmes and structures. In addition, it will assess the extent to which policies have been institutionalised at the level of the organisation, work unit, and individual staff member in respective UN agencies.

The Minister of Women Affairs, Mrs Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, who was represented by the Director for

Women Affairs in the Ministry, Mrs Ajanah, asked for the support of UNIFEM in assisting them to monitor and assess the relative progress they

the ministry to build organisational ownership for gender equality initiatives in Nigeria.

The launching ceremony was attended by a representative of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the Director of Gender Development, ECOWAS, Dr Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, Dr Aisha Usman Mahmood, Director of the National Center for Women Development, UN Resident Coordinator Albéric Kacou as well as the heads of FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO.



From left to right: WHO Representative Dr Peter Eriki, Director of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Mrs Ajanah, UN Resident Coordinator Albéric Kacou, UNICEF Representative Dr Suomi Sakai, and ILO facilitator from Geneva Ms Jyoti Tuladhar.

have made internally as government in gender mainstreaming and help

Nigerian peacekeepers acclaimed for heroic role in sustaining peace and stability in Liberia

The Head of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) pledged in Monrovia on 13 February 2009 that the Mission would continue to support the Liberian Government in dealing with incidents of violence and crime. Ms Ellen Margrethe Løj said a secure Liberia would attract investors and provide employment opportunities for Liberians. She made this statement when she awarded UN peacekeeping medals to almost 2,000 Nigerian soldiers serving in UNMIL.

Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) emphasised that UNMIL's role was to support and assist Liberia in achieving that goal and "we must never forget that Liberia's future rests firmly in

Liberian hands".

Describing Nigeria's contribution to Liberia as "outstanding", the SRSG added that, "Nigeria led the response to end the civil war and remains committed to bring Liberia back to peace, stability and development." She paid tribute to the heroic sacrifices made by many Nigerians who lost their lives in the cause of peace in Liberia and reminded the peacekeepers of the numerous challenges that still lay ahead, stating that the Mission had to work harder to ensure that post-conflict challenges were "systematically and properly addressed".

SRSG Løj underlined the support of the Nigerian contingent for the Liberia National Police (LNP) and UN Police (UNPOL) in curbing criminal

activities and violent public disorders. "More recently, the information that you have assisted in collecting while on joint field and border patrols, especially at Liberia's border with Sierra Leone is very vital to the maintenance of peace and security in both countries," the SRSG stated. She also alluded to the increased responsibilities that were being undertaken by the Nigerian troops in light of UNMIL's drawdown and the fact that the contingent had managed to conduct their activities without compromising the security of Liberia.

Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau, who headed the Nigerian Government delegation to the medal ceremony, expressed satisfaction over the performance of

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Nigerian peacekeepers acclaimed for heroic role in sustaining peace and stability in Liberia

Nigerian troops serving with UNMIL. While in Liberia, Lt.-Gen. Dambazau visited a number of Nigerian military units to assess their working conditions.

Since the early 1990s when Nigeria intervened in Liberia's conflict under the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), it has committed substantial human and material resources over the years in the search for peace in Liberia. Currently, members of the Nigerian contingent in UNMIL have been assigned in Monrovia and its environs, manning the sector headquarters, protecting the President and other key officials,

guarding key installations, such as the port, airport and parliament, including its support to the LNP and UN Police in combating criminal



Special Representative of the Secretary-General Løj decorates female UNMIL Nigerian officers with UN peacekeeping medals.

activities and public disorders. Those attending the medal ceremony included Mrs Henrietta

Mensa-Bonsu, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Rule of Law; Lieutenant General ATM Zahirul Alam, UNMIL Force Commander; Brigadier General Paul Boroh, UNMIL Force Chief of Staff; Mr Stephen Lieberman, Director of Mission Support; His Excellency Ebenezer Ayo Adigun, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Liberia and other members of the diplomatic corps from China, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana; Sector Commanders, members of the Nigerian community in Liberia and numerous well wishers.

