

ACTIONAID NIGERIA TRIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

# SWIFT

ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2020 – MARCH 2021



*Halima and cohort made a presentation during the inclusive girls' safe space activities at AA Raji Special School, Sokoto.*

**Credit:** ActionAid Nigeria | Lola Ayanda

**act:onaid**

## WHAT'S NEW?



In January 2021, ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) reached 9,000 women led households with cash for food items in Benue State through Start Fund. During this period, AAN donated PPEs (Facemask, hand gloves and infrared devices) worth 2.5 Million Naira to 2 hospitals providing care to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and food items worth 22.5 Million Naira to IDPs. 160 shelters were also constructed for IDPs.



To advance women's rights, ActionAid Nigeria is happy to announce the development and launch of the Feminist Hub. [www.feministhub.org](http://www.feministhub.org); a website created to assist Women's Right Organisations, women, girls seeking grants, mentorship, and reference materials. Also fund option for deepening women rights works in Nigeria has been launched along the website [www.nigeriawomenaspirants.com](http://www.nigeriawomenaspirants.com) designed to connect and support female political aspirants. This initiative is proudly funded by Global Affairs Canada as part of the implementation of the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N) Project.



ActionAid Nigeria is complementing the efforts of the Edo state government in tackling irregular migration; 1000 young persons have been trained and equipped in their chosen skill areas ranging from Graphics design and ICT, Photography, Hair styling, Fashion design, Fish farming, Makeup artistry, Shoe and bag making, Poultry, Aluminium fabrication and Bead making. Each cohort consisting of 20 beneficiaries will receive N650,000 cash grants and one-year shop rent to kickstart their businesses.



Lastly, ActionAid Nigeria has signed a letter of intent with World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food assistance to IDPs and displaced communities in Borno and Yobe States. This is a significant stride in contributing to the Humanitarian space in Nigeria.

*Welcome to another exciting edition of SWIFT!*

### EDITORIAL BOARD

**Ene Obi** - Country Director | **Funmilayo Oyefusi** – Director, Organisational Effectiveness | **Samuel Ikani** – Manager, Impact Assessment and Shared Learning | **Lola Ayanda** – Communications Coordinator | **Charles Petu** – I.T Coordinator | **Kemi Akinremi-Segun** – Sponsorship Communications Advisor | **Peace Chiamaka Eneja** – Communications Officer | **Kehinde Afolabi** - Communications Officer | **Imaobong Edukere** – Communications Intern | **Victory Idogho** – Multimedia Design Consultant.

### CONTRIBUTORS

Victor Emeruwa | Kehinde Afolabi | Kemi Akinremi-Segun | Lola Ayanda |

# DARE TO HOPE:

## RUKAYAT'S STORY

**R**ukayat Damisa, 30 is full of life and dreams. She keeps a broad smile, but she has been through what she describes as “going through the gates of hell”.

The death of her mother was more than a loss; it was the death of her dreams. “When I lost my mother, I was 9 years old, my father was not really present, he never bothered much about my welfare” she said at 20, her father forced her into early marriage.

The marriage barely survived one year: “my husband maltreated and molested me” said Rukayat. One day, fearing for her life, she moved out of her husband's home back to Auchi, Edo State. At Auchi she met an elder sister to her classmate. She was later informed that her classmate had travelled abroad and was 'doing well'. Inspired but angry that her best friend would travel abroad without informing her, she began to think of travelling to join her. Unknown to Rukayat, her classmate already had plans to ship her 'abroad'.

“I spoke to her (her classmate) and she told me not to worry that she would handle everything”. Elated, Rukayat abandoned her thriving hair salon business, gave out her belongings and embarked on the trip. She arrived Badagry; she was told that her flight 'abroad' would take off from Cotonou. At Cotonou, she was heaped with other migrants to Mali bound lorry. It was a tortuous 2-day trip.

Finally arriving at Bamako; they made another 8 hours journey to a rural community in Mali.

“When we arrived, my friend called me into a small hut and told me this is the 'abroad'. I was held hostage. She told me the only business there was prostitution and that I would have to work to pay her back” Rukayat was in shock for two days, she could not eat or drink. She begged to return but her friend told her, she will be killed



if she fails to comply.

Left with no choice in the hand of her cruel captor, she was forced to comply: “I worked and paid her 25,000 cfa (equivalent of 17, 500 naira) every day. I worked for 8 months; at that time I had paid more than 3 times what we agreed. I became a servant to my friend, I washed her clothes, cleaned her room and call her madam” Rukayat said.

It was time to return, but a few days to her planned escape more than 15 under-aged girls were brought into the 'home', she was devastated: “These girls are like 14 to 17years old, all of them are from different parts of Edo State. I cried for two days thinking about what will befall those children, but I had to escape for my life”.

Rukayat is back to her hair salon business in Auchi, she is attending the skills and capacity development programme organised by ActionAid Nigeria. At the completion of her training, her cohort will receive shop rent for a year, start-up equipment and N650,000 to kick start their business. She is also a Safe Migration Ambassador, an initiative that trained 30 returned migrants to become change agents in the communities by sharing their experiences and stories.





Umma

## BREAKING BARRIERS FOR **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**W**hen the cameras are not rolling, Umma Hirisu, 17 displays a clout of confidence, she pokes at her classmates, playfully order them to toss her around on her wheelchair. Umma made the A.A Special Secondary School proud when she scored credit pass in all her West Africa Examination Council, WAEC while she was in Senior Secondary School 2.

Umma suffered a badly treated measles as a child; she could not access quality healthcare on time. At 5 she became unable to walk because of the measles complication. As long as her mother was with her, it was easy to cope with schooling. But that would be interrupted when her mother died: "I was only 10 years old, when my Mummy died; it was very difficult for me because I had lost my Daddy when I was a toddler. My Mummy was my only motivation to go to school because she would encourage me when children of my age mock me because of my condition" said Umma.

Somehow, Umma found the courage to continue her education. The special secondary school's new policy on inclusive education tells on her renewed confidence: "I mingle easily with other students, we play together, we learn together. It is better than my experience before I

came to this school" Umma recounts moments of stigma and discrimination during her primary school: "In my primary school, I use to face a lot of teasing and name-calling from other students, it used to be discouraging though I try to fight back" she recalls.

"I enjoyed the boarding school here because of the cooperation and understanding of the teachers and the students but it was very difficult learning during the school lockdown. My elder sister whom I live with could not afford a phone that enables internet connection, we could not even eat well during that period" she said.

As part of the activities to assist vulnerable children from poor households and students with disabilities, ActionAid and Rural Women and Youth Development engaged in intense sensitisation on COVID-19 pandemic and the prevention methods. The intervention involved training girls and women on making locally made facemasks and hand sanitizers. About 500 transistor radios were distributed to girls in the safe spaces to enable them continue studies during the period. The impact was reflected in improved grades and enhanced self-confidence of the students.



One beneficiary of the COVID -19 support is Mairi Salihu, 16. Mairi wakes up at 5a.m; she immediately sets out of the house with empty kegs to fetch water. She would move round the neighbourhood where she sells the water to raise money for school. "From the age of 8, I began to sell water. I had to sell water every day to enable me go to school, if I do not sell water, I would not be able to go to school. I remember I did not attend school for two weeks when one of my clients travelled" she recounts. Mairi said she makes an average of 500 naira every day she sells water, from the money she pays for transport to school for herself and her siblings.

Her participation at the Safe Space has helped to shore up her confidence and the courage to continue her education despite the challenges of apparent poverty and lack of support from her parents. "I have learnt a lot of things during the school lockdown, I have learnt better hygiene, I learnt tailoring, I learnt how to make soap and how to protect ourselves and report cases of sexual violations" said Mairi.

The Breaking Barrier project in Sokoto State is targeted at schools in bordering communities with element of high vulnerability and high incidences of out of school children.

So far, the project is counting down at reaching 5250 girls and 300 boys in 15 schools across the state. School enrolment has also peaked because of the different activities such as the formation and monitoring of the Safe Spaces girls club, the capacity building of SBMC, Girls and other stakeholders on Advocacy, Taxation, Gender and Rights, including participation in the International Day of the Girl Child.

At the inception of the project in 2018, Maikuli Junior Secondary School and Binji Junior Secondary Schools had population of a very low student enrolment. One year into the project, 2019, the population of Maikuli JSS increased from 20 students to 92 students, enrolment at Binji Junior Secondary School also jumped from about 70 girls to 480 girls.

Yahaya Bello, Binji JSS School principal said the rise in school enrolment is because of advocacy and the incentives provided by ActionAid: "ActionAid provided some facilities for vocational training; they came here to train the girls in various vocational training. This really encouraged parents to begin to enrol their girl children into the school" Bello affirms.

**Mairi**



Modupe

## PUBLIC FINANCING FOR AGRICULTURE: EMPOWERING WOMEN

**M**odupe Suleiman never imagined sitting across the table with government officials to discuss State budget. Like any citizen, Modupe would soak in any budget declared by the government. “It (budget) is not to be argued” so she thought.

“I didn’t know that I have the right to make inputs in the budget” Modupe revealed how she felt dignified when she realised she had a say in the State budget.

“I now understand the budget, when they announce the budget, I can analyse and make my inputs in any budget, I understand the terms used in budget” she confidently explains.

During the budget public hearing of 2018/2019 session, she represented SWOFON members at the Kwara State House of Assembly. It was like a dream; an experience she never thought could happen.

Once shy and reserved, Modupe is nominated the secretary of the Small-scale Women Farmers

Organisation in Nigeria (SWOFON), Ilorin West, Kwara State. As secretary of the 5,000 SWOFON members in her district, she is required to take records, manage and coordinate activities of the group; those were skills she never thought she could exhibit: “There was no way I could have done what I am doing now without coming in contact with PFA. What I am today, I owe to the PFA programme” she said with a glint of glee.

Her farming activity too is not spared the impact of the PFA project. “I started in a 2 acre of land, doing small crops and poultry but things have changed since 6 years ago when I became part of the PFA project, I have expanded; now I have about 6 hectares of land where I grow cassava, beans, guinea corn and maize” she noted.

“I am a happier farmer today because of the exposure that I have received from PFA project. My sales have now improved because I package and brand my produce. Many women in my community are interested in farming. There is pride in farming now” Modupe said.



# PHOTO REEL



December 22, 2020: KICK4GRPS Novelty Match in FCT Excluded Communities ActionAid Nigeria organised the KICK4GRPS novelty match in Abuja to increase awareness on Gender Responsive Public Service (GRPS) and raise the interest of youths in engaging duty bearers on the subject.



January, 2021: StartFund COVID-19 Response in Benue ActionAid Nigeria donated PPEs worth 2.5 Million Naira to 2 hospitals providing care and food items worth 22.5 Million Naira to IDPs in Benue State.



February 23, 2021: The Country Director, Ene Obi Inducts Edo State Governor, His Excellency, Mr. Godwin Obaseki as Safe Migration Ambassador.



February 25, 2021: #AlternativesToMigration Wife of the Edo State Governor. Her Excellency, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki, flanked by Ene Obi, Country Director, as ActionAid presents livelihood equipment to 1000 youths and beneficiaries of the Migration 2 (Dare To Hope Project) in Edo state. The beneficiaries cohorts (20 per cohort) also received seed grants of N650,000 each and 1 year rented shops to start their businesses.



February 26, 2021: Migration Reporting 20 Journalists participated in a media training facilitated by ActionAid Nigeria in Benin. Modules include Essential Guides Towards Impactful Migration Reporting – to mention a few. At the end of the training a working group to counter the narratives of irregular migration was formed.



March 3 & 4 2021: 30 Journalists participated in ActionAid Nigeria Media Master class on Policy Engagement for preventing violent extremism during and post COVID19. The training was funded by Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).





## LOCAL RIGHTS PROGRAMME: THE LONG ROAD TO ENDING PATRIARCHY

Iyaji Shehu has never been to school; she is unsure of her age, but estimates she is about 50 years old. In early 2019, The mother of 10 was nominated by the Bauchi State house of representatives to serve as the Women Leader for her Ward (group of communities) and represent them during State level meetings; this was a dream she never thought could be actualised.

Before 2006, Kwagal community was operating a patriarchal system. The village council was all male-member group, headed by the village chief making decisions for the community. Education for the girl-child was not popular and children only went to school when they wanted; the community school was dilapidated and it was just assumed government will do the renovation when they are ready. Engagement with the government was only during elections and the people voted the preferred candidate of the village council.

Iyaji's quest for leadership and promoting the rights of women and girls began in 2006 when ActionAid Nigeria and partner, FAHIMTA commence the implementation of the Local Rights Programme in Kwagal. The trainings and sensitisations enlightened her on rights, accountable governance and it increased her resolve to fight for the rights of women and children.

At one of the sensitisation meetings, the community nominated her to lead the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC). "We had just one goal, to increase children's enrolment and retention in school. Overtime, we added advocacy to the state and local government to get the school renovated and the school enrolment drive was a huge success."

Over the years, Iyaji consistently remained a

voice for women in her community, and when the state of the community became worsened in 2018, Iyaji led a team of 3 women and took a call for renovation of schools' campaign to the senatorial district representative. In 2019 the community school was renovated, new roofs and windows fixed, desks and chairs replaced, building repainted and a perimeter fencing constructed for the health centre in Kwagal.

Another giant stride in Kwagal is the inclusion of women in the village council. There are now 2 women, including Iyaji amongst the 6 members of the village council "Our opinions at the village council meetings count because they know we are passionate about community development. I have had other communities like Tubule, Lomin Fulani, Sindigau, Dakwa seeking experience sharing with me on how to engage duty bearers".

Beyond serving as a women leader, Iyaji aspires for more. As 2023 elections draw nearer Iyaji plans to continue lobbying duty bearers, mobilising people in the community especially women, to leverage their voting power to demand the needs of the community. In the nearest future, she will explore the possibility of vying for a Councilor.

"90% of men in the community have now embraced that women and girls have rights. Kwagal is no longer a patriarchal community but a community that recognises and respects women and girls' rights. I am truly grateful to ActionAid Nigeria and partner, FAHIMTA for empowering me, women in the community, and the community at large. We now know our rights, how to advocate, lobby and we will continue to hold the government accountable. When women lead, patriarchy ends" Iyaji quips in Hausa.



## SW!FT WOMAN

Spotlight on a women's rights champion

**T**hink about an exemplary leader, think Tasallah Chibok. The humility personified Tasallah, popularly referred to as Mama T, has left her mark in the sand of times in the development sector. Holding a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science and a Master of Public Administration Degree from the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University; She consistently demonstrated diligence, excellence, and commitment in the application of the immeasurable knowledge she has acquired.

In her years of active service as a Lecturer, Program Manager, Head of Program Quality, Head of Sector Programme, and Director of programme, colleagues, partners, and beneficiaries can attest to her unmatched skills in Program Development, Policy Analysis, Public Health, Global Health, Community Development, Program Evaluation, Human

Rights, and Proposal Development to mention a few.

Her willingness to share knowledge and her method of knowledge sharing makes her exceptional. Besides her prowess in her chosen field, she has mentored, motivated, and impacted many lives as a mother, grandmother, guardian, and a builder. Her high sense of humour corroborates her kind nature.

Mama T worked in ActionAid Nigeria for 17 years in various capacities including her last four years as the Director of Programmes. She took a bow from ActionAid Nigeria in December 2020. Her passion, dedication, and support especially in ensuring that women's rights are mainstreamed into all ActionAid Nigeria's projects will forever be remembered. For her invaluable contributions to ActionAid Nigeria's mission, Tasallah Chibok earned the SWIFT Woman accolade for this edition of SWIFT. We wish her the best as she moves on from here.

**Community Sponsorship**  
Empower Communities. Create Change.

Mark Angel



# I SPONSOR A COMMUNITY WITH ACTIONAID NIGERIA

**PLEASE JOIN ME**



Donate via the GoFundMe page: <http://bit.ly/3nuebwi>

OR via bank transfer to

**FirstBank**  First Bank 2024080600

**OR call +234 700 707 0700**



## One More Thing!

**A**t ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) the 2nd week of January is usually anticipated by most staff. It is the week AAN holds her annual programme meeting with all staff across the country meeting within the same physical space to review the previous year, plan for the new year, wine and dine in celebration of our collective achievements and recognition of outstanding staff.

Sadly, COVID19 happened and in compliance with the nation's precautionary measures, meeting was declared virtual, and our first reaction was how do we do a virtual party?

On the 13th of January 2021, the meeting began, with the theme "Planning for Visibility Impact and Sustainability" and the event was declared opened by the Board Chairperson, Dr. Jummai Umar-Ajijola, ably represented by the Vice Board Chair, Mr Mac Imoni Amarere. Her message of reflection reiterated that we are in unprecedented times with the emergence of

the Covid-19 pandemic; the widening gaps between the rich and the poor and commended AAN for the quick adaptation to the new times and migration to the digital space.

As always, the week ended with 'the party', our first virtual party ever! And it was fun! Andrew Mamedu, the new Director of Resource Mobilisation & Innovation received the 15 years-long service awards, whilst Blessing Egumamhe and Azubike Nwokoye were presented with the 5 years long service award.

The grand event ended with a surprise send forth for Tasallah Chibok, the outgoing Director of Programmes who served in ActionAid Nigeria for 17 years before her retirement in December 2020.

Although a virtual party was great, we can't wait to return to the groovy days when we can share hugs, dance together and offer a handshake without fear.

**act:onaid**



**Abuja**

ActionAid Nigeria  
Plot 477, 41 Crescent,  
off Sa'adu Zungur Avenue  
Gwarimpa, Abuja.



+234 (0) 812 8888 825-7



ActionAidNigeria



nigeria.actionaid.org



ActionAidNigeria



@ActionAidNG

Your feedback is important to us. Please send comments or enquiries to

**[Communications.Nigeria@actionaid.org](mailto:Communications.Nigeria@actionaid.org)**