

Place premium on youth empowerment, government told

Coming on the heels of the UN's World Youth day celebration, UCHE UDUNGWO, President of Youth Development and Empowerment Foundation (YODEF) in this chat with CHRIS ONYAM, believes that the youth are indeed the pillars of any nation.

What is the idea behind the establishment of YODEF?

The idea of establishing YODEF was conceived about five years ago and by the grace of God, in the year 2002, that dream became a reality. In essence YODEF was founded in the year 2002. I happen to be one of the co-founders and the president since inception.

What is the target or mission statement of the foundation?

The idea of having this non-governmental organisation is to see how we can fashion a new way of life for the youths of Nigeria and beyond. We had some kind of reflection on what has been going on in our country as it concerns the youth, especially in the wrong direction. They have been involved in a lot of social vices which we consider inimical to the development of the nation and so we decided to form this organisation and we have the following as its aims and objectives: to create, promote and sustain broad exchange and interaction among the youth nationwide and beyond. To encourage discipline among the youth by instilling in them moral values, spirit of patriotism and loyalty to constituted authorities. To champion the cause for a better future for the youth. To take decision against all forms of discrimination against the youth and violence among the youth. To re-orientate the youths on the dangers of drug addiction and abuse, banditry, prostitution and other vices and also to join the fight against HIV/AIDS.

YODEF also serve as a bridge between Nigerian youth and their counterpart for the purpose of mutual understanding of each others development and learning process.

We also try to elevate in all forms, values and ideas that can enhance Nigeria's national image, thereby fostering global integration and permanent culture of peace.

We try to facilitate and carry on exchange of programmes and ideas that border on youth building and emancipation both in Nigeria and abroad. We conduct seminars, symposia's conferences, workshops and other forum of learning for the development and empowerment of the youth. And finally we try to confer consult, affiliate and maintain contact, and co-operate with individuals, organisations institutions, bodies of persons established in Nigeria and overseas having objectives, in whole or in part, similar to those of our foundation. These are the basic aims and objectives of YODEF.

Practically speaking, what landmark achievement has YODEF recorded since it started?

We have made our modest contribution since our establishment in 2002 when we started. We went into what we call advocacy sensitization, bringing the youth together for them to know that their future lies in their hands. And in so doing, we have been able to hold several seminars; we call it youth enlightenment seminars. Sometime in 2004, July 27 precisely, we held a seminar at the Federal Palace Hotel with the theme, Violence and Crime the Bane of Youth Development and Empowerment in Nigeria. We had speakers like Mr. Frank Oditia, the



• Uche Udungwo

retired Commissioner of Police. We also had Prince Tony Momoh, former minister for information and culture as the guest speaker while Ambassador Segun Olusola chaired the session. It was a very wonderful seminar.

We got several feedbacks thereafter, which spurred us to do more of such seminars and we have conducted over five or six seminars in the series. We had one last year at Rochester Gardens with the theme, The Role of the Youth in Community and National Security; we also had the other one on ethical issues on HIV/AIDS.

We have been holding seminars that border on youth issues and I think by God's grace we still have more to do.

The World Youth Day was celebrated recently, could you tell us about the millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the implications for the Nigerian Youth?

The United Nations, some years back, came up with an idea of setting aside a day each year to celebrate the youth; to let the youth realise that they are of essence in whichever society they belong and they decided that August 12 each year be set aside for youth. Hence, it is called United Nations International Youth Day.

Overtime, since the formation of YODEF, we have been joining other youth world over to celebrate this day. Why it is so important of late is in view of the UN's declaration, which took place in September 2001, when world leaders and governments met in New York to make the millennium declaration. In that declaration they came up with eight goals known as Millennium Development Goals. The idea is for the world to come together as a kind of global village where there would be a kind

of synergy or symbiotic relationship among the nations. And the idea is for the developed world to aid the poorest nations of the world through debt relief, aids – both technical and human resources. They now decided that between 2000 and 2015, this target would be met. These goals are: to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger, to encourage universal basic education, to promote gender equality, to reduce child and maternal mortality, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, to ensure sustainable environment and develop global partnership for development. In these eight goals, they have youth at heart.

Like I have always said, the youth is an integral part of any society. Youths therefore, are the greatest asset any nation can have; not only are they legitimately regarded as future leaders, they are, with emphasis, indeed the greatest investment any nation can have for any nation's development. So you can understand the position of the youth in any nation, and in any society.

We know that the youth are the hardest hit when it comes to HIV/AIDS scourge, what is YODEF's programme to ensure that it is nipped in the bud?

It is a very pathetic situation world over, more especially the poor nation, which Nigeria is one of them. The unfortunate part of this syndrome is the fact that most people are yet to come to the reality that HIV/AIDS exists. This we have discovered over time when we carry on some enlightenment campaign. And when we come on one-on-one contact with them, you see them toying with this issue, which is very deadly. In that respect and in view of the MDGs, earlier in the year, YODEF decided to launch a massive campaign in that matter, beginning from Lagos.

mittee uses the established difference between three levels of obligation: respect, protect and fulfil.

(1) Respect obliges states to refrain from engaging in any practice or activity that denies access to adequate water not interfering directly or indirectly with the enjoyment of the right to water. This obligation includes the protection of water in crisis situations.

(2) The obligation to protect the right to water requires states to prevent third parties, such as individuals, groups or corporations, from interfering in any way with enjoyment of the right to water. Protection includes adopting effective legislative and other measures to protect disadvantaged groups in society and to avoid discrimination. According to the committee, such a control also includes the obligation to adopt effective legislative and management measures in the case of privatization of water systems.

Implementing the right to water campaign in Nigeria

The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.

The Bread of Life Development Foundation, a non-governmental organisation has launched an advocacy towards the implementation of the Right to water campaign in Nigeria.

Programme Manager of the NGO, Babatope Babalobi said in a statement that, the advocacy campaign is to ensure that the Nigerian government strengthens the implementation of the right to water and make it fully enforceable in our national laws, as in other countries like South Africa and Uruguay to guarantee every Nigerian citizen, access to safe and affordable water towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7, target 10. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 does not presently have any provision on the right for water.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights in November 2002 adopted General Comment 15, which states that the human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use.

The General Comment sets out the following components of the right to water. Each person must have access to water that is: Sufficient: An adequate quantity must be available in accordance with international guidelines. This normally means 50-100 litres, and an absolute minimum of 20 litres; Safe: Water used for personal and domestic uses must be safe; Physically accessible: Water must be within safe

not reducing a person's capacity to buy other essential goods. This means that essential amounts of water must sometimes be provided free.

Most countries including Nigeria have not put in place policies and practices to achieve this right, in spite of the fact that most of their citizens are facing untold hardships because of lack of access to water said Babalobi. Adding that If Goal 7 of the MDGs of ensuring environmental sustainability through several targets including halving by the year 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to drinking water and basic sanitation is to be achieved in Nigeria, then we must seriously start to think of guaranteeing each citizen's right to water for securing his or her basic livelihood.

When characterizing states national obligations, the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural com-

Civil Society Policy Forum

The World Bank Group (WBG) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Civil Society Teams are organizing a Civil Society Forum during the 2006 Annual Meetings of the institutions at the Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore from September 14-20, 2006.

The Forum will bring together Bank and Fund staff, CSO representatives, government officials, and others to discuss important issues. All accredited CSO representatives are welcome to attend the sessions, which will be held in the Civil Society Space located in the main venue of

Other sessions in the process of being scheduled include discussion of planned reform of the International Monetary Fund; Women and Global Trade; launch of The Global Transparency Initiative Singapore Charter and discussion; Education for All; Debt Sustainability for Middle Income Countries; Social Entrepreneurship in Asia; Multi-stakeholder Session on Illegal Logging; Electricity Governance; Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Reconstruction; World Bank Conditionality and discussions with World Bank South Asia Vice President and World Bank Vice President for

BRIEFS

BLF constructs toilets for school pupils

The Bread of Life Development Foundation, is presently implementing a Wash in Schools Project in several primary schools in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos state, which involves teaching the school children basic hygiene practices (particularly Hand washing with Soap), and advocacy for the provision of safe water and gender sensitive toilet facilities in the School.

As part of this campaign, our organization with the support of the Japan Water Fund recently constructed a Block of Gender sensitive toilet in Mother's Pride Montessori School in Oke Odo Area, Lagos State, and this was launched on May 27th, 2006. Our experience in this project shows that most schools in Lagos state, particularly in rural communities and low resource settings do not have good water and sanitation facilities. Knowledge of WASH related issues are also very poor among the students, teachers, and the parents. The consequence is that most children continue to needlessly suffer from the effects of WASH related diseases.

We also discover that they are not standards or regulatory mechanisms for ensuring that Public and Private schools provide basic and

Sanitation facilities for their pupils. This may be as a result of the fact that the WASH concept is yet to be embraced by Nigerian National and State Governments.

The project has shown that with about \$800 (about N1000, 000.00), a block Gender sensitive Ventilated Improved Toilet can be provided. The continue failure of private and public schools to provide water and sanitation facilities for their pupils are therefore unpardonable.

State Governments should set the pace by ensuring that all public schools are provided with basic water and sanitation facilities including gender sensitive toilets. The present situation where school pupils and even teachers defecate in unsanitary conditions and at times nearby open spaces can no longer be tolerated.

LEAP Africa holds 3rd leadership awards November

LEAP Africa, in its continuing quest to recognize and encourage Nigeria youth that are contributing positively to the growth of their communities, will be holding its third leadership awards in November 2006. The most outstanding young people that were also change agents in their communities who are role models because of their activities, are the expected beneficiaries of these awards.

LEAP (Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability and Professionalism) Africa, a not for profit organization, holds this annual award to identify young people in Nigeria who have initiated change projects that are focused on improving the lives of others. It is also aimed at encouraging and supporting these young people in their efforts, and to showcase their impact on local communities and demonstrate that the youth can effectively serve as change agents in Nigeria.

The stories we hear and read in our mass media, and even foreign media is that Nigeria is devoid of good people. But there are millions of Nigerians engaged in very honest enterprises, and many young people among these Nigerians have shown enthusiasm in making Nigeria a much better place than they met it, said Ndidi Nwuneli, chief executive officer and founder of LEAP Africa. Recognizing these young people will gear them up for bigger responsibilities and greater achievements in the future, she added.

In this year's edition, the young leaders will be chosen from people between the ages of 18 to 30. These young people must have demonstrated leadership in business and economic development, environment, education, law and human rights, and other areas that had impact on the lives of the people in their communities. They must also be able to show how others can replicate their initiatives. In addition, these young leaders will be role models to encourage other youth.

The support we have received from our partners, Nokia and the International Youth Foundation have been immense. Only this year, Nokia extended its sponsorship of the youth leadership programme for another two years, said Mrs. Nwuneli. With the support, we've been able to expand the scope of the programme to include many more youth across Nigeria.

The beneficiaries of the awards will receive prizes at a ceremony on November 16, 2006. In addition, the awardees will be given funds to