

As part of the activities marking the week, which runs from May 20 to May 26, the coalition in addition to observing a candle-light memorial day, called on the Federal Government and the incoming administration to guarantee Universal Access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

Working on a theme 'Free the Drugs, Stop the Death', the coalition, which comprised 17 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), associations, and movements working across the length and breadth of the country in the area of HIV and AIDS, and led by ActionAid Nigeria, outlined its demands in a charter and urged relevant governments, including Nigeria, to keep their promises on adequate health services to combat the pandemic.

According to the group, in a statement by Mr. Solomon Adebayo, Reproductive Health Sexual Health Project, ActionAid, Abuja, "the Global AIDS Week of Action provides an opportunity for activists around the world to stand together, generate political pressure and demand action

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their leaders on best practices and strategies to combat HIV/AIDS".

"The theme for this year's Global AIDS Week of Action is 'Free the Drug, Stop the Death'. Civil Society Groups and PLWHA in the forefront of the campaign are therefore demanding that governments should keep their promises to ensure that Nigeria meets the target of Universal Access on prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010".

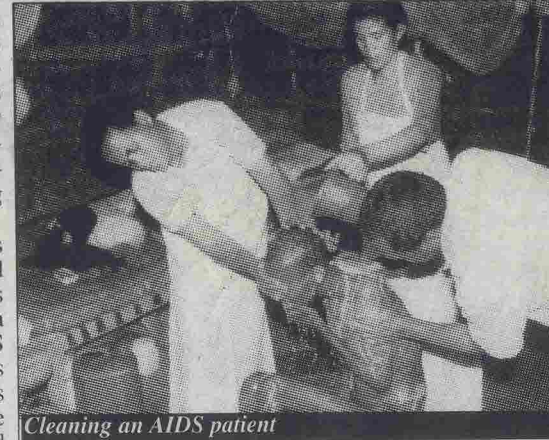
The coalition demanded the immediate tripling of annual HIV and AIDS spending to developing countries by the club of rich nations (G8), especially as they plan to meet in Germany to discuss the universal access goal in June 2 2007; claiming that the week of activism is critical given the grave picture of HIV and AIDS epidemic in Nigeria.

"Currently 1 in 20 Nigerians is HIV+. The

2005 Sentinel Surveillance showed that 200,000 AIDS deaths were recorded. This increased by 50% in 2006 and it is estimated that by 2010, three million Nigerians would have died of AIDS. And in a country where about one million Nigerians currently require Anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs, statistics show that only 85,300, including children, are on the drugs".

The coalition insisted that adequate steps are yet to be taken to address the identified challenges and ensure that Nigeria does miss the 2010 targets. "This year, Nigeria committed 7 billion naira to HIV and AIDS initiative; this is the highest in the nation's history. However, donor agencies across the country have also committed over one billion dollars to efforts to combat HIV and AIDS".

In its Charter of demands, the coalition focused on stigma and discrimination and called



Cleaning an AIDS patient

for the establishment and enforcement of progressive legislation that protects the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS at all levels e.g. national, workplace, schools, prisons, and during VCT/PMTCT interventions or following disclosure.

On access to treatment, there was a call for rapid scale up of access to comprehensive, sustainable, quality treatment, care and support for PLWHA by 2010 HIV programmes are integrated with programmes for TB and other opportunistic infections, to provide the widest access to care possible..

Among the organisations and associations that signed the charter were FAHIMTA Women and Youth Dev. Initiative, Bauchi; Kids and Teens Concern, Ondo; Youth Against Sickle Cell Disease (YOTASCID), Kafachan; Association of Women Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (ASWHAN), Abuja; Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Lagos; ChristianAid, Abuja; Community Based Organisation in 11 states; A37- Youth Advocacy group; Society for Family Health (SFH), Abuja; ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), Abuja; and Media AIDS Project (MAP), Abuja.

Water: FG, Others Urged on Efficient Delivery

The Water and Sanitation Media Network (WATSAN) has called on the Federal Government and reminded newly elected political officers holders to initiate programmes that will increase the efficiency of service delivery in the water and sanitation sector, on assumption of office.

The group in a statement jointly signed by its interim coordinators, Regina Eche-Fali, Babatope Babalobi, and Omoniyi Omojugbagbe noted that during the electioneering Campaign, almost all Political contestants promised to improve the access to water and sanitation services.

It therefore urged those that have been declared winners at the State and Federal levels to prioritise the development of the water sector in order to fulfill this promises.

"It is regrettable that succeeding tiers of Governments have paid lip service to the development of the Water and Sanitation services in the country, where as, this sector holds the key to the achievement of almost all the other Millennium Development Goals, (MDG)s, a situation whereby none of the thirty-six (36) states has developed a water policy as a road map to the development of the Water and Sanitation services in their respective states can not longer be tolerated".

"We therefore urge the newly elected State Governors to redress this anomaly as soon as they assumed duties. The Water and Sanitation Media Network wishes to see a situation where thirty-six (36) states in the country conducts an assessment of its water and sanitation resources (where this has not been done) to determine infrastructural and investment gaps that has to be bridged".

"We also want the formulation of water sector

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reform policies that will ensure the set-up of separate agencies to oversee the asset ownership, regulatory and service ownership functions of water delivery in order to increase the efficiency of service delivery and sustainability of the State Water Agencies".

"At the Federal level, the challenge that faces the new administration is not only to increase funding to meet the needs of the sector but to ensure the funds budgeted is prudently managed. WATSAN is worried that the huge funding for the sector sourced from the Federal budgets and debt relief gains have not practically translated to improve water and sanitation Services delivery in the country, and hopes the new Federal administration will introduce measures that will ensure the reduction

of scarcity".

The Network urged all its members through-out the country to diligently discharge their responsibility of keeping government accountable to the people. "We urge our members who are reporting Government Water agencies to conduct in-depth investigations on Budgeting expenditures for the water sector, State of Projects, implementation and sustainability of projects implementation.

We must start to ask questions and demand answer from Government Officials in the Water Ministries, or what projects are being implemented and where the funds budgeted for the water sector is going. We must follow the money".

The Water and Sanitation Media Network also unveiled plans to organise a training work-shop for its members, in order to equip them with the skills of its effective monitor of government program and investigate corruption in the water sector.

Climate Change Creating New Refugees – UN

The United Nations (UN) has claimed that increasing global temperatures and land degradation are forcing more people to migrate, creating a wave of environmental refugees who need UN protection.

Speaking in New York on the climate issue, Janos Bogardi, a professor at the United Nations University urged the United Nations to recognise that droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes and other environmental factors (many of which are worsening because of climate change) have played a role in the migration of millions of people worldwide.

"Accurate, comprehensive numbers on envi-

ronmental migrants are hard to come by, since migrants often leave home for a variety of reasons", Bogardi said.

Bogardi, director of the university's Institute for Environment and Human Security based in Bonn, Germany, said many in the international community are wary of addressing environmental migration because they fear the vague term might water down current UN protections for refugees.

"If we overload the UN convention, we are weakening one of the strongest tools for protecting refugees. The United Nations should find other means of helping environmental migrants.

Environmental factors often lie at the root of more obvious causes of migration," he told a panel discussion at the UN headquarters.

Bogardi suggested that either the UN should adopt a new convention aimed solely at protecting environmental migrants or that provisions for such migrants should be included in international environmental treaties.

He proposed three broad categories to distinguish among people who leave their homes: those who are influenced only in part by worsening environmental conditions, those who leave to escape the worst effects of a poor environment, and those who are forced to flee a disaster.

The don claimed that, like other migrants, environmental migrants most often flee the developing world for richer countries, though he