

Annual Report 2023



Action Health Incorporated

Action Health Incorporated (AHI) is a non-profit organization committed to creating opportunities for young people's successful transition to productive adulthood. AHI was founded out of a deep concern about young people's limited access to preventive information and life skills to deal with the myriad of issues confronting them.

Since our establishment in 1989, we have served as an advocate and catalyst for creating better life options for young people in Nigeria. In partnership with individuals and institutions around the globe, AHI has helped to drive advocacy in the public domain and engender action by states and the federal government to address the sexual health and development needs of young people in Nigeria.

We envision a world where every young person's right to achieve their full potential is guaranteed, where all young girls and boys can grow up to assume control over their lives, having the basic information, skills, and services to enhance their health and well-being.

Learn more about our work on our website at <https://www.actionhealthinc.org>



Contents

- 04** Foreword by the Executive Director
- 05** 2023 Impact by the Numbers
- 07** Empowering Young People with Lifesaving Information and Services
- 11** Supporting Young People's Transition to Productive Adulthood
- 16** From Tradition to Transformation: *A Grandmother's Fight Against FGM*
- 17** Special Focus: *Young People's Transformation at AHI*
- 18** Building the Capacity of Service Providers and Future Leaders
- 20** Fostering Resilience in Response to Nigeria's Humanitarian Crisis
- 22** Success Story: *Impact of Skills Acquisition Programme*
- 26** Our Donors and Partners



Foreword by the Executive Director

With immense pride and gratitude, I present the 2023 Annual Report of Action Health Incorporated (AHI). This year has been one of profound transformation, impactful interventions, and remarkable achievements. Our journey is a demonstration on the need to prioritize contexts, meaningful participation, as well as, recognize the importance of mental health in initiatives to enhance the agency of young people.

The landscape of our work continues to evolve, influenced by the complex challenges and opportunities that shape the lives of young people today. Nevertheless, in 2023, we have made significant strides in our mission to create a healthier and more equitable society. This year, we deepened our focus on vital areas such as the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), capacity building for health service providers, leadership development in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected regions. Each of these focus areas is a testament to our holistic approach to driving sustainable change and fostering environments where young people can thrive.

Our commitment to ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in high-prevalence communities has borne fruit, with substantial community pledges and the empowerment of young advocates who are now leading the charge against this harmful practice. Stories like that of Madam Ibiwumi Adejumo, who transformed from an FGM supporter to a staunch advocate for its elimination, remind us of the power of education and community engagement.

In our Youth-Friendly Clinic, we have continued to build the capacity of future healthcare providers. Training programs for medical and nursing students have equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver adolescent and youth-friendly health services. The Resident Doctor Programme further reinforces our commitment to nurturing competent and compassionate healthcare professionals dedicated to serving the unique needs of young people.

Our Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship (SLDF) stands out as a beacon of hope and empowerment. The fellowship has been instrumental in developing a new generation of leaders in SRHR across Africa. The diverse backgrounds and expertise of this year's fellows, coupled with an intensive and enriching curriculum, have prepared them to champion sexual well-being and social justice in their respective communities.

Our humanitarian interventions in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States have addressed the urgent needs of crisis-affected populations, providing life-saving assistance, improving access to essential services, and supporting survivors of gender-based violence. The resilience and courage of individuals like Asabe Marcus, who transformed her life through our Skills Acquisition Programme, inspire us to continue our efforts to provide opportunities and hope to those in need.

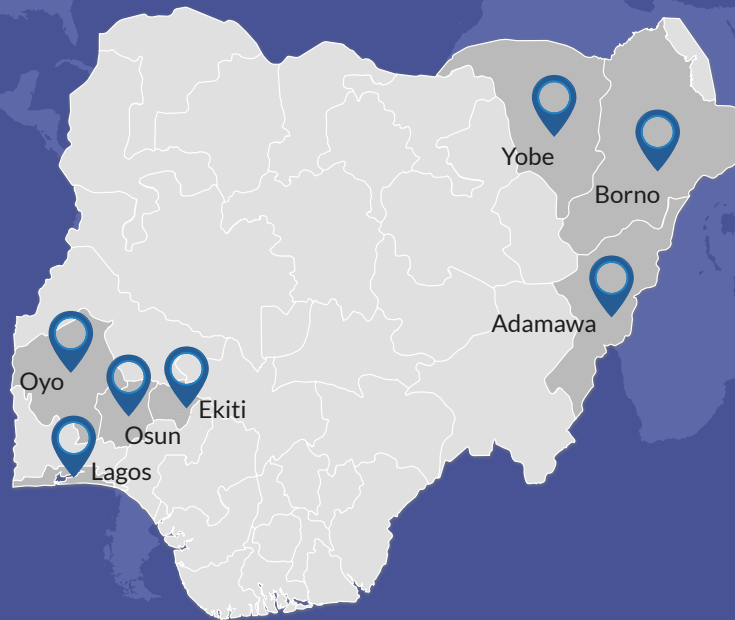
Lastly, our Youth Skills Development Programme has continued to shape the futures of young people like Bolu Oguntola and Kemi Gbolagun, who have returned to AHI in new roles and contributed significantly to our mission. Their experiences and growth underscore the importance of providing opportunities for young people to lead and innovate. The road ahead will undoubtedly present challenges. Yet, we are committed to building a future where every individual, regardless of circumstance, has the opportunity to thrive. Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners, donors, and supporters. Together, we will continue to drive change and inspire hope.

On behalf of the entire AHI team, I extend my deepest gratitude to our donors, partners, and supporters. Your unwavering commitment fuels our mission and empowers us to create lasting change. Together, we are making a difference.

- Adenike Esiet
Executive Director / Co-Founder

2023 Impact by the Numbers

Geographical Coverage in 2023



Empowering Young People with Lifesaving Information and Services

26,600+

adolescents reached directly with sexuality education and life skills sessions.

1,932

people empowered to promote their mental health and that of peers in their communities.

328,500

individuals reached with SRH and life skills information through AHI's social media channels



Supporting Young People's Transition to Productive Adulthood

6

teenagers benefitted from a one-year internship and learning journey to self-discovery

95

next-generation doctors and nurses trained in youth-friendly service provision

10,826

marginalized adolescents built resilience through access to life skills, financial literacy, and improved livelihood opportunities

21

new leaders in the fields of human sexuality and SRHR trained to create change in their communities

Fostering Resilience in response to Nigeria's Humanitarian Crisis



2,494

births attended to by skilled birth attendants and health personnel



7,487

children vaccinated in routine immunization campaigns



115,392

People reached with SRH/GBV Information



36,983

individuals reached by mobile medical activities



4,131

people provided with mental health and/or Psychosocial Support counselling services



2

Women and Girls Safe Spaces supported to provide SRH/GBV services



151

vulnerable women and GBV survivors supported with livelihood skills



3,265

adolescent girls gained improved life skills at Safe Spaces to strengthen their agency and build a communal safety net



2

One-Stop Centres established in Gulak, Madagali LGA (Adamawa) and Gashua, Bade LGA (Yobe)



18

Health Facilities supported



Empowering Young People with Lifesaving Information and Services

Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Activities

The Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) unit provides adolescents aged 10 to 19 with essential information about their sexual and reproductive health. This knowledge helps young people understand themselves better, develop healthy beliefs and positive attitudes, and make informed decisions.

Working in collaboration with the Youth-Friendly Clinic, AHI's SBCC Unit is a cornerstone of our efforts to address the challenges faced by Nigerian young people, enabling us to gain a deep understanding of the challenges faced by Nigerian adolescents and young people, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to navigate these challenges.

AHI offers a variety of engaging SBCC activities, reaching over 26,600 adolescents in 2023.

These activities include:

- School Assembly Outreaches
- After-School Facility-Based Sessions
- Girls' and Boys' Fora Discussion Groups
- Online Discussion Groups
- Commemorative Day Celebration

2023's SBCC highlights include:

- **International Women's Day** collaboration with Tech4Dev, featuring an inspiring session led by Ms. Blessing Ashi, an AHI Youth Skills Development Program alumna

and Tech4Dev's Women Techstars Program Lead.

- Celebration of the **International Adolescent Health Week** with students at Mainland Senior High School.
- **World Menstrual Hygiene Day** celebration with CMS Girls' Secondary School, reaching hundreds of students.
- **Summer Program**, held annually during the long vacation between school years, which was attended by over 240 adolescents who participated in subject tutorials, skills budding sessions, games and other social activities. A session on healthy eating habits, led by a registered chef, Mrs. Comfort Alabede of Kenfort Foods, dispelled food myths and provided practical tips for healthy eating habits.



AHI prioritizes youth voices and actively seeks their input on how our programs can better meet their needs. In **Focus Group Discussions** with young people representing the senior and junior secondary school students, they highlighted a desire for more skills acquisition and interactive entertainment. We are actively incorporating this feedback to enhance future programming.

Key Achievements of our Social and Behavioural Change Interventions

Our efforts are making a difference:

- **26,600+** Adolescents Reached: We provided vital sexual and reproductive health information to a significant number of young people.
- **1,882** Empowered for Mental Wellbeing: The Teenage Festival of Life equipped students to prioritize their mental health.
- **60** Girls and Boys Informed: Girls and Boys Fora provided gender-specific information on health, relationships, and sexuality.
- **328,500+** Young People Engaged: AHI's new media channels reached a broad audience with health and well-being messaging.



Teenage Festival of Life: Empowering Youth through Mental Health Advocacy

AHI's signature event, Teenage Festival of Life (TFL) is more than just a competition; it's an "edutainment platform" empowering young Nigerians to speak out on critical issues. The 28th edition focused on a particularly pressing topic: mental health, under the theme: "Mental Health: Adolescents and Young People Taking Action."

This theme resonates deeply in Nigeria, where data shows that 1 in 6 young people aged 15-24 are at risk of a mental health issue. Globally, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among adolescents, with about one adolescent life lost to suicide every 11 minutes according to UNICEF. Through scriptwriting, drama, poetry, and song, participants explored the issue and encouraged their peers to seek help without fear of stigma.

The festival ignited creative passion. When the 2023 theme was announced, **343** schools participated in the scriptwriting workshops held across Lagos State's six Education Districts, and **370** schools submitted entries in the drama, poetry, and song categories. After a rigorous selection process, consisting of a review of the entries by AHI staff and a Pre-Judging stage, nine schools consisting of the top three in each performance category were selected for the grand finale.

The grand finale, was hosted by popular MC, Ifeanyi Martins, with Ms. Eunice Olayemi and Mr. Gabriel Nzere, AHI's 2023 Youth Skills Development Programme (YSDP) beneficiaries serving as the youth compères. The event brought together government officials from the Lagos State Ministry of Education, Lagos State Education Districts I-VI, and Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development, UNFPA representatives, and medical professionals from Lagos State University Teaching Hospital and Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

In addition to the performances of the top three entries in each creative category, the event featured a panel discussion on promoting adolescent and young people's mental health and well-being. A major highlight of the grand finale was a performance by guest artiste Mr. Olanrewaju Ogunmefun, aka Vector, who also gave a motivational speech to inspire young people to pursue their dreams without fear of failure.



The festival provided an opportunity for young people to transform complex topics into engaging presentations that entertained and educated their peers. Participants channelled their creative energies into producing songs, stage plays, and poems while also honing their skills in public speaking and compèring.

Key figures relating to the 2023 Teenage Festival of Life:

- **1,048** students and teachers participated in the scriptwriting workshops.
- **370** schools submitted entries for the TFL's competitive performances.
- **1,932** people were empowered to take action to promote their mental health at the TFL grand finale.



Provision of Youth-Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

AHI's Youth-Friendly Clinic is a safe space where adolescents and young people aged 10-24 can access vital SRH and general health services. Our goal is to empower young people to reach their full potential by addressing their health needs in a supportive and confidential environment.

- **Personalized Sexuality Education:** Confidential sessions addressing individual needs and concerns.
- **General Health Services:** Comprehensive check-ups and treatment for various health issues.
- **SRH Testing and Counselling:** Services for HIV, Hepatitis B, and contraception, with expert guidance.
- **Referral and Support:** Assistance in accessing specialized care when needed.



Beyond the Clinic Walls:

AHI's Youth-Friendly Service Provider, a full-time nurse practitioner, takes the clinic on the road. Collaborating with our Youth Ambassadors and the Resident Doctors, they conduct outreach programs at schools and communities around Lagos State.



Reaching Thousands

In 2023, AHI's Youth-Friendly Clinic served:

 **6,961**

young people through outreach and clinic visits.

 **3,884 (55.8%)**

 **3,077 (44.2%)**

demonstrating AHI's commitment to making healthcare accessible to young people in Lagos.

2023 Teenage Festival of Life

370

schools submitted entries for the TFL's competitive performances.

1,048

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Supporting Young People's Transition to Productive Adulthood

Youth on a Learning Journey to Self-Discovery

AHI's Youth Skills Development Programme (YSDP) isn't just about gaining skills; it's a transformative year of self-discovery for young adults. This 12-month programme equips secondary school leavers (aged 16-19) with the tools they need to thrive in the working world and beyond.

Each year, YSDP fosters the growth of exceptional young people. The 2023 cohort included Deborah Abanikanda, Eunice Olayemi, Aishat Ayinde, Annabel Eloka, Jethro Akinteye, and Gabriel Nzere. As Youth Ambassadors they played a vital role in AHI's operations, including interacting with youth clients at the AHI Youth Centre Library and Youth-Friendly Clinic, and implementing social and behavior change communication (SBCC) programs. These programs included school assembly outreaches, commemorative day observances, and holiday programs for in-school youth.

Personal Transformations

Deborah Abanikanda:

Deborah was excited about the opportunity for self-development that YSDP offered her. *"In the first few months of joining the program, I learned to plan for and lead SBCC sessions at the Youth*

Centre and school assembly outreaches. I am happy to say that I developed greater self-awareness and self-confidence from the training and mentoring received from the Programme Officers I worked with daily."

Aishat Ayinde:

Aisha arrived at the program very reserved and shy. Initially, she found it challenging to serve at the AHI Youth Centre's Front Desk as the first point of contact for youth clients and adult visitors. She said, *"The first few weeks were nerve-racking, and I always left work feeling overwhelmed. However, with encouragement and support from my supervisors, I began to enjoy the diverse interactions I had with visitors. By the time I moved to another department, I really missed the interesting encounters I had every day."*

Annabel Eloka:

Annabel joined the program wanting to improve her leadership skills and ability to work well with others. *"I was very happy to represent AHI at numerous community outreach activities, external official assignments, and workshops. I even got to serve as a rapporteur at a major workshop when AHI was developing the Online Comprehensive Sexuality Education platform with UNFPA and UNESCO, with participants from across the country."*

Jethro Akinteye:

One of Jethro's goals when he applied for the program was to improve his teaching skills, but he hadn't anticipated everything that entailed. *"When you choose to be a teacher, you have to learn patience. Managing the crowd of junior secondary students at the Youth Centre for afterschool activities can be daunting; they're all so restless and always talking at the same time, at the top of their voices. One certainly has to learn how to manage the chaos without losing one's mind."*

Gabriel Nzere and Eunice Olayemi:

For Gabriel and Eunice, being nominated to serve as comperes at the Annual Teenage Festival of Life in November was the highlight of their YSDP experience. Gabriel shared, *"This was a dream come true! While in secondary school, I had always looked forward to performing on stage at TFL along with my mates. So, to now find myself compering the event for an audience of over 2,000 people was all I had dreamt of and more!"*



SBCC Summer Hoilday Programme - Nutrition Session



SBCC Summer Hoilday Programme - Game of Scrabble

Fostering Livelihood Opportunities for Marginalized Youth: The GIRL-H Project Success Story

July 2023 marked the conclusion of the *Girls Improving Resilience through Livelihood and Health (GIRL-H) Project*, a 12-month initiative sponsored by Mercy Corps. The program aimed to reduce illiteracy and poverty levels among marginalized adolescent girls and boys in Lagos State by fostering pathways to formal education, economic opportunities, and civic engagement.

Implementation and Reach

The project was implemented in five local government areas: Alimosho, Epe, Kosofe, Ojo, and Somolu. AHI's partnership with the State Universal Primary Education Board and the Lagos State Agency for Mass Education facilitated access to safe learning spaces. A total of 560 Safe Spaces were established, and 560 learning space mentors were trained to facilitate learning sessions.

Building on longstanding relationships in various communities, AHI secured the support of key community leaders, including LGA Chairmen, Baales, and Community Development Associations. This collaboration enabled the mobilization of potential participants, resulting in the enrollment of **14,079** individuals (9,856 females and 4,223 males) in Safe Spaces across the five LGAs.

Building Skills, Building Lives

Of the 14,079 beneficiaries enrolled, **10,826** successfully completed the 12-week training in life skills, basic literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy. Furthermore, **3,471** beneficiaries were linked with public and private sector partners for short- and long-term skills training. These participants transitioned into various economic and livelihood pathways, including food and catering, beauty, garment and textiles,

carpentry, plumbing, cobbler craft, event decoration, agency banking, and mobile telco agency.

Beyond the Numbers: A Lasting Impact

The implementation of the GIRL-H Project in Lagos State significantly impacted the intervention communities through:

- **Enhanced Knowledge and Skills:** Participants acquired new knowledge and developed self-awareness and positive self-image, expanding their horizons and increasing their confidence. The interactive and hands-on nature of the sessions fostered active participation and enthusiasm, boosting motivation to learn.
- **Improved Collaboration and Communication:** Through group activities and discussions, participants learned to collaborate effectively, listen to different perspectives, and express their ideas clearly.



- **Strengthened Self-Awareness and Personal Growth:** Safe-Space Sessions and Champions Day activities provided platforms for self-reflection, goal setting, and personal development. Participants gained a deeper understanding of themselves and their aspirations, and these sessions also facilitated interactions between young people, their parents, and other stakeholders.
- **Building Social Connections:** GIRL-H participants had opportunities to interact with peers who shared similar interests, fostering new friendships and a sense of belonging within the learning community. This created a safe network that will continue beyond the project's closure.
- **Increased Community and Government Participation:** Significant progress was made in gaining high-level community and government support in Lagos. This support recognized the vulnerability of adolescents and young people, leading to enhanced efforts to improve their well-being and development.

Empowering Girls and Engaging Communities to Fight Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a globally recognized violation of the human rights of girls and women. Despite a global decline in its prevalence, FGM remains practiced in some parts of the world, including Nigeria.

AHI, with support from UNFPA, is making a difference in Nigeria. Our interventions in three states in southwest Nigeria – Ekiti, Osun, and Oyo States – target both adolescent girls, who are at high risk, and community leaders and stakeholders who play crucial roles in eradicating this practice.

Empowering Adolescents to Champion Change

AHI trained **75** in-school and **45** out-of-school girls in digital technology skills, empowering them to raise awareness about FGM and become "End FGM Champions." The girls learned about the different types of FGM, its consequences, sexual and reproductive health, information and communication technology, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and advocacy skills. This comprehensive training equipped them to create awareness, encourage prevention, and support survivors. With support from AHI, the girls formed End FGM clubs, reaching nearly **6,500** people in schools and places of worship; and they continue to expand their reach through awareness campaigns.

Engaging Community Leaders and Stakeholders

AHI conducted advocacy and entry-level engagements with key religious, traditional, and community leaders. We supported inter-generational town hall sensitization meetings, built consensus among community leaders, police, and other law enforcement agencies, facilitated community dialogues, and organized public declarations. During these declarations, community leaders and members publicly denounced FGM and pledged to stop the practice.

A total of **32** communities pledged to end FGM, ensuring future generations of girls and women will have their rights respected. After these pledges, AHI helped establish surveillance systems in these communities to monitor and prevent FGM. We also set up clear referral pathways for community leaders to manage any cases that arise.

Awareness Campaigns and Public Engagements

To cap off the year, AHI commemorated the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence by partnering with the Ministry of Women Affairs in Ekiti and Osun States to organize public walks against gender-based violence. Over **500** persons participated in these walks led by Chief Mrs. Titilola Adeleke, the wife of the Osun State Governor, and Mrs. Olayemi Oyebanji, the wife of the Ekiti State Governor.

Additionally, with UNFPA Nigeria's support and in collaboration with the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, we conducted a #StandAgainstFGM walk and community sensitization program in the Bariga community of Somolu LGA, Lagos. This campaign raised awareness about FGM, the services available to address it and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), and the importance of protecting the rights and well-being of girls and

women. During the campaign, we sensitized **500** people through a community walk and an additional **200** people in Ashogbon Market with a dance and drama performance by Tru Dance Art.

Key Achievements of the End FGM Intervention



- **120 girls** became anti-FGM champions.
- **32 communities** publicly declared to end FGM and established surveillance structures to monitor and report cases.
- **834 community members** publicly committed to ending FGM.
- **312 men and boys** engaged in activities promoting gender equality and positive masculinities related to FGM.
- **Over 3,000 people** were sensitized about GBV during public awareness walks in Ekiti and Osun States.



FGM Osun Olorunda Public Declaration

From Tradition to Transformation: *A Grandmother's Fight Against FGM*

Madam Ibiwumi Adejumo, the Iyalaje of Dagbolu in Olurunda Local Government Area, Osun State, had long been a staunch supporter of female circumcision. She believed it was an essential practice for properly raising girls and preparing them for adulthood. In fact, she had been pressuring her daughter-in-law to circumcise her granddaughter, causing significant tension between them.

A Turning Point

Everything changed when Madam Ibiwumi attended a community dialogue organized by AHI with traditional rulers and key community influencers in Dagbolu.

These sessions encouraged participants to examine their beliefs and values related to FGM, impart new knowledge, exchange experiences, and reveal and share complex inner feelings while addressing conflicting attitudes towards the practice.

This experience marked a turning point in Madam Ibiwumi's perception of the benefits of female circumcision. She learned that FGM is not only a violation of the human rights of girls and women but is also associated with significant health risks and consequences.



Championing a Healthier Future

Now, a passionate advocate for ending FGM, Madam Ibiwumi educates her family and community about the dangers of this practice and the legal consequences for those who perform it. Her dedication earned her the nickname "Iya Madabefun" ("Madam Do-Not-Circumcise" in Yoruba), a testament to her influence.

Madam Ibiwumi's story exemplifies the power of education and open dialogue in transforming deeply held beliefs. Her courage inspires others to challenge harmful traditions and build a future where girls' rights are protected.

Special Focus:

Young People's Transformation at AHI

In 2023, two 2016 and 2017 graduates of the Youth Skills Development Programme (YSDP), **Bolu Oguntola** and **Kemi Gbolagun**, returned for short internships between their university graduation and their call-up for the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Their experiences showcase the transformative power of AHI's programs.

For Bolu, returning to AHI was an eye-opening experience. "It gave me a better ground to be able to face the world outside. I learnt new things and I was able to achieve things I didn't think I could actually do. And it made me work outside my comfort zone." Kemi, on the other hand, found the experience enjoyable. "There are several activities that I participated in that were very fun and interesting, especially TFL. It was a lot of fun. And other projects, like GIRL-H... It was nice to work in the different places."

Comparing their experiences after secondary school when they joined AHI as Youth Assistants to their roles as Graduate Interns after completing their university education, both felt the difference was significant. Kemi felt empowered: "As interns, we played a more meaningful role in projects. We took charge and contributed significantly to AHI's mission." Bolu reflected on her personal growth: "Coming back, actually, I was no longer a 17-year-old. Like now I'm a university graduate - what do I actually want to pursue? Coming to AHI has opened my eyes and given me a proper perspective of what I want to do aside from school and every other thing."

The Teenage Festival of Life (TFL) was a major highlight. Bolu was deeply involved in the preparations and process, and wrote the programme report. Kemi enjoyed planning something from scratch and seeing it come to life.

Beyond TFL, both interns were deeply involved in other programmes. For Kemi, it was the Girls Improving Resilience Through Livelihood and Health (GIRL-H) Project. "For GIRL-H, I worked across all the 5 local government areas in Lagos State. I applied more knowledge because I worked with each programme officer, gaining an overview of the entire programme." Bolu, on the other hand, focused on the Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship (SLDF). "Working with Dr. Uwem Esiet, AHI's Co-Founder on SLDF and interacting with participants from different countries in Africa was definitely a highlight for me."

A key insight from their second coming to AHI, their parting advice was for AHI to continue recruiting passionate individuals because these are the kind of people who make a greater difference in the lives of young people. Bolu suggested, "In recruiting Youth Assistants and Staff we should continue to look for people passionate about AHI's mission." Kemi added, "Managing young people can be challenging and it takes friendly individuals who can take the heat."





Building the Capacity of Service Providers and Future Leaders

Empowering the Next Generation of Youth-Friendly Health Service Providers

In addition to providing services and conducting outreach activities, the Youth-Friendly Clinic also supports AHI's capacity-building interventions.

One key intervention involves training 500-level medical students from the Department of Community Health and Primary Care at the College of Medicine, University of Lagos (CMUL), and nursing students from the Post-Basic School of Mental Health Nursing, Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos. Participants receive comprehensive training in Concepts and Principles of Youth-Friendly Health Service Provision through lectures, group discussions, role-play, and scenario-based problem-solving sessions. The objective is to equip medical and nursing students with practical knowledge and skills to effectively provide adolescent and youth-friendly health services in healthcare settings in Nigeria. In 2023, **61** penultimate-year (500-level) medical students and **20** post-basic mental health nursing students were trained.

Another capacity-building initiative is the Resident Doctor Programme, which hosts doctors undergoing postgraduate training in the Departments of Community Health at Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) and Lagos

State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH). They spend a month at the AHI Youth-Friendly Clinic, providing consultations to clients and conducting outreach activities in secondary schools and communities in Lagos, gaining the hands-on experience and learnings to better address the unique needs of young people. At the conclusion of their residency, they deliver an educational presentation on a topic related to their area of interest or specialization. These capacity-building interventions are vital in enhancing the proficiency of future healthcare providers, ensuring that they are well-prepared to meet the health needs of young people in Nigeria.

Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship: Raising Vanguarders for SRHR in Africa

Since 2004, AHI's Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship (SLDF) has empowered a generation of leaders to champion sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across Africa. This year's program was particularly important, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the operationalization of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA). Amidst growing opposition to adolescent and youth access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and persistent SRHR violations such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and

forced marriages, the SLDF's mission has never been more critical.

AHI welcomed **21** participants from Nigeria and Somalia to the 2023 fellowship. The Somali Fellows are young professionals supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Somalia country office as part of the Somali Youth Fellowship Program (SOYO). The cohort, comprised of 10 females and 11 males, brought diverse backgrounds, including Creative Arts, Economics, Education, Journalism, Law, Medicine, Public Finance, and Social Development, to the fellowship.

During the two-week intensive program, SLDF fellows engaged with a multidisciplinary faculty to explore advanced concepts, theories, policies, and programming issues, which helped them to gain a deeper understanding of the intersection of sexuality, development,

and social justice. The faculty included experts in sexuality, human rights, gender advocacy, policy development, and program management. The fellows also interacted with leaders in business, philanthropy, and the performing arts to discuss transformational leadership and the role of government in addressing SRHR issues, gaining broader perspectives on these critical issues.

Fellows honed their leadership, networking, public speaking, and advocacy skills to advance sexual well-being. They participated in interactive sessions, dialogues, field trips, and projects, acquiring practical skills to make an immediate impact in their organizations and communities. Highlights of the fellowship included visits to notable Lagos landmarks such as Lekki Conservation Centre, the National Museum, Oniru Private Beach, and Ikeja City Mall.



SLDF Fellows with Mr Moyo Ajekigbe



Fostering Resilience in Response to Nigeria's Humanitarian Crisis

AHI's Humanitarian Interventions

8.3 million people in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY States) needed humanitarian aid in 2023, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) **Nigerian Humanitarian Needs Overview**.

The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Nigeria highlighted the critical need for gender-responsive humanitarian actions to address the challenges facing women and girls and to ensure crisis-affected people enjoy a safer and healthier environment with adequate access to essential services.

AHI's humanitarian programs responded to three of the four strategic objectives (1, 2, and 4) of OCHA's Nigeria Humanitarian Country Team in 2023. Our interventions provided life-saving assistance to avert severe threats to life and health, improved access to essential services for crisis-affected individuals, and ensured that victims of SGBV received necessary services and care. AHI's interventions focused on alleviating disease burdens, enhancing livelihood opportunities in inaccessible communities, internally displaced people (IDP) camps, and host communities, and reducing gender-based violence.

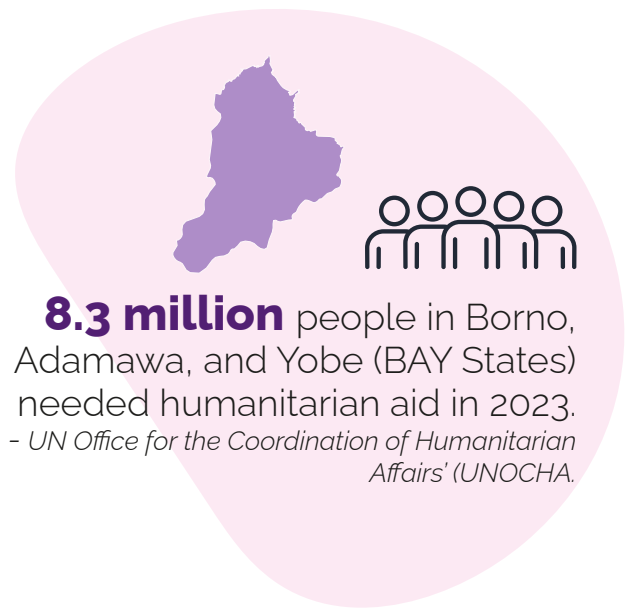
Key Achievements with OCHA's Support in 2023

- **Capacity Building:** Trained healthcare workers on Integrated Community Case Management (iCCM) and infection prevention and control (IPC).
- **Mobile Medical Teams:** Deployed nurses and community health extension workers (CHEWs) to conduct weekly health outreaches in extremely hard-to-reach communities.
- **Essential Medicines and Supplies:** Procured and pre-positioned essential medicines, including malaria and cholera kits, to support vulnerable populations.
- **Reproductive Health Services:** Supported reproductive health services with delivery kits for clean and safe deliveries in remote communities and PHCs.
- **Primary Health Services:** Strengthened four PHCs to improve primary health services and the quality of care in surrounding communities.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** Trained health workers to provide MHPSS services in host communities and IDP camps.

- **Immunizations and Insecticidal Nets:** Increased routine immunization coverage for children and distributed long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLIN) to pregnant women.
- **Health Promotion:** Organized health promotion, Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), hygiene promotion, and PSEA sessions with vulnerable populations.
- **Monitoring and Engagement:** Conducted monitoring visits and community stakeholder engagement meetings to assess project implementation and gather feedback for improvement.

Key Achievements with UNFPA's Support in 2023

- **Training:** Trained GBV case workers and psychosocial support services (PSS) counsellors to provide comprehensive GBV and SRH services.
- **Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC):** Conducted SBCC sessions at women- and girls-friendly safe spaces (WGSS) on GBV, SRH, and PSEA.
- **Health Worker Support:** Provided stipends to health workers affiliated with the WGSS.
- **Community Outreach:** Conducted sessions to raise awareness on GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response, encouraging visits to the WGSS.
- **Clothing Provision:** Procured and supplied culturally appropriate clothing to safeguard the SRHR of women and girls and mitigate GBV risks.
- **Safe Spaces:** Renovated and equipped two one-stop centres, offering safe shelters and multi-sectoral SGBV response services, enhancing access to social support and skills acquisition.



Success Story:

Impact of Skills Acquisition Programme

Asabe Marcus's life took a devastating turn when she tragically lost her husband during an attack by insurgents. Left to care for her three children alone, she faced immense challenges. However, the Women and Girls Dignity Center offered Asabe a lifeline of hope and opportunity. Here is Asabe in her own words.

"My name is Asabe Marcus, and I find myself in the role of a widow with three children due to the tragic loss of my husband during the insurgency. Life has been exceptionally challenging since then. I want to express my deep gratitude to AHI for guiding me to the Women and Girls Dignity Center, where I had the opportunity to acquire skills in shoe and bag making.

Before enrolling in the Skills Acquisition program, I had no knowledge of crafting bags or shoes. The guidance, support, and teachings provided during the livelihood training have empowered me to become proficient in bag-making. Despite not having a machine at home, my skill facilitator graciously allowed me to use hers, enabling me to practice and improve after our classes. The impact of this newfound skill became evident when my neighbor, impressed by a bag I made in class, asked me to create souvenirs for her wedding. The joy and excitement I felt were indescribable. I shared the news with my skill instructor, who generously offered the use of her machine. Two weeks later, I successfully crafted 40 bags for the wedding souvenirs. This experience not only brought me joy but also provided a source



of income, reinforcing my commitment to mastering this skill for the well-being of my children and myself.

Beyond learning shoe and bag making, the Women and Girls Dignity Center has also equipped me with skills in making liquid soap, air fresheners, and bar soap. This expanded skill set has instilled in me a profound sense of empowerment and independence, knowing that I can create valuable and useful products. My gratitude towards AHI knows no bounds, as words fail to capture the immense impact of their support. Without AHI, I cannot fathom where I would have gained access to such invaluable skills.

As I continue my learning journey, I am committed to passing on these skills to my children, ensuring that they, too, have the opportunity to learn and build a secure future. Once again, thank you, AHI, for being a beacon of hope and transformation in my life."



Photos from the SBCC International Womens Day





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- Adamawa State Ministry of Women Affairs
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- Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
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Action Health Incorporated

Corporate Headquarters
No. 17, Lawal Street. off Oweh Street
Jibowu-Yaba, Lagos

Northern Region Office
Suite A1-A3, Otnam Plaza, 11 Bama Road
Maiduguri, Borno State

Tel: +234 812 344 5837
E-mail: info@actionhealthinc.org
Website: .actionhealthinc.org