

SPECIAL EDITION

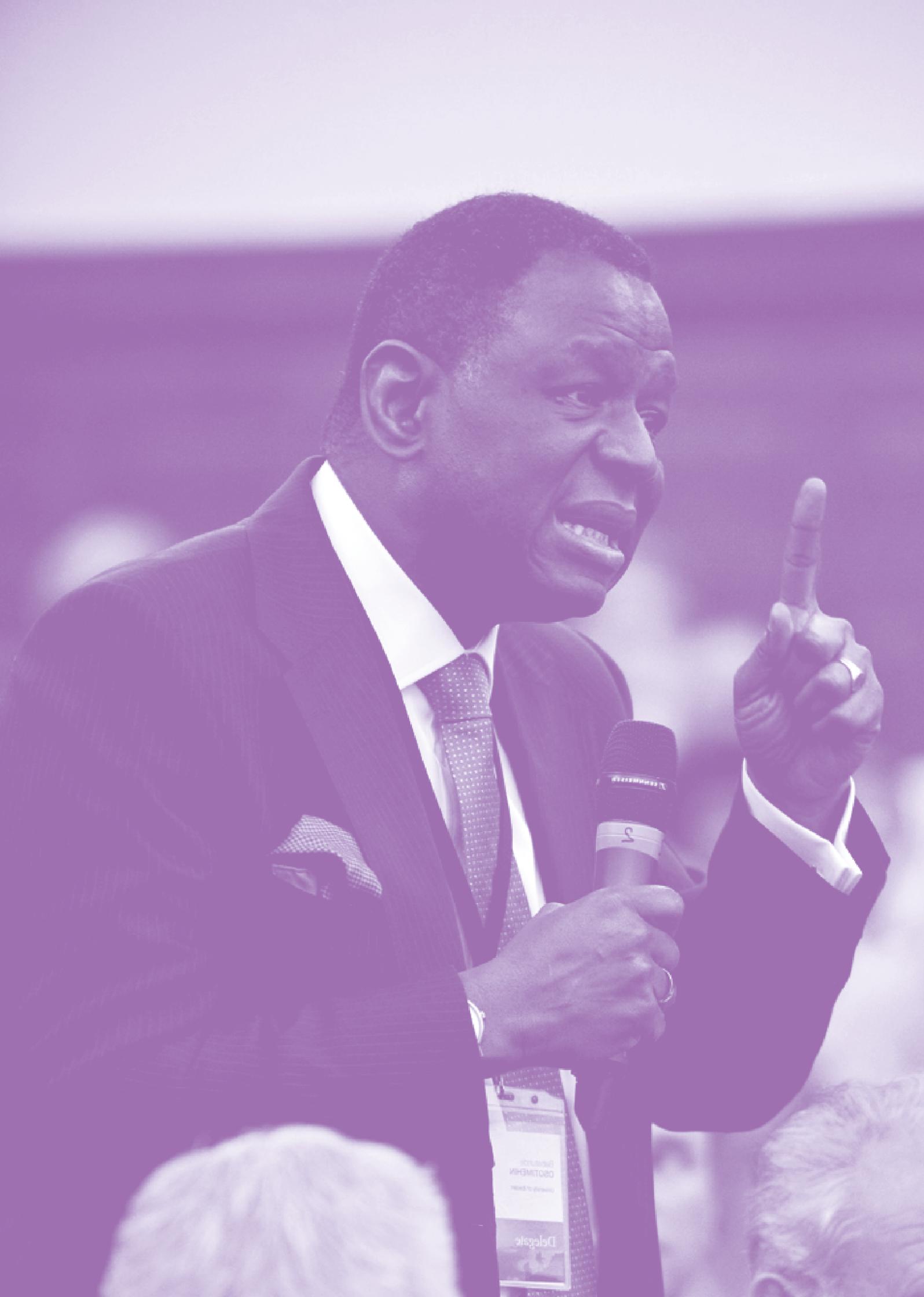
NEWSLETTER

NIGERIA



DR. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN
(OON)
(1949 - 2017)

*A Leadership of
Empathy and Commitment*



PREFACE

Born on 6 February 1948, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, astute physician and academic led a life that combined exceptional professionalism with deep humanitarian values, in service to the world's most vulnerable, marginalised and disempowered people.

Having served first in a local capacity as the first Executive Director of National Agency for Control of Aids (NACA), and as Minister of Health for Nigeria, he became well acquainted with the health and gender problems that are typical to developing countries.

His eventual elevation to the global stage as Executive Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) gave him the opportunity to drive solutions for local problem (across developing countries) through a top-down approach that showed deep understanding of the plight of vulnerable individuals, excluded people, and neglected communities.

It is worth noting Dr. Osotimehin served as the first Director General of National Agency for Control of Aids at a time when the body was only a presidential committee, with a restricted scope of operation. Yet, his ability to develop systems of effective research, information gathering and policy implementation was so impressive that the body was eventually approved to become a Federal Government agency, in which he then became the pioneer director.

His time in NACA saw an increase in 250,000 HIV-positive Nigerians receive anti-retroviral treatment, while also being able to attract the World Bank assisted HIV/AIDS Programme Development Project to Nigeria in order to shore up funds needed for implementing the goals of NACA. His tenure as Minister of Health in Nigeria was marked by his dogged insistence for all the states in the federation to build a national health plan that focuses on primary healthcare.

These experiences, coupled with his vast knowledge on global health practices, accounts for his appreciation for data-driven analysis of health and reproductive problems, as well the urgency with which he pushed for solutions.

While Dr. Osotimehin's burial took place on 21st July 2017, a series of

memorial events in, New York, London, Abuja, UN System Nigeria and Ibadan were held in his honour between July 10th and July 21st. These events brought together dignitaries and friends from all across the world, including the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres who was represented by the Acting Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem. This Newsletter briefly captures the national and international celebration of his life in the wake of his passing, as well as the humanitarian content of his legacy.

More than just being an excellent performer in positioning UNFPA's mandate, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin was a man who believed in people, and this was visible in the outpour of tributes at his funeral and in the course of the various memorial activities held for him. Clearly, Dr. Osotimehin would be remembered not only as a man that developed solutions to address the plight of the marginalised and vulnerable people in economically-disadvantaged or conflict-ridden communities, but also, as a person who inspired many at the individual level, and whose life exhumed empathy and a commitment to ending human sufferings of all kind.

Yet, while the world may remember him mainly for an illustrious career dedicated to the service of humanity, those who worked with him, people who were directly or indirectly under his tutelage appreciated how much of a humane and exceptional character he was. And the difference he made in their lives.

We dedicate this special edition of Newsletter to honour him.

Signed
Mabingue Ngom
Regional Director
West & Central Africa







The news of Dr. Osotimehin's passing came to all as a shock, and for each passing day afterwards, our hearts were heavy with grief for an exceptional man who would no longer be physically present with us.

At the inaugural Babatunde Osotimehin Lecture held on 10th July 2017 in London, his daughter, Omolola, reaffirmed that her father's passion for the empowerment of women and girls in the developing world was reflective of an innate passion that shone through in the way he raised her and three of her other sisters, inspiring a confidence in them that they can achieve their full potentials.



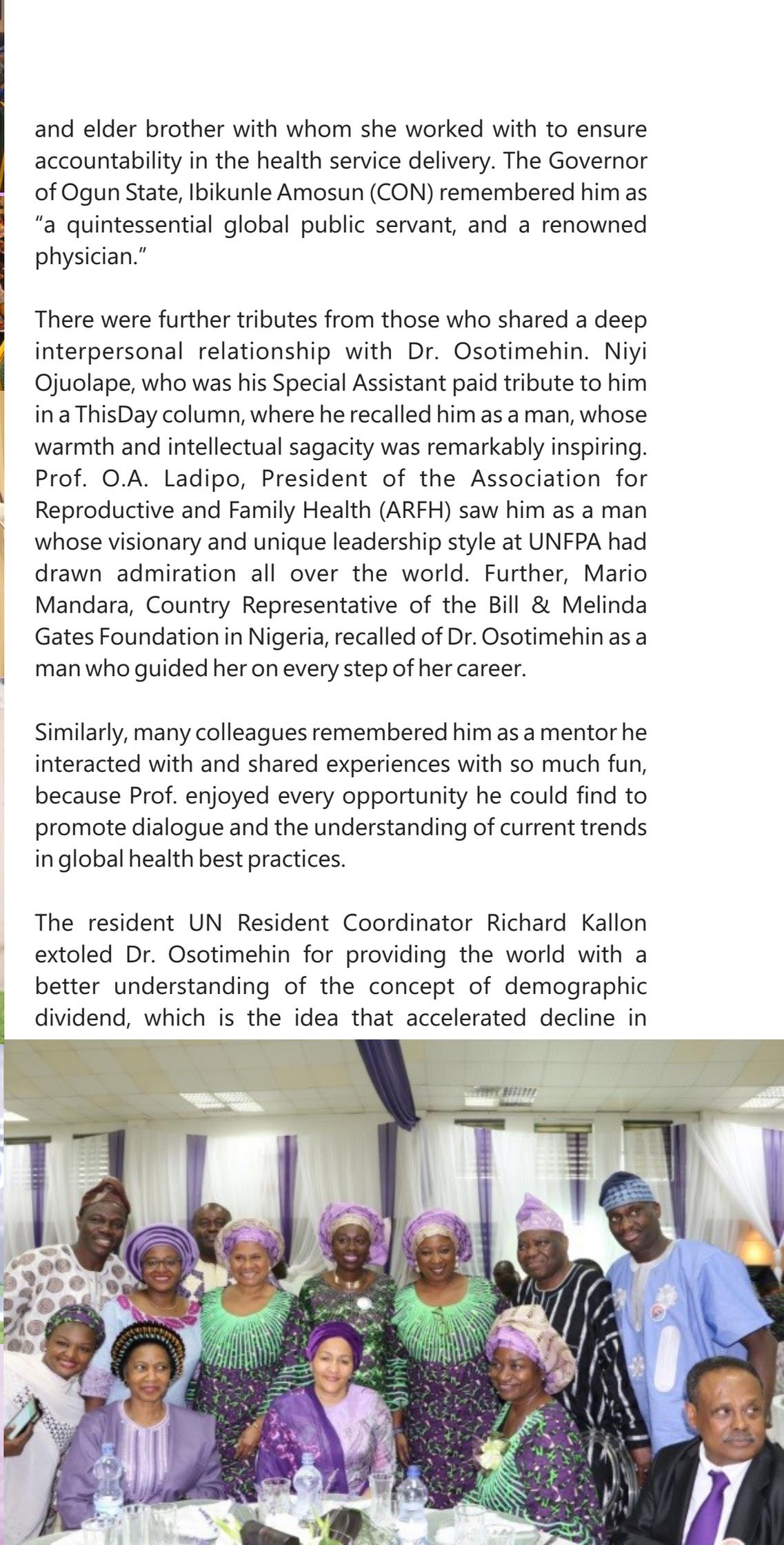


Similarly, at the UN Memorial Service in Abuja held by the UN System in Nigeria on 14th of July, Dr. Diene Keita, UNFPA Resident Representative reiterated that human side of Dr. Osotimehin, which beautifully struck whoever worked with him. She recalled him as a man who was “not just our Executive Director,” but as “a brother, and friend to all of us. A man who made everyone at the organisation feels special.”

*a brother, and friend
to all of us.
A man who made
everyone at the
organisation feels
special.”*



Various key national and international figures shared glowing tributes about the special character of Dr. Osotimehin. The First Lady, Mrs. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari eulogised him as a pillar of support and mentor to the emergence of her FUTURE ASSURED PROGRAMME Initiative. Also, H.E Toyin Saraki, Founder of the Wellbeing Foundation recalled him as a friend



and elder brother with whom she worked with to ensure accountability in the health service delivery. The Governor of Ogun State, Ibikunle Amosun (CON) remembered him as “a quintessential global public servant, and a renowned physician.”

There were further tributes from those who shared a deep interpersonal relationship with Dr. Osotimehin. Niyi Ojuolape, who was his Special Assistant paid tribute to him in a ThisDay column, where he recalled him as a man, whose warmth and intellectual sagacity was remarkably inspiring. Prof. O.A. Ladipo, President of the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) saw him as a man whose visionary and unique leadership style at UNFPA had drawn admiration all over the world. Further, Mario Mandara, Country Representative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Nigeria, recalled of Dr. Osotimehin as a man who guided her on every step of her career.

Similarly, many colleagues remembered him as a mentor he interacted with and shared experiences with so much fun, because Prof. enjoyed every opportunity he could find to promote dialogue and the understanding of current trends in global health best practices.

The resident UN Resident Coordinator Richard Kallon extolled Dr. Osotimehin for providing the world with a better understanding of the concept of demographic dividend, which is the idea that accelerated decline in



fertility rate and fewer dependents relative to income-generation, will provide economic boom and more stable and secure societies. Diene Keita, the UNFPA representative remembered him as a man who was "determined to see a world where no woman died giving life, and where all young people fulfilled their potentials." The Minister for Health, Prof. Isaac Adewole also praised him as an ardent advocate of the rights of "women, girls and children's rights", while the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyema eulogised him as a man whose illustrious career was devoted not only to the service of his "fatherland but also to humanity."

Through Dr. Osotimehin's leadership, UNFPA touched the lives of many. His legacy is a testament of what can be achieved with empathetic and pragmatic leadership. He has left an enduring torch that would permanently light the path on which future strategies of bringing relief to the world's most vulnerable communities would be developed.

If there is one major lesson his legacy teaches us, it is that, the plight disempowered people across the world can be greatly ameliorated, if only we try. As the Nigerian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Goeffrey Onyema profoundly stated at his memorial service in Abuja, "....any nation on earth would have been immensely proud to have Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin as one of its own."



During the Lying in State Ceremony at Ibadan on the 20th of July, The Acting ED of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem extolled him as “a challenging boss who expected all colleagues to strive towards the goal of creating a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.”

Prof. Olopade Olaopa, the Provost, College of Medicine (a position Dr. Osotimehin held between 1990 and

1994) recalled him as a man who “illuminated our hallowed chambers and the corridors of academia.”

Prof. Isaac Adewole, Nigeria's Minister of Health (also, a position Dr. Osotimehin held between 2008 and 2010) commented on how he was there for him and few other colleagues. “Most of us are where we are today,” Prof. Adewole stressed “because he supported us.”



DR. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN'S LEGACY CHART

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ADVOCACY

"Having the means to prevent a pregnancy and being safe from sexual violence – these are basic human rights. Rights don't just go away, and women don't stop giving birth when a conflict breaks out or disaster strikes." – Dr. B. Osotimehin (UNFPA, December, 2015).

YOUNG PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT

"It is time to make the humanitarian system work for young people by engaging them, addressing the risk factors they face and maximizing their ability to help rebuild and re-energize their communities and countries." – Dr. B. Osotimehin, World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul (UNFPA June 2016).



VOLUNTARY FAMILY PLANNING

"Introducing effective family planning and meeting the needs of people can cut the cost of providing health by around \$2.5 billion in Africa" – Dr. B. Osotimehin (UNFPA, March 2011).

GIRL (CHILD) EMPOWERMENT

"We are bringing the power of the UN together to make the case for 500 million adolescent girls in the developing world to live up to their full potential. This is why the UN Adolescent Girls Task Force exists." – Dr. B. Osotimehin, 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (UNFPA, March 2011).

The Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin's Legacy Chart is a diagrammatical presentation of four cardinal goals he dedicated his life to as a public health administrator, and especially during his time as Executive Director of UNFPA.

Dr. Osotimehin, focused on four interconnected objectives, which are: sexual and reproductive health, empowerment of young people, empowering adolescent girls in the developing world, and voluntary family planning. Each of these goals were interdependent and interconnected, in the sense that progress in one area impacted positively on others. His commitment to these goals, for which he deployed various top-down policy implementation strategies brought about many commendable successes. He was committed to problem-solving strategies that were anchored on sustainable policies, enduring partnerships and collaborations with various multinational actors.

Dr. Osotimehin's concern for sexual and reproductive health saw the UNFPA under his headship provide reproductive health equipment, medicines and supplies to 35 million women and girls in crisis-affected countries. The urgency to see the UNFPA provide the needed relief for this demographic stemmed from the realisation that by the end of 2015, two in three cases of maternal deaths were set to occur in countries undergoing a humanitarian crisis.

He also considered the continuous negligence and disempowerment of young people in developing countries as a potential humanitarian risk, as the continuous lack of engagement, and a sustained lack of realization of their potentials can have destabilising effects on their communities and countries. In 2016, The UNFPA response under his leadership to the youth problem was the signing of the first-ever compact to specifically fund, research and address youth's needs in crisis settings, which took place during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul.

Yet, connected to the massive lack of youth opportunities is the lack of family planning in Africa and other parts of the developing world. A situation which accounts for massive population growth in societies that are deeply lacking in opportunities and economic resources. In 2011, he championed the course of effective family planning which he suggested would cut the cost of providing health by around \$2.5 billion in Africa. Undoubtedly, he believed that the pressures on the African health system would be largely reduced through proper family planning. Much later, he advanced the idea of demographic dividend which is the idea that decline in fertility rates, which invariably yields fewer dependents relative to income-earners, would lead to massive economic boom. Voluntary family planning, he believed, was highly



crucial to reaping this demographic dividend. Economic boom, he understood, would forestall the likelihood of political instability that led to humanitarian crisis, and instead, increase access to education and decent employment that can help to ensure gender equality.

Given that increasing uptake of Family Planning can reduce maternal deaths by 30%, he considered planning as an effective strategy in combating maternal mortality. Given this situation, he was able to secure development assistance to the Government of Nigeria and has over the years provided strategic support for the implementation of national programmes aimed at increasing access and uptake of Family Planning services in 31 States including Kano, Kaduna and Borno States. At the 4th National Planning Stakeholders Consultative Meeting in 2016, in Abuja, in which he appeared, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), he secured further assurances from the FMOH that \$2.9M was to be appropriated for Family Planning in 2016.

In addition, one area where Dr. Osotimehin assiduously focused on, in his time as head of NACA, or Minister of Health (Nigeria) and at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it was in the (adolescent) girl child empowerment campaign. He saw a relationship between child marriages and the higher rate of HIV infection in girls, which led to his vigorous campaign against child marriage (and child bride) in Africa. He firmly believed that “impeding a girl's safe, healthy path through adolescence to a reproductive and autonomous adulthood is a violation of her rights.” No one was more pleased in 2011 than Dr. Osotimehin, whom speaking at the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women restated the UN's resolve to ensure that 500 million adolescent girls in the developing world live up to their full potential. He was also able to secure a \$5 million funding for the North East

from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) following his deliberations with the Korean Embassy in Nigeria. He worked with State Governments in Nigeria, such as in Kano, Kebbi and Kaduna, for the launch of innovative UNFPA programmes like the “Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI)”.

A remarkable strength of Dr. Osotimehin, it is worth mentioning, was his ability to leverage on the support and collaboration of various local and international actors, either for the purpose of attracting funding for urgent humanitarian needs or for implementing the goals of UNFPA in the most remote localities.

He excelled remarkably well in this regard with respect to UNFPA's response to the humanitarian crisis in the North East of Nigeria. His joint visit to Nigeria with the Permanent Secretary DfID UK, Mr Mark Lowcock in September 2016 in Abuja to advocate for increased Government investment in family planning, not only secured more government funding commitment, but an additional 50 million pounds from the DfID UK to strengthen the health system in the North East, family planning and food security. Such multilateral coordination was defined his approach for responding to humanitarian crises.



POSTSCRIPT

Dr. Babatunde was the Executive Director of UNFPA at a period when the world saw numerous strife and turbulence, but these challenges couldn't have met a more courageous, resolute and forward-thinking man. His leadership acumen exemplified the resilience which the United Nations embodies, and which is further evidenced in various UNFPA interventions in war torn Sudan, Syria, Haiti, and other similar locales across the world during his time.

Dr. Babatunde's leadership was a combination of idealism and pragmatism. On one hand, he appreciated and recognised the massive challenges confronting the world with regards to women and reproductive health, but he nonetheless had the ideals to imagine these problems as conquerable. This in fact shaped how he envisioned and designed solutions for a better world. Be it in his ability to raise 2.6 billion by donor countries through his championing for family planning in Africa with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UNFPA intervention in Sierra Leone in 2014 through the provision of contact tracers in collaborative efforts with the Sierra Leonean government, Africell and Airtel, or the provision of reproductive health equipment, medicines and supplies to 35 million women and girls in crisis-affected countries.

Without a doubt, Dr. Babatunde was a firm believer in UNFPA's ability to make a difference in the lives of marginalised and disempowered young people and women across the world.

The current NACA Director, Dr. Sani Aliyu extolled him as a man of selfless service, and a role model for all health professionals in the developing countries and the world at large.







Dr. Osotimehin would always be remembered not only as a maverick health expert and scholar, but as a public administrator whose approach to service was inspired by love; love for man and society. His philosophy of service could be attributed to Cornel West's who said, "I am who I am because somebody loved me, somebody attended to me, somebody showed me that I could make a difference in space and time." Dr. Osotimehin's life showed he could have been inspired by these words, as he devoted all of his time in public service trying to end the suffering of vulnerable people across the world, to help in creating a world where no woman died giving birth, to inspire and empower young people whom he considered the "assets of nations", to empower adolescent girls by creating conditions where they would grow in a safe society full of opportunities, and above all, to make a difference in the lives of everyone he came in contact with.

– Nigeria Country Office staff



HIS LEGACY LIVES ON. ADIEU COLLEAGUES!



DR. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN
(OON)
(1949 - 2017)

For more photos on the events: <https://goo.gl/ZqKTH8>



Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled

UN Building
Plot 617/618
Diplomatic Drive,
Central Business District,
Abuja, FCT

☎ 0905 3779 641
🌐 nigeria.unfpa.org
📘 UNFPANigeria
🐦 @unfpanigeria