

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 3RD INTERFAITH FORUM**  
**HELD FROM**  
**28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2007**  
**AT THE SHEHU MUSA YAR'ADUA CENTRE, ABUJA.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> interfaith forum is a follow up to the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> interfaith fora held in 2003 and 2005 respectively. This 3<sup>rd</sup> interfaith forum was organized by the National Faith-Based Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (NFACA) with support from NACA and in collaboration with development partners comprising UNAIDS, SFH, UNFPA, ACTIONAID, ENHANSE, CiSHAN, Pathfinder, DFID and USAID.

The THEME of the conference is "Strengthening Faith-Based Response to HIV/AIDS in Nigeria and the goal is to reach a consensus on the strategies and modalities for implementing Faith Based approaches in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support in Nigeria.

In addition the conference holds the following objectives:

- To appraise the level at which resolutions at the last forum has been effected
- To provide a forum for experience sharing on faith-based approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment care and support
- To determine ways of harnessing the efforts of Faith-based organizations for a more effective National response to HIV
- To document and disseminate faith-based best practices and achievements
- To develop basic strategies to reach the faith communities more effectively through NFACA
- To identify the basic requirements for more effective faith-based response to HIV/AIDS
- To plan for follow up activities to the 3<sup>rd</sup> interfaith forum in relation to the NSF

The conference was well attended by over 150 participants from across the country. This included eminent leaders and religious scholars from the two major faith communities (Islam and Christianity), FBOs, CSO, and development partners as well as NGOs.

The meeting had in attendance eminent Nigerians from within and outside the faith communities that included the president of CAN, His Grace, Archbishop Dr. John Onaiyekan; His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammadu Saad Abubarkar III, the Sultan of Sokoto represented by Dr. Lateef Adegbite the Secretary-General, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs; representative of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and many others.

At the end of the conference, the forum unanimously resolved on the following:

1. Both the Christian and Muslim faith leaders and communities have made significant contributions to the response to AIDS in Nigeria. The faith-based organizations should identify their areas of competence and do more of what they do best, including prevention, treatment, care and support for those infected and affected
2. Opportunities of religious services and teaching should be used to provide accurate information on HIV and AIDS, promote abstinence among young people and better care for infected and affected people, and to speak out strongly in support of the campaign against stigma and discrimination.
3. Faith leaders should mobilize their communities to access HIV testing and counseling on a voluntary and confidential basis.
4. The Muslim and Christian faith leaders urge the government to accelerate access to free medical treatment and care for all People living with HIV and provide adequate support to Orphans and Vulnerable children to reduce vulnerability.
5. The faith-based organizations should be given adequate financial and technical support to facilitate their significant role in the fight against HIV/AIDS
6. The forum calls on NACA to clarify all structures within the faith-based organizations working in the field of HIV/AIDS and have their activities harmonised.
7. The forum notes the untoward effect of stigma and discrimination of PLWHAs and PABAs, we therefore calls on all faith based organizations and the public to demonstrate positive attitudes and support PLWHA and PABA as well as be vanguards through preaching and educating people against stigma and discrimination.
8. The forum employs this medium to call on the government to pass into law the Anti-Stigma and Discrimination Bill.
9. The forum endorses the AB of prevention and discourages dependence on the use of condoms, however the FBOs should ensure that youths are provided with adequate skills required to enable them abstain

10. The forum wish to appreciate the tireless efforts of the Director-General of NACA, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin in supporting NFACA and championing the HIV/AIDS response in Nigeria. Also the UN system, ENHANSE, USAID, Action Aid, SFH, CiSHAN, Pathfinder, CEDPA, FHI and DFID for their support.

### **Members Communiqué Group**

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|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Rev. Kaine Nwashile     | Chairman  |
| 2. | Pastor Mike Ayodele     | Member    |
| 3. | Esther Agbon            | Member    |
| 4. | Alh. Sirajo Mashi       | Member    |
| 5. | Hajiya Salamatu Ibrahim | Member    |
| 6. | Dr Godwin Uwaoma        | Member    |
| 7. | Chief (Mrs)Adetula      | Member    |
| 8. | Mal. Nuhu Lawan         | Secretary |