



## **Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention**

### **Mental Health Outreach Project to Nigeria & Niger Delta:**

#### **Healing, Peace Building & Mindful Leadership**

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**Jan 2019 – A call to responsible action**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, commonly referred to as Nigeria, is a federal republic in West Africa, bordering Niger in the north, Chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east, and Benin in the west. Its coast in the south is located on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. The federation comprises 36 States and 1 Federal Capital Territory, where the capital Abuja is located. Nigeria is officially a democratic secular country, founded on October 01, 1960, with a population of 174.51 million (per 2013 reports) and GDP of 4397.47 Billion USD (per 2018 reports). Although English is the official language in the country, Nigeria's large population is responsible for its linguistic diversity which is like a microcosm of Africa as a whole.

Despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government and international groups, Nigeria is still in great need of emotional healing. The political conflict has been going on for over a decade. In November 2010 the federal government pledged to deploy more resources to the communities of the Niger Delta to boost development and help restore and sustain peace. The Niger Delta is a prominent region of the southern part of Nigeria. It is 70,00 square kilometers comprised of the following states: Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, as well as Edo, Abia, Imo and Ondo States. About one third of the land is made up of wetlands, swamp, mangrove forest and meandering waterways that stretch for 300 miles from the Benin River in the west to the Cross River in the east. It is Africa's largest Delta and the world's third largest mangrove (Taylor, 2007).

#### **Violence Against Women & Political Unrest**

Analyzing the genesis of modern-day brutality against people, especially women, in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria, scholars have pointed to the beginning of exploration and exploitation of oil in the area. According to these community the exploitation of oil resources in the Niger Delta has resulted in economic and environmental conflicts, with the women bearing the brunt of the situation. Studies have shown that oil provides over

90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, yet the people of the Niger Delta, especially the women are among the poorest in Nigeria.

Available evidence indicates that women in the Niger Delta area were subjected to all kinds of violence including sexual (i.e., rape), physical (i.e., beating, maiming and murder), and the destruction of property. They have suffered unimaginable human right abuses for which redress is unattainable because their husbands and sons have been killed or maimed in the conflict and women have had to assume burdensome responsibilities as heads of households (Akubor, Emmanuel;2011).

Urgent help in post trauma healing is needed in the Niger Delta area. Many residents of the region have been victimized and traumatized by the ongoing conflicts. While a lot of attention has been devoted to stabilizing oil production, little has been done to address the mental health needs of the residents of this region.

### **Nigerian Culture, Literacy, Health, Religion & Politics**

Nigeria's culture is influenced by several different ethnic groups, who all determine the country's food, clothing, and overall culture. With around 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria has extensive and diverse list of traditions and customs. Education is extremely important and valued: adult literacy rate is 59.6% in 2015 up from 51.1% in 2008. Nigeria has one of the most complicated healthcare systems in Africa. Health standards, as measured by life expectancy, in Nigeria have increased since 1950, although progress has not been steady. Maternal mortality rate appears to have increased between 1990 and 2010. According to the latest World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) data, life expectancy in Nigeria is 54.7 years for men and 55.7 years of women with a total life expectancy of 55.2 years. This gives Nigeria a world life expectancy ranking of 178. Religion is an important phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria as it affects every segment of the Nigerian society. There are three primary religions in Nigeria: Christianity (53%), Islam (45%), and African Traditional Religion (2%).

Politically, Nigeria has 68 political parties with the most popular being the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All Progressive Congress (APC), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The current President, Muhammadu Buhari (APC party affiliate) was reelected to a second term on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, after a contentious election in which the opposition refused to accept the outcome and a period of uncertainty and unrest that followed. With the opposition alleging fraud and refusing to accept the outcome, the risk of further unrest remains high in the weeks ahead, especially in the restive oil region, which was the scene of some of the worst election day unrest, according to King Agada IV (personal communication).

### **ATOP Meaningfulworld Goals**

*The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld* ([www.meaningfulworld.com](http://www.meaningfulworld.com)) is an international charitable organization devoted to fostering a meaningful, peaceful, and just world. ATOP has planned a Mental Health Outreach Project (MHOP) to the Niger Delta region, set for the middle of June 2019. ATOP team members are trained in the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model, which will be implemented. Peace building and conflict transformation trainings are scheduled to take place at several universities, orphanages, older age homes, police, Ministries of Health, Education and Social Welfare, and other community centers.

Our goals are three pronged: 1. Healing and Education; 2. Research and Publications; 3. Policy Revisions and Developing Sustainable Programs. The following goals are established: 1. Healing groups; 2. Educational workshops on Emotional Intelligence and Post Trauma Healing; 3. Planting Trees and Nurturing Healthy Ecology; 4. Working with children, adolescents, adults, with men and women; 5. Establishing Peace & Forgiveness Gardens; 6. Transform Horizontal Violence and Generationally Transmitted Trauma; and 7. Share the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model.

#### **Our Collaborators**

Our collaborators are the University of Lagos, Department of Peace and Ethnic Studies, UN Agencies in Lagos, Centre for Human Development & Social Transformation (CHDST), Positive Change Alliance, a coalition of NGOs, as well as the King Agada IV, Ekpetiama Kingdom in Bayelsa State.

ATOP Meaningfulworld has spearheaded humanitarian missions in the past 30 years in over 46 countries and 25 States in USA, in response to both human-made and natural disasters. This humanitarian mission will be spearheaded by Dr. Kalayjian, Founder and President of ATOP Meaningfulworld. Volunteers are welcome, kindly email Dr Kalayjian: [drkalayjian@meaningfulworld.com](mailto:drkalayjian@meaningfulworld.com)

#### **Your Support is Appreciated**

This mission, however, cannot be successful without your continued and generous support. The aftermath of trauma requires a long and challenging rehabilitation process. We appeal to you and express gratitude for your kind tax-deductible donation in providing psychosocial and spiritual help to the people of Nigeria, as well as the Niger Delta. Kindly send donations (**checks payable to ATOP**) or by PayPal at: <http://meaningfulworld.com/get-involved/donation>, [www.meaningfulworld.com](http://www.meaningfulworld.com)