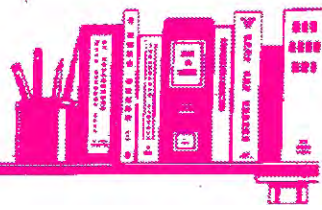


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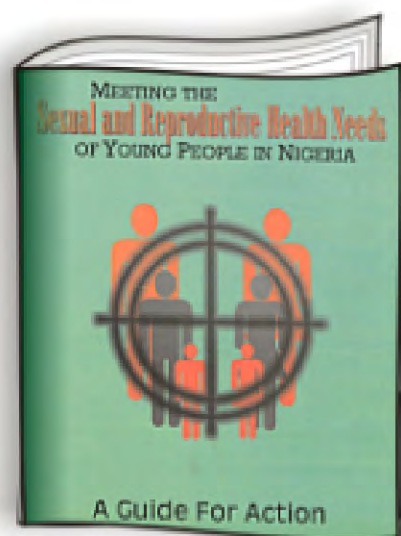


The materials listed here are resources on adolescent development. These materials are available for use within our reference library at the AHI Youth Centre at 17 Lawal Street, Jibowu, Yaba, Lagos.

BOOKS

Meeting The Sexual And Reproductive Health Needs of Young People in Nigeria: A Guide for Action:
By Action Health Incorporated

This book sheds light on the status of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and why young people are at risk. It also proposes ways through which key stakeholders including parents/guardians, educators, healthcare providers, policy makers, Community and religious leaders as well as the mass media can make the difference



Information For Life(The AHI Peer Education Programme).
By Action Health Incorporated.

A well-implemented sexuality education programme will equip young people to appreciate their bodies; interact with both genders in appropriate and respectful ways; avoid exploitative relationships; develop self-confidence and life skills; communicate effectively with family, peers and recognize and live according to their own values as well as show respect for people with different values.

This book documents the various peer education programmes undertaken by AHI in her quest to equip young people with the relevant information in order for them to make informed choices.

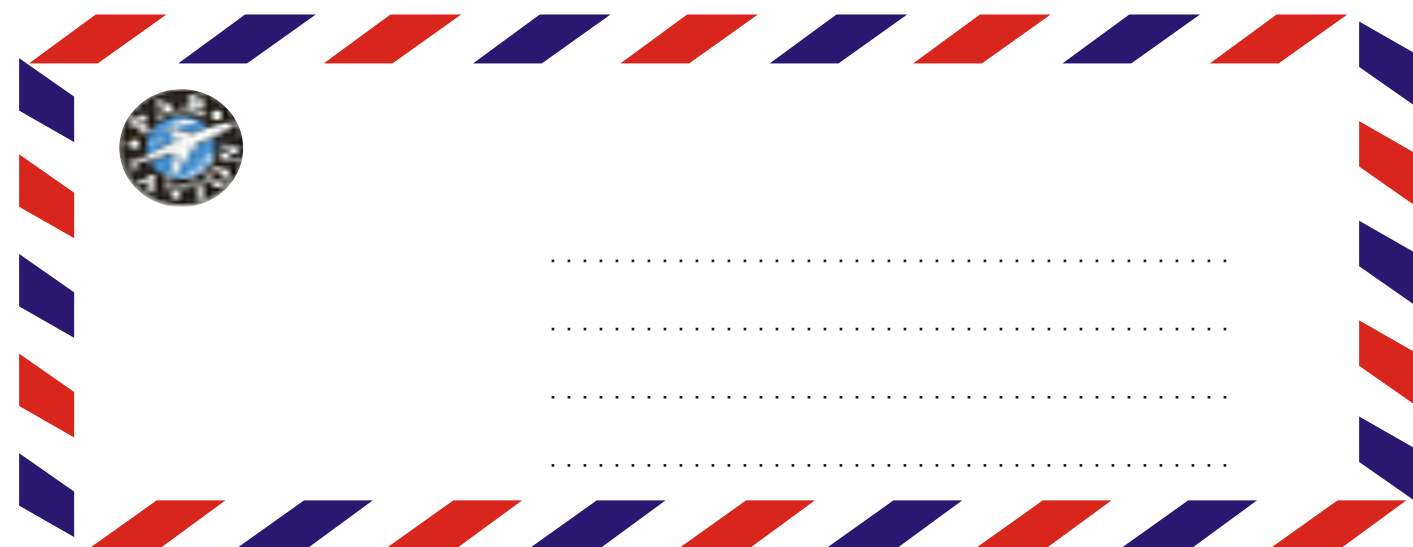
Facts of Life For Adolescents:
By Grace Faoye and Bola Lana.

This book seeks to improve the health of adolescents, a group whose sheer size - about one third of total population commands attention. It highlights what the youths need in order to keep healthy and keep from being infected by the high and growing incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) including

HIV/AIDS. The book fulfills the needs of three important groups; adolescents themselves who need to come to terms with their sexuality; parents and guardians who need to know the contents of this book to communicate effectively with their children and wards; teachers and other youth leaders who must complement the work of parents and guardians in guiding the youth through adolescence.

"Voices": By Grace Osakue, Bene Madunagu, Hajara Usman and Jane Osagie for (IRRRAG)

This book presents the findings of a research into the meanings of Reproductive Rights among women in Nigeria. It gave emphasis to the voices of women at the "grassroots" level among minority ethnic groups. As the voices above show, while some held views that could be interpreted as passive and indicative of non-entitlement others expressed views that were indicative of entitlement to, and participation in decision making processes, particularly in respect of their reproductive health.



Growing Up

A NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Action Health Incorporated
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Achieving Your Educational Goals



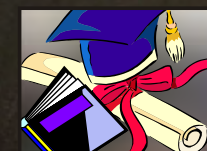
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Growing Up is published quarterly in Lagos, Nigeria by Action Health Incorporated (AHI). AHI is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of adolescent health and development. We serve as an advocate and a catalyst for change in the present poor status of adolescents' well being by increasing public awareness and implementing innovative education, healthcare and youth development programmes.

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ACHIEVING YOUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

by: Feyi Fowowe

Education is the bedrock of any nation. A country whose citizens attain high levels of education is likely to thrive and develop faster than a country where citizens have little or no education. It is in recognition of this fact that Nigeria and many other developing nations in the world have given priority to the education of their citizens in general and young people in particular. It is estimated that globally, about 113 million children do not attend school. One of the Millennium Development Goals, which world nations committed to at the United Nations Millennium Summit held in September 2000, is to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015. Many countries are putting in place strategies towards the realization of this goal.

Today, in Nigeria, many young people are paying more attention to education because they realize that it is an important determinant of their future well-being. For them, the greatest concern is achieving their educational goals. Unfortunately, morale is low as many young people gradually lose confidence in themselves and a system which pays little attention to their educational ambitions. Nigeria has produced a large pool of lawyers, doctors, engineers, bankers, highly-placed civil servants, diplomats, to mention a few. It is common knowledge that Nigerian youth excel in many educational institutions outside the country. This can largely be attributed to the availability of adequate educational facilities and a conducive environment for

learning in these foreign countries. Within Nigeria, however, a different story is told. Every year, thousands of young people face the qualifying exams needed to proceed from the secondary school to the tertiary institutions. This experience is fraught with frustrating stories of examination malpractices, unconducive examination centres and withheld or incomplete results. The story is even worse in cases where the parents of these young people have little or no funds to finance their education. Although government provides free education to a certain level under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, a lot of young people still have to do menial jobs to get money both to support their parents and to purchase relevant materials needed to perform school work. This divided focus and energy, invariably leads to poorer performance in school.

The opinions of several young people who have written these qualifying examinations into tertiary institutions were sampled. The following reasons were given for the way they feel about the system, why they fail, why morale is low and why some of them cheat:

Inadequate resource materials:

Many young people cannot afford to buy textbooks and other materials required to prepare adequately for exams. Libraries in many public secondary schools are also ill-equipped to meet young people's demand for textbooks. Even when such books are available, the quantity is in such short supply as to prevent a large number of young people from gainfully having access to them. This has been a major cause for failure among youths. Without additional reference materials to complement classroom lessons, young people are bound to perform below expected standards. There is also inadequate laboratory equipment in many secondary schools. This has led to a high degree of failure recorded in subjects such as chemistry, physics and biology which require a good knowledge of practical applications. Similarly, computers are quite scarce in many public schools. Many students cannot carry out research in topics and do not even have the skills to avail themselves of the wealth of information on the world wide web. In an age where computers have become the focal point of many academic and business activities, the lack of competency in basic computer operations coupled with the unavailability of these computers puts Nigerian youth at a great disadvantage and has made learning a very tedious process.

Lack of commitment on the part of teachers:

Many students complain that their teachers do not give them adequate support necessary for them to excel in external examinations. Many will argue that teachers, especially those in public schools are not adequately compensated. However, it is still of the utmost importance, because of the very significant role they play in students' lives, that they give their students adequate attention and moral support. The fact is that the extent to which a student understands and develops interest in a particular subject depends a great deal on the way the subject is being taught and on the attitude of teachers taking the subject. One of the students interviewed affirmed that the only reason he developed interest in Further Mathematics was the patience of the teacher, which made the subject quite appealing.

Lack of understanding of the subjects:

Unbelievable as it may sound, many young people are taking subjects they do not understand. Hear Chibuke, a student in one of the public secondary schools in Lagos. "My major challenge in exams has been Mathematics and it has really been tough coping with the calculations. Although I am quite good in other subjects such as English language, Mathematics has been a real challenge. Several times, I have tried studying hard, but when I get to the exam hall I forget all the formulae and this makes me very sad. I am almost tired of trying..."

Chibuke is not the only one who feels this way. Many students study subjects they have no natural aptitude



Young people are willing to be guided by adults

for. This is quite common with students that study science subjects such as Chemistry, Physics and Biology. Many of them take these subjects either because their parents force them to, or because their friends are taking the subjects, and not because they've developed any real interest in learning them. Of course, this makes it very difficult for them to excel in such subjects. This is because interest must be developed in a subject for a student to be willing to study hard and ultimately, pass it.

Lack of Counselling on how to answer questions:

Different examination bodies have different criteria for grading subjects. It is therefore not just enough for students to study hard for exams. They must also know how to answer the questions. This is very important in subjects such as English and Literature where the students writing skills and ability to interpret questions are graded. Thus, a student may fail a subject not because he/she doesn't understand the subject but because he/she lacks the skills required to interpret and answer questions correctly.

Exam malpractice often goes unpunished

In Nigeria, exam malpractice, has become a very big problem both in secondary and tertiary institutions. This is of very great concern because many students who "successfully" cheat during exams pass, while those who do not cheat and are studious often do not get marks as high as those who cheat. What this

means is that young people are no longer being graded according to how much they know, but according to how well they can cheat. This is particularly common in qualifying exams into tertiary institutions where young people carry pieces of paper bearing answers to the questions into the exam halls. Take the story of Ogechi, one of the students interviewed.

"I started cheating during my Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination. We were writing Agricultural Science and were given 1½ hours to write the paper when suddenly, the girl beside me brought out her "prepared answers". I was quite nervous and didn't want to look at it, but the questions were quite tough and I didn't have any alternative than to join the girl in cheating. Afterwards, I felt bad but continued cheating in every examination. I became so dependent on cheating that I wouldn't read even for the simplest subjects. Again, I felt very bad and decided to tell a teacher in my school whom I happened to be close to. She encouraged me to stop depending on "expo" to pass, and I decided to take her advice. I stopped using the "expo" and started reading hard for my exams. Ever since, I have felt more confident in myself and my grades have really improved.

Many issues affect young people's performance in exams, however, only few have been mentioned above. Many young people are not unaware of these

obstacles they face everyday. Their main challenge however is how to overcome them. A few of these are shared below.

Study! Study!! Study!!!

Nothing can take the place of studying. There is a law of hard work which states that if you work hard at any endeavor, you are likely to achieve success. There are no short-cuts to success; universal law still holds "study and work hard". Many young people, when asked why they fail exams, gave various reasons. However, very few attributed their failure to lack of studying. No matter how much your school, teachers and parents try to help you, if you don't study, you won't pass. Like Mr. Ukhuegbe Ferguson, a teacher at Offshore Tutors Tutorial Center, Lagos said, "students should not leave everything to their teachers, they must take time to study..." Take time to study your notes, past questions, syllabus for the exams and textbooks. The more you study, the better your understanding of a particular topic or subject will be and the less the chances of you making mistakes during the exams. You can also study with a group of friends or classmates. This way, you would read longer hours and would learn from your mates. If you are not good at a particular topic, you could ask a friend who has a good grasp of the topic to explain it to you. Don't be shy to admit that you don't understand a topic and ask for help.

Solving past questions has proved to be a very good way of studying. This points to the fact that it gives you an idea of what the pattern of questioning usually is. It also helps you revise and know how well you understand the subject. Thus, you should solve as many past questions as you can and if there are any questions you cant solve, then you can ask your teachers for help.

Take Extra Classes:

For exams such as S.S.C.E. and U.M.E, it is very important that you take extra

classes, apart from the normal classes you take in school. Don't assume that you know or can do it all on your own. These classes will guide you in the different subjects and help to reinforce whatever you have been taught in school. Extra exam classes usually focus not just on content of the subjects but also how to answer questions. Like Mr. Ferguson pointed out, these coaching centers "enhance and broaden students' knowledge and quicken their understanding of the topics". It is therefore important that you register at a good coaching center and dedicate a few hours everyday to attend the extra classes.

Be Composed And Confident:

If you are nervous during exams then you might have problems performing well. Although it is natural to feel a little twinge of nervousness when sitting for exams, you shouldn't let it translate into fear and stop you from giving your best. Michael Coker, a final year student of Igbobi College Yaba, says it best: "Most students are not confident about their ability to pass exams. While in

the exam hall they begin debating whether they will pass or fail, and while doing this, they find out that they have forgotten most of what they read". It is thus very important that you maintain your composure. As much as possible revise your notes thoroughly and then relax before the exams. If during the exams there are any questions you can't answer, go to the ones you can and answer those. Later, you can review the questions you skipped and see if you can recollect anything about them. The fact that you can't answer a question does not mean you will fail. Make the most of the questions you understand very well and answer those.

It is also very important that you present your answers neatly and in an easy-to-read handwriting. Your handwriting should be clear and legible. In subjects like English language, this is very important, as you would be graded not only on your knowledge but also on your presentation style. If you are shading, then use a sharp pencil to shade and make sure that when you erase, you do so properly. When you need to cancel a word you've written, draw a line neatly across it, don't paint over it again and again as this makes you work look



Young people participating actively in an educational session

untidy.

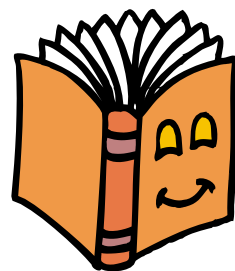
Get all the relevant information you need concerning the exams. Many examination bodies have designed examination syllabuses and have printed themes in booklets. Thus, it is important that you get these syllabuses to enable you know what the scope of each subject is and also help you evaluate how far you've gone, in covering the topics. As stated earlier you should also get past questions papers on the different subjects. This will give you an idea about what kinds of questions are asked.

What Teachers Can Do:

The role and influence of teachers in a student's life cannot be over emphasized! Many teachers do not recognize that their belief in and positive influence on a student can go a long way in determining how well the student performs and even how well he/she succeeds in life. Many young people who have succeeded in

Contd on pg 14

POEMS



Alone With Love

In my aloneness,
I said to my heart,
"Can I ever find love again?"
And my heart replied,
"Love is not found like a lost purse
Dropped by the wayside with treasure in it.

But the troubled waters of past loves
Led me to seek the wisdom
Of my heart again.
And in my concern,
I asked my heart,
"Love is such an uncertainty.
How shall I know when I have met
Someone with whom
I can find the giving
And the receiving,
Of each other's needs?"

The love you seek,
Is the recognition of the light,
Shining from someone else."

By Alexander Orok

Motherly Love

We three queens of orient are
clothed in loin
but our hearts are naked
as our feet
browned by the sun
wading through brown paint
someone spilt on the sky
and our huts in search
of our children, dissolved
as brown sugar
we will sieve them
bowl by bowl
till each bowl holds
pure child gurgling
ma mi ma mi.

By Tolulope Ogunlesi

Your Future

Your future is in your hands
Hold it! Grab it!
Go for the best things of life
Work hard to achieve them

Goal setting, assertiveness,
High self esteem and abstinence
Lead to a bright future.
Don't ruin your future
Take the right steps and
Make responsible choices

Egunjobi Oluwakemi

Ex- student, Lagos city College, Sabo.

Looking Out The Window

It's a plain enough window
Nothing fancy
No trimmings to it at all
An old common window
Just like an old common woman
I am often told

But my mother is not common
Nor was her mother before her
Or the mother before that mother
Strong women all

Who raised children
Like they knitted booties

Tight and well

Nothing common at all in that!

By Chika Unigwe

Adapted from "Web African writers' poem entries".

PHOTO REPORT



AHI Holds Orientation Programme For Final Year Medical Students.

The Adolescent-Friendly Health Services Project of Action Health Incorporated has evolved over the years from management of adolescent health and reproductive issues to capacity building and the provision of technical assistance to service providers in both governmental and non-governmental health institutions.

The Health Services unit in collaboration with the Institute of Child Health, College of Medicine, of the University of Lagos, Nigeria held a two-day orientation programme on Human Sexuality and Adolescent Friendly Health Services.

Eight batches of students (making a total of 276 final year students) participated in the 2-day orientation programme which comprised one-day class work and one-day practicum health education sessions in some selected secondary schools within Shomolu, Mainland and Kosofe local government schools.

The health education practicum sessions in the schools afforded the medical students the opportunity to learn about the challenges of providing health services to young people.



Career Talk Programme" Held For Young People:

As part of activities to promote the development of young people in the society, the Information, Education and Communication unit (I.E.C) of AHI organized series of Career Talk Programmes for the youths.

The programme held between March 9th-30th, 2005 aimed at helping young people identify opportunities and prospects in different professions as well as encourage them to identify role models in the pursuit of their goals.

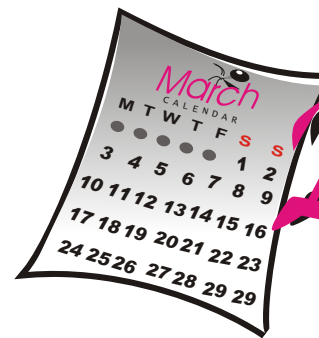
More than 189 young people attended the programme which centred primarily on various professions such as Journalism, Computer Science, Accounting and Arts and Design.

Pictures below capture some of the scenes during the



Young people listen attentively to the career talk on computer science by Mr. Tunji Oshodi

Cartoon



Dear Diary

Nelly Onwordi

Panel 1 (Top Left): IT'S WRONG TO SEND YOUR DAUGHTER TO HAWK BREAD WHEN SHE SHOULD BE IN SCHOOL. **WHY?**

Panel 2 (Top Right): SEND HER TO SCHOOL TO GIVE YOU ALL A HEADSTART IN LIFE. DON'T YOU LIKE THE WAY PEOPLE ADDRESS ME? **HOW?**

Panel 3 (Second Row Left): THEY CALL ME 'MAMA LAWYER', CALL OUR OTHER NEIGHBOUR 'MAMA DOCTOR' AND THE OTHER WOMAN IS CALLED 'MAMA PILOT'! **So?**

Panel 4 (Second Row Right): D'YOU WANT TO BE CALLED 'MAMA HAWKER'?

Panel 5 (Third Row Left): THAT MY DAUGHTER IS ALWAYS ASKING ME EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS.

Panel 6 (Third Row Right): WHAT QUESTIONS? QUESTIONS ON MENSTRUATION, REPRODUCTION, ETC!

Panel 7 (Bottom Row Left): YOU MUST EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO HER, CARO. DON'T WAIT TILL IT'S TOO LATE. **TOO LATE, HOW?**

Panel 8 (Bottom Row Right): IT'S BETTER TO ANSWER HER EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS NOW, THAN TO WAIT TILL SHE EMBARRASSES YOU WITH AN UNWANTED PREGNANCY. **?!?**

Monday:

The thought of the guy at the store who had scribbled something on a piece of paper and thrust it into my hands just lingered. Can't seem to get it off no matter how hard I tried. "Let's have a date, a place of your choice, call me if need be..." At first I thought he was joking, and then I saw the serious look on his face. I didn't know what to say at that point, but I knew for sure that such a date could never hold because he was a stranger, and I didn't think I was in the mood for a date with a stranger. I needed to talk to someone about this, but who could I talk to? My mum, my dad, my friend or my elder sister? I'll think about it and talk to whoever I feel the most comfortable with.

Tuesday:

I eventually chose to talk to Deola, my elder sister, who advised me on what to do and said I shouldn't keep the date since I didn't know the man and had never met him. She said it was not ethical for young girls who are supposed to be thinking of their studies to accept dates with total strangers. I felt relieved at Deola's advice. It's nice to be able to confide in one's elder sisters and to do so when necessary because they are better placed to put one through. I couldn't help but whisper 'Thank you D!'

Wednesday

I woke up very early to make breakfast for Dad and Mum before they left for work. While at it, my younger brother joined me in the kitchen and we made the breakfast together and of course we used the time to discuss our proposed activities for the day. I needed to score high marks in my matriculation examination in order to be admitted into the University of my choice as I was becoming fed-up with staying at home. My brother said he was going to see his friend and that he would go to watch some movies and thereafter go to browse.

Thursday

I went in search of a good coaching centre where I could register and prepare for my JAMB exams. I found one which I liked but it was far from the house. I told my parents about it and also where it was located. They eventually gave their consent after

many questions. If things work out as scheduled, I should start the lessons next month! I need to prepare seriously (and without distractions) for my forth-coming exams.

Friday

My younger sister fell ill and had to be rushed to the hospital. The doctor insisted on some tests in order for him to be able to properly diagnose the cause of the illness. When the results arrived later in the day, it revealed that all she had was malaria; but the doctor insisted that she would have to remain at the hospital so that proper care and treatment could be administered. I volunteered to stay with her so as to attend to her, since my parents had to go to work and my younger brother too had to go to school.

Saturday

My sister is getting better. The sight of so many ill people is really scary. Didn't realize that so many people fall ill daily! The most touching was an emergency case that was brought into the hospital. By looking at her, one could tell that she was very young and the bruises on her showed that she was in severe pains. After she was given first aid treatment she was brought in to share a room with my sister. I felt like helping to ease those pains but there was very little I could do but to pray that she gets well fast!

Sunday

Mum brought breakfast for my sister and me. She was happy to see that my sister was looking and getting better. After some hours, mum left to get some drugs prescribed by the doctor. When she left, I walked up to the lady with the many bruises and asked how she was. That simple gesture so touched her that she just burst into tears. Instantly, I knew she needed someone to talk to. It was written all over her troubled face. I consoled her and assured her that all would be well. After a while, she calmed down and what she said next hit me like a bomb!

"Dear Diary" continues in the next edition, don't miss it for anything!

Networking Forum On S.R.H.R Builds Capacity On Fund Raising



Mrs. Nike Esiet, executive director, AHI address members of the networking forum at the AHI conference room.

On Friday, December 3, 2004, AHI hosted the quarterly meeting of the Networking Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Nigeria (N.F.S.R.H.R.N). The regular quarterly meetings are designed to share information as well as assist the forum members develop skills for improving SRH programming. The capacity building session slated as part of this quarterly meeting was aimed at exploring the major sources of funding for non-profit organizations, sharing information about the most useful funding websites and how to get the most out of online funding research time.

Mrs. Nike Esiet, the Executive Director, AHI facilitated the session. In her presentation, she highlighted common misconceptions people had about fundraising and clarified such misconceptions. Common sources of institutional funding and support such as private foundations, donor agencies, corporations and businesses were also highlighted. Participants were also taken through the skills needed for obtaining information about grants on the internet. They were shown how to search for donors and a list of relevant websites/search engines were provided. The facilitator also suggested tips for relevant information to search for, including funder's interest in the organization's projects, list of recently awarded grants by the funder, application guidelines and relevant contacts.

Furthermore, the advantages and disadvantages of raising support from foundations were brought to the fore. Mrs. Esiet used the opportunity to explain why and how each of the common sources of institutional funding supports NGOs. The Networking Forum was established in 1997 and its membership includes organizations like SWAAN, PPFN, I.A.C, LRRDC, CAUP, CLP, DEVCOMS and AHI.

St. Valentine's Day

It was a beehive of activities at the AHI Youth Centre as young people and secondary school students around Lagos marked the annual St. Valentine's Day Celebration with the theme, "Love and Infatuation: Your perspective". The young people were taken through memory lane from the history to the significance of the day.

This year's edition incorporated song renditions, poem recitations on HIV/AIDS and the students of Mainland Secondary School, Fadeyi presented a drama titled "Take Care and be Safe". This communicated ideas on abstinence, goal-setting, assertiveness and so forth, to the young ones. They were also encouraged to avoid getting involved in risky behaviour such as drug abuse, alcohol and unprotected sex which some engaged in all in the name of expressing love and having fun.

More than five hundred and thirty-five (535)



A cross-section of young people during the St. Valentine's day 2005 celebration

(cont'd from pg 10)

secondary school students around Lagos took part in the celebration.

The highlight of the occasion was the cutting of the St. Valentine's Cake.

In a related event, and as part of its school-based activities, AHI in conjunction with Rev. Mrs. Adekoya of Shalom Foundation organized this year's school-based event at Eva Adelaja Senior Secondary school. The theme of the event was, "Let's Talk about Love" and it was aimed at promoting abstinence among

young people as a way of maintaining good health and attaining future goals. It also tried to increase the capacity of young people to make informed choices concerning their sexual health.

To add colour to the event, a drama presentation depicting virtues such as assertiveness, decision making, goal setting and the like, was performed by students of Gbagada Comprehensive Junior High School.

International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation

AHI joined the rest of the international community to mark the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The event which took place on February 7, 2005 at the Youth Centre aimed at increasing young peoples' knowledge about the practice and the different types of FGM. It also sensitized youth on the need to eliminate all forms of FGM practices and to increase their knowledge on the dangers and complications associated with the practice.

Among the activities carried out by the participants were debates on Female Genital Mutilation: a guarantee for fidelity. The Discussion segment focused on the young peoples' opinion on how to stop

or eradicate the practice. These views centred on government intervention, support from religious leaders, adequate information dissemination on the dangers of FGM and re-orientation in terms of cultural/family beliefs.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) otherwise called Female Genital Circumcision (FGC) constitutes all procedures which involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons (WHO, 1995). This inhibits or terminates sexual feelings and it aids in the spread of HIV/AIDS as the instruments used for the circumcision are not always sterilized. It is widely practiced in Africa,



A young person answering questions on E. G. M. as part of the activities marking the celebration

Enugu State On Study Visit To Lagos State

Officials of the Enugu State Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Global Health and Research Foundation (GHARF) paid a two-day visit to Lagos State from February 1-3, 2005. This visit was made to understudy the approach adopted by the Lagos State Ministry of Education which has been collaborating with Action Health Incorporated (AHI) in spearheading the implementation of the Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education programme in public secondary schools.

The learning visit aimed at interacting with all key stakeholders involved in the implementation and management of Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education Curriculum in Lagos state. It was also to appraise the successes and challenges associated with the implementation process as well as document necessary experiences and lessons learnt to facilitate the replication of the programme in Enugu state.

Furthermore, the team used the opportunity of the visit to clarify roles and responsibilities of all participants that would be involved in the Family Life and HIV/AIDS Programme implementation in Enugu State.

During the team's visit to the Lagos State Ministry of Education, interview sessions were held with the Honourable Commissioner for Education, Professor Olakunle Lawal, the Permanent Secretary and some key Directors. They also had interactive group discussions with the Director of Training, PP TESCOM, some trained FLHE teachers, students/peer educators, principals and parents.

At the end of the visit, the participants developed an action plan that would guide the implementation of the programme in Enugu State.



Officials of the Enugu State Ministry of Education and GHARF in a group discussion during the visit



Members of the Enugu State MOE led by the permanent secretary, Mrs. Reginal Emehelu (centre) in a group photograph with members of AHI led by the executive director, Mrs. Nike Esiet (3rd from left).

Healthy Living And Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is the first step to good grooming and good health. Many people with bad breath are blissfully unaware of this condition. Improving standards of hygiene will control this conditions. Dandruff is a case in point. More often than you know, good looks are the result of careful and continuous grooming.

Every external part of the body demands a basic amount of attention on a regular basis. Maintaining personal hygiene enhances an individual's physical and emotional well being. Here are some grooming routines and complaints associated with neglect.

Hair:

If you are blessed with hair, it is easy enough to maintain it. Keep it at a length and style at which you can maintain. Wash your hair at least once a week using soap or mild shampoo. Dry your hair after a wash. Brush your hair at least three to four times a day with a soft brush or a wide toothed comb. Wash your brush or comb every time you wash your hair. Oil the scalp once a week, preferably an hour before hair wash.

Skin:

Soap and water are essential for keeping the skin clean. A good bath once or twice a day is recommended. Those who are involved in active sports or work out to a sweat would do well to take a bath after the activity.

A mild soap will do the job adequately. You can use a bath sponge for scrubbing. Back brushes and heel scrubbers are available. The genitals and the anus need to be cleaned well because the natural secretions of these areas, in unhygienic conditions, can cause irritation and infection. After soaping, wash off well. Drying with a clean towel is important. Change into clean underwear after bath.

Teeth:

You have to hold the brush well. Brush teeth twice a day and rinse well after every meal. Brushing before going to bed is important. While brushing, pay attention to the fact that you are getting rid of the food particles stuck in between the teeth and in the crevices of the flatter teeth at the back, the molars and pre-molars. Brush down on the upper teeth and brush up on the lower teeth. Use a circular motion. Pay attention to the

tongue and the inner surface of teeth as well.

Hands:

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after every meal and after visiting the toilet. Soaping and rinsing should cover the areas between fingers, nails, and back of the hand. Hands should be dried with a clean towel after wash. While cooking, you can prevent food from spoilage and minimise contamination by keeping your hands clean. While handling food, avoid scratching the ears, nose, mouth or other body orifices. If you need to use a handkerchief or tissue, wash your hands after that. Keep your nails short.

Nails:

Grow nails only if you can keep them clean. Short nails make less trouble. Clip nails short, along their shape. Don't cut them so close that they pinch the skin. A healthy body ensures healthy nails. Brittle or discoloured nails show up deficiencies or disease conditions. Do not keep your nails painted continuously. It causes the Keratin, of which nails are made, to split. Pamper your hands and nails once every three weeks with a manicure. This requires soaking your hands in warm water for ten minutes, massaging of hands, thoroughly cleaning and shaping of nails.

Feet:

Give your feet a good scrub with a sponge, pumice stone or foot scrubber. Dry after bath between toes. Keep toenails clipped. Those who use shoes constantly need to slip them off now and then. This airs the socks a bit and makes them less smelly. Wear cotton socks. Wear a clean pair everyday. Powder your feet before wearing socks. Many people have sweaty feet, and socks and shoes can get quite smelly. Go for a pedicure once in three weeks. Give importance to wearing comfort in the choice of footwear. For those who go barefoot indoors, doormats must be cleaned or changed frequently.

Menstrual Hygiene:

No female feels completely comfortable when she has her period. If it is not pre-menstrual tension or stomach cramps, it is the problem of dealing with the menstrual flow. Technology offers sanitary pads, tampons or menstrual cups or caps to deal with the

(cont'd on pg 14)

flow. The user has to decide what suits her best. Some females prefer tampon to external pads. A plug of absorbent cotton or gauze is inserted inside-But these should not be left unchanged beyond six hours. Whatever the preference, washing is important. There need be no taboo about bath on these days. Some people have the problem of odour during menstruation. Cleanliness and change of pad/tampon, as often as is necessary, reduces this problem. Improving personal hygiene can control the following conditions:

- Head lice
- Dandruff
- Bad breath
- Ear wax or Cerumen
- Body odour
- Perspiration
- Urinary infection
- Athletes foot

Achieving Your Educational Goals

(cont'd from pg 5)

their various fields and careers can recollect a teacher who had a positive influence on their lives. Although it is a fact that many teachers in Nigeria are remunerated poorly, teachers should take pleasure in the fact that they are helping to build future leaders and laying a foundation on which to build a greater nation.

It is very important for teachers not just to teach but to also serve as role models for respectful and responsible behaviour. Teachers should be patient with their students and take time to really explain and put them through in their areas of difficulty. Being a teacher is therefore not just a job, it is an opportunity to influence lives. Once, seen this way, teachers will find it easier to give their students the needed support.

What Government Can Do:

Education is greatly influenced by government priorities and policies. Although the private sector is now establishing more educational institutions, the government needs to realize that many households in Nigeria are dependent on government for a good and sound education.

Educational institutions have to be upgraded. Many students complain of lack of good textbooks and laboratory equipment. Thus, well stocked libraries and well equipped laboratories need to be provided in public secondary schools. This is quite important because without adequate provision of learning materials, there is little teachers can do to help students. For external examinations such as S.S.C.E. and U.M.E, government should ensure better co-ordination of the exams and take steps to curtail the rate of examination malpractices among students.

What Parents Can Do:

Parents as usual have a key role in helping their children do well in examinations. Young people whose parents take time to assist in learning are likely to get better results. A young person would not want to disappoint a parent who has taken time and effort to assist him/her in preparing for the exam. Such a young person is therefore likely to make greater effort to do

well in the exams.

Parents should therefore take the time to ask their children questions on how well they are preparing for exams and render assistance when needed. They should set strict guidelines for their children on how to spend their time. Parents should not allow their children to watch TV all the time when they should be doing assignments or reading their notes. They should also take time to look through their children's notebooks and if possible, set short quizzes to evaluate how well their children are doing in each subject. It is very important for parents to work hand in hand with teachers in ensuring that their children put in their best in the exams. They should therefore ask teachers questions on how well their children are doing so as to find out any weak points that exist and render the needed assistance.

Success, especially in exams, is not just a day's job. It is a process that requires planning, sacrifices, intensive studying and support. Success in exams is something that can easily be achieved if students are willing to take the necessary steps. If you are sitting for a major exam such as U.M.E. and S.S.C.E. you can start preparing in earnest by following all the steps above. Never doubt your ability to excel in these exams. Instead of looking at how many people have failed the exams, consider the number of people that have passed and aim to pass also. It is important that you have a very clear picture of what grade you want in each paper, then start preparing towards getting these grades. If you feel that you are not yet prepared, you can start now by planning and setting a realistic timetable. Remember that it is never too early to start preparing. Like someone said "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". Take that single step today towards the path of examination success.



"It Could Have Been You"

I was engrossed in the book I was reading, a beautiful plot; it was weaved around the heroine... that was when I felt that somebody was looking at me. As I looked up, I was a little bit startled as the face smiled and moved towards me and I took in her clothes and hairdo.

"Hello" she said, her voice warm and husky, it was the kind of voice you would wish to have. I can't say I disliked her at first sight. All I can say is that she was what I always wanted to be. I replied hello wondering what she wanted. Then she sat beside me and I put my book in my bag.

"My name is Dimi Meyak (not real name) and I was in the music class with you. Remember?" I nodded even though I couldn't remember seeing her. Then she continued, "You were very good, you are just what we need in our band. It's a new one and we would like to get as many talented people as possible".

I was just about to voice my negative reply when she said, "please, don't say no, you are one of the best we have found Tolumabe (not real name). I have heard you sing and with that talent of yours, we could do wonders. I'm sure you want to be a singer, this is the time to start", she finished so convincingly that I found myself nodding.

"Is that a yes?" she asked.

I nodded again, too shocked for words. How did she know I always wanted to sing? How did she know my name..? All these questions were replayed all over in my mind. My puzzlement increased when she told me to meet her at her classroom, where she would take me the next day to where the band practiced. What had I let myself into, I asked myself as I walked home.

I had ample time to get ready. I was excited; I even wondered what to wear. I ended up with jeans and a sweat-shirt which was my trademark, trying to convince myself that I looked okay. I told my mum I was to have music practices and I might be late that day.

I felt jittery all day and as the hours grew nearer, I felt like going back on my words. After school, I waited until all other students had dispersed then I slowly trudged off to her class.

As I came out, Dimi bumped into me saying

breathlessly, "I thought you were not coming", I didn't reply. Then we went out of school, Dimi started talking to ease my anxiety. I don't think I would have found my way back home but I went on. The only sound between us was the sound of our shoes. Finally, we got there. It was a house that didn't look safe on the outside. As if guessing my uncertainty, Dimi pulled my arm as we entered. I saw a lot of people in the room and as we entered, I could feel eyes probing and boring into me. I nearly cringed with the impact. Dimi introduced me and told me to sit on a

couch. By my side was a jar with blue and red pills, and then I noticed that everyone was drinking. A boy flopped beside me and asked, "You are nervous?" "Yes", I said. Then handing me a glass half filled with brandy, he took two red pills gave them to me smiling as he said, "This would make you feel better". I took everything in. He was right, I did feel better. He was talking and laughing and other boys sat all around me. My head began to feel fuzzy and now I had forgotten that I came for a practice with the band. The conversation went over my head; more laughter and the music got louder....

When I was finally able to stand, I looked down at my clothes, torn they were and Oh God!

When I woke up, I found myself on a bench near the school. My body felt terribly heavy and my head full of thick cottony cloud. When I was finally able to stand, I looked down at my clothes, torn they were and Oh God! The bruises on my arms were numerous and I just wanted to go back to the slumber that allowed this to happen. My body felt strange and I felt like I was bruised all over.

I don't know how I got home, all I know is that I got there and my mum never saw me in that state. The truth I couldn't begin to tell, for I didn't even know what happened.

It was when I was showering that I noticed the red marks on my thighs and stomach. I don't know if I was ravished but if I was, I thank God I was unconscious and couldn't feel the pain. My mind still remained blank to what happened. The next time I went to school, I checked for a Dimi Meyak but of course there was nobody by that name in the whole school.



Dear Auntie

The "Dear Auntie" column treats questions young people ask about their reproductive and sexual health concerns. You too can write in and let us know what your concerns are. You are assured of confidentiality, as your real names will not be published. Send your questions to: The Editor, Growing Up Newsletter (Dear Auntie Column), Action Health Incorporated, 17 Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Jibowu, P.O. Box 803, Sabo, Yaba, Lagos.

Q I noticed that one of my breasts is bigger than the other. Is this normal? (14yrs)

This happens in most girls when the breasts start enlarging at puberty. This is normal. After puberty, there may be a little difference in the size of both breasts. The difference is not expected to be noticeable by any other person except the owner of the breasts. Any obvious difference in size may require that you see a doctor or health provider.

Q I have a small penis and this makes me feel sad. Is there something I can do about it? (15yrs)

You do not need to feel sad. You are a unique and different person. The size of the penis has nothing to do with its functions; your penis is not abnormal. Do not allow your self-esteem to be lowered due to this. There is a possibility that your penis will still grow because at your age you are still growing. However, if you are still concerned by age 21 years, consult a medical doctor. Penises naturally come in different sizes just like other parts of the body.

Q I really want to practice abstinence but I do not know how to do this successfully. Please can you help me out?

Your decision is very good and it is the best. Here are some tips that can help you: -

- ✍ Decide that you want to abstain.
- ✍ List out the reasons why you want to abstain and read through it from time to time.
- ✍ Make friends with those who have the same values like yours.
- ✍ Recognize pressures and prepare ahead what to do e.g. running away from the scene, avoidance of pornographic films, pictures and books, avoiding being alone in a secluded place with someone of the opposite sex etc
- ✍ Always admire and praise yourself.
- ✍ Be assertive. Say "no" and mean "it"
- ✍ Learn to communicate your feelings and decisions effectively.
- ✍ Find out alternative activities you can engage in to

enjoy your relationship and this will help you to abstain from sexual activities.

- ✍ Always keep your future goals in mind.

Q I am not growing well. My weight has been the same since last year. What can I do?

To determine whether you are growing well or not, you have to weigh yourself regularly and place it on a chart for comparison, writing the dates against the weight each time. It will then show in 3-6 months whether you are putting on weight. You should also do some measurements of your height to see if this is increasing. Most important as long as you feel well, there is nothing to worry about. If your parents are small you may be relatively small compared with people with large parents. Eat a balanced diet.

Q Why do girls reach puberty faster than boys?

On the average, start of puberty in boys is between ages 9 to 14 while in girls it is between ages 8 to 13. This is a natural occurrence and boys catch up with girls later. The oestrogen spike in females comes earlier and it could be responsible for this. During puberty, 80% of an individual's physical growth is done and this is known as 'growth spurt or growth peak'. In boys it occurs at age 14 while in girls it occurs at age 12.

Q Why is it that at menarche, the menstrual flow is heavier than at subsequent times?

Menarche is the term used to define the first menstruation. Not all girls have heavy flow during their first menses. Some may have heavy flow while some have scanty flow, it therefore varies in girls. If scanty menstruation persists for about six months and the duration of the flow is not more than two days, it may be good to see a doctor. On the other hand, it is also advisable to see a doctor if flow is persistently heavy for three months.

Contd on pg 16)

Q Is it compulsory that I use a deodorant?

Deodorant is used on the armpit and what it does is to prevent the smell of perspiration thereby preventing the unpleasant odour that comes with perspiration. The sweat glands develop at puberty thus increasing the quantity and smell of sweat. It is very important to keep the armpit clean at all times by shaving and thorough washing. It is advisable to use deodorant in addition to this.

Q Is it good to use soap to wash the vulva?

It is important to take proper care of the vulva to prevent infection and unpleasant odour. Gently wash with a mild soap and then rinse with clean water. Use of strong soap should be avoided. The vulva should be

cleaned this way at least two times daily. Tissue or water should be used to clean around the mons pubis after urinating. Cleaning for girls should be from the front towards the back to prevent infection.

Q What is the difference between Syphilis and Gonorrhoea?

Both are sexually transmitted infections and are caused by bacteria called Treponema pallidum and Neisseria gonorrhoea respectively. While the former requires a long-term treatment, gonorrhoea responds to treatment more quickly. Both of them need early diagnosis and treatment to prevent damage to body organs and in each case both partners need to be treated.

If any of these two is suspected, it is important to visit a doctor or health provider as quickly as possible to

YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCESS

(JAMB/WAEC GUIDELINES AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES)

The Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination Board conducts Matriculation Examinations for entry into all degree awarding institutions in Nigeria and places suitably qualified candidates in the available places in the institutions.

Candidates must have completed or about to complete a full course of training in a Secondary School, Technical college, Teacher Training College or an approved institution of equivalent status.

A candidate too must have attained the age of sixteen (16) or would have done so on the first day of quarter in the year of his /her candidature. Candidates must write the University Matriculation Examination and attain an acceptable standard in the examination for the entry into the course of his/her choice.

In addition to the specific entry requirements into each faculty or department, other general entry

requirements approved for admission into the first degree courses for both U.M.E and direct entry candidates include:

- ✍ Applicants must write the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) and attain acceptable standard in the use of English (compulsory) and three subjects relevant to the



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YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCESS

(cont'd from pg 17)

proposed course of study.

✍ Furthering candidates must obtain one of the following qualifications:

a) National Examinations council (NECO)/ West African Examinations council (WAEC) Senior School Certificate (SSC) or the school certificate/ General Certificate of Education ordinary level / SSC/GCE O' level or equivalent with credit passes in five (5) subjects relevant to the course of study and obtained at not more than two sittings.

(b) Grade 2 Teachers' Certificate (TC2) with credit or merit in at least five (5) subjects (this is not acceptable in some universities).

(c) A credit pass in mathematics is required for all science and social science courses except when it is stated otherwise.

(d) A credit pass in English Language is required for all courses except where it is stated otherwise.

(e) Applicants with the following qualifications may be considered for admission by direct entry:

✍ A minimum of five (5) subjects passed at not more than two sittings with at least at the principal or advanced level of the G.C.E and the others, at credit level of the SSC/G.C.E O/level, NTC/NBC, no subject shall be counted at both Ordinary and Advanced levels.

✍ Passes in two major subjects in the NCE with SSC O/level, NTC/NBC credits or equivalent in three other subjects (mainly for Education Courses). Education may be accepted as the third A/level subject for those taking courses in Education.

✍ Direct entry should also satisfy UME requirements.

✍ Also candidates awaiting results of any examination must write the examination on or before 30th of September for the result to be valid for admission in the session beginning from the first of October of the same year.

Regulation For The West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

This examination is administered to school candidates in the third year of the Senior Secondary School education course and to private candidates. The examination will test the extent to which candidates have covered the materials contained in the teaching curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education of member countries. Candidates are expected to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the regulations since they form the basis for taking the examination.

The West African Senior School Certificate Examination is made up of two components viz, the Continuous Assessment and the External Examination. The Continuous Assessment and External will be applicable to school candidates while Private Candidates will be exposed to the External Examination only.

Monotechnics, Polytechnics And Colleges Of Education

JAMB also conducts matriculation examination for entry into all the monotechnics, polytechnics, and Colleges of Education in Nigeria as well as placing suitably qualified candidates in the available places in the institutions. The first matriculation examination conducted by the Board for entry into all the polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria was in July 1991.

General Entry Requirements

The following are approved for the first two-year programme leading to the award of the National Diploma (NB) and to all Colleges of Education for three-year programme to the award of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

Polytechnics:

1. Candidates must (in addition to attaining an acceptable level of performance at the MPCE examination meet the following minimum entry requirements:

(a) Four (4) ordinary levels passes at credit level in subjects relevant to the proposed programme

of study at not more than two sittings.

(b) City and Guides/WAEC/NECO/NABTEB Technical Certificate in Building, Wood work, Mechanical or Electrical trades respectively/ NABTEB National Business Certificate with at least four credits in academic subjects including Mathematics, Science, English Language and Social Studies. Holders of any of these certificates should apply only to the institutions that specify it as an acceptable qualification:

(c) Candidates awaiting results of any of these examinations may also apply.

Monotechnics:

(a) Four (4) Ordinary levels Passes at Credit level in subjects relevant to the proposed performances of study at not more than two sittings.

Colleges Of Education:

(a) O/level passes in at least five (5) subjects at one sitting; three (3) or which must be at credit level or four (4) credits at two sittings.

(b) Grade 2 Teachers' Certificate (TC2) with credit with credit or merit in at least three (3) subjects. For the Technical Colleges, the subjects must include Mathematics/ Arithmetic and two Physical Science subjects.

(c) City and Guilds/WAEC Technical/Craft/ Intermediate part 2 course B certificate in building and Wood work, Mechanical or Electrical trades respectively plus the Federal Craft Certificate (FCC) with at least four (4) credits in Mathematics, Sciences, English Language and Social Studies.

(d) WASC, Commercial/NABTEB or RSA stage 2 Group Certificate with passes in five (5) subjects at not more than two sittings. The passes should include English Language and two subjects relevant to the course of study. Holders of these certificates should apply only to the institutions

that specify them as acceptable entry qualifications.

(e) NABTEB National Technical Certificate/ National Business Certificate.

(f) NECO National Examination Council Certificate.

The Continuous Assessment forms 30% while the External Examination forms 70%, the total assessment the External Examination will form 100% of the assessment of Private Candidates.

The examination will be administered to all candidates in the third year of the senior secondary school course and is open to all schools, which are daily recognized by the Ministry Of Education of the member countries.

✍ Heads of schools or their representatives are expected to register candidates on official entry forms/schedules provided by the West African Examination Council.

✍ Entry forms/ schedules, together with the registration fees should reach the appropriate office of the council by specified dates that will be determined by the council from year to year.

✍ Private candidates shall make their own individual entries to the appropriate office of the council.

The examination will be held twice a year, May/June and November/December. The actual dates for each year will be communicated by a circular to school candidates or publication in the press for private candidates.

Adapted from JAMB's and WAEC's Brochures for Matriculation Candidates.

Do You Want To Be A Writer?

Authors write books, plays and/or scripts, poetry, manuals, and reports that have either been commissioned or produced speculatively in the hope that they will sell - to publishers, in the case of books and poems; to radio, film, and television producers in the case of scripts, and to theatre owners for plays.

The Job:

Fiction writers usually write on a subject that interests them, or they may choose a topic for which there is a market. They may spend a great deal of time researching, but this varies according to the type of work. A historical novel must be accurately researched. Readers are likely to write letters of complaint to the publisher if mistakes are made. Backgrounds must be accurate, place names and descriptions correct, and care must be taken not to libel them. Publishers have editors who thoroughly check manuscripts but it helps if authors minimize mistakes.

A fiction writer first has to think of an idea, produce an outline of the book, and then persuade a publisher to commission it. It is difficult to get started, so many authors employ literary agents to approach publishers on their behalf and negotiate contracts for a percentage of their earnings.

Fiction writers spend much time alone at their desks. They may have days when words come easily; others when they feel a total lack of inspiration. Nevertheless they must respect publishers' deadlines. They, may, therefore, have more working days when things are going well to compensate for a previous bad day. Some authors write in longhand and pay for typing services, but most now use word processors.

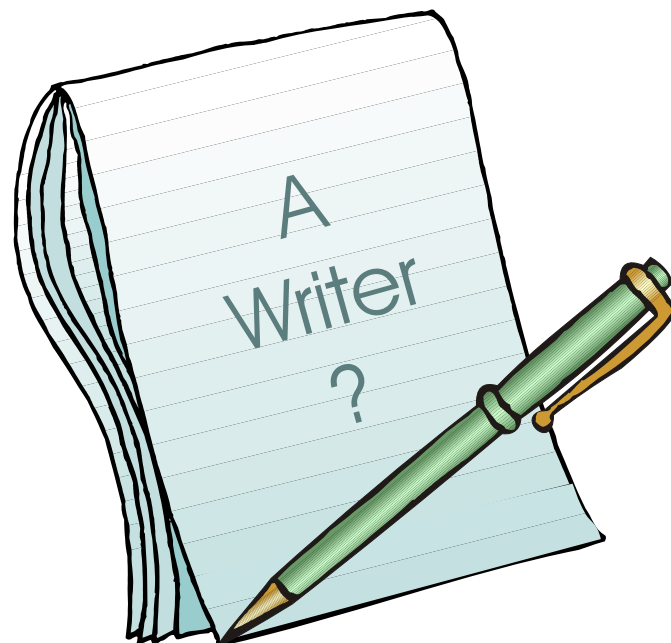
Fiction writers may write stories specifically to be read on radio. In this case they need to know how

much air time is necessary. For example, a 15 minutes story slot on radio, requires 2, 0003,000 words on text. Some writers specialize in books for children, and need special skills in order to produce suitable material. They usually read children's literature to get a feel for the market and find out what children are currently reading. They must use a vocabulary that is suitable for their readership. Some children may only have just learned to read, while others are more advanced. Children's books are always shorter than those written for adults.

Playwrights are similar to fiction authors: they think of an idea for a play, write the work, and hope to persuade a theatre company to perform it. In addition to writing skills, they need the ability to visualize the action and the stage set, their scripts give actors the movement directions as well as the words.

Not all the writers write fiction. There are many who write specialty materials. Their names may not be well known but they are, nevertheless, professional writers.

Non-fiction writers are often specialists; they may write reference books or books on topics that appeal



to certain sections of the public for example, gardening, diet, fitness, or sport. Some write textbooks. Others compile travel guides, first visiting and assessing different areas and types of accommodation in order to write about them. Some non-fiction writers are specialists in the field before becoming writers. University teachers, for example, often write academic books. Specialist writers may, like novelists and poets, be self-employed, but some are staff writers employed by publishers or companies.

Ghost writers do not, as the name suggests, write on horror fiction, instead, they write on someone else's behalf and their names do not appear in the book. They write for a writer who has a large output and subcontracts some of the work or, more often, they write, a well-known person's autobiography.

Script writers come in two groups, some work like playwrights; they write radio, film, or TV scripts and endeavor to sell them to producers. Others are commissioned to write a screenplay. In the case of the popular TV series, different writers may write individual episodes. Obviously, they must keep up to date with the series even when not working on an episode, so that they know how the story had developed. They must also know how characters in series behave and react to tailor their writing to fit their personalities. Script writers need more than just writing skill. Writing comedy requires an

understanding of how audience will react and the ability to make them laugh.

Some script writers specialize in adapting books for TV or the stage. First, they read the book several times. Then they work closely with the producer and the director to decide which scenes to include. They have the task of converting into a screenplay the text of a book that a large number of people have already read. The audience will already have views

about the relative stress to be given to each part of the book. An added difficulty is to convey in conversation form, large sections of the script which the author may have written in prose. Length is also an important factor, and an author's original material must also be drastically shortened to fit into a standard time slot.

Critics review other people's work for newspapers and magazines. They may be specialist writers who are asked to review a book or play because of their own knowledge or they may be journalists with an interest in the arts.

Training:

There is no standard training for a writer. Many are completely self-taught. Others have first gained writing experience in related employment, such as journalism or editing. One of the most usual ways to become a professional writer is to join an amateur's writers group where you can learn from other members and gain experience on having work criticized.

Some short courses are available in the craft of writing and on other techniques that author's often need - marketing their work, understanding such legal aspects as contracts, royalties, and copyright law, and keeping business accounts.

There are also an increasing number of creative writing courses to be found in higher education

(cont'd on pg 20)

Skills and Personal Qualities

- Business Sense
- Creativity
- Determination
- Imagination
- Patience
- Self-discipline
- Confidence
- Communication skills
- Good eyesight
- Manual dexterity
- Perseverance
- Sensitivity



(cont'd from pg 21)

institutions. Many liberal arts degree programmes also include this subject. Some courses specialize more heavily in writing and there are special courses devoted just to scriptwriting.

Prospects/Outlook

There are many struggling writers barely making a living or working at other jobs while writing in their spare time. At the other end of the scale, an author who does produce a best seller can earn substantial amounts. Success depends on combination of: talent, inspiration, and finding the right publisher.

Many authors do not restrict themselves to one type of writing. They may write short stories, articles, and scripts. Some write two or more distinct types of work and use pseudonyms for one of them. Some ghost, or re-write other authors' work to make it appealing. Some authors also write the screenplay for their own novels and plays if they are to be adapted for TV.



Profile Of A Role Model

Promise Okekwe

Recipient of the 1999 Cadbury prize for poetry with her collection of poems entitled "My Mother's Eyes Speak Volumes"; winner of the 1999 Spectrum prize for prose; winner of the distinguished Okigbo prize for poetry in Africa for her collection entitled "Canals In Paradox". This lady of letters was in 2002 again honoured with the Spectrum prize for prose for her novel, "Deep Blue Woman". In the same year, she earned the maiden ANA/NDDC prize with her acclaimed novel, "Hall of Memories".

Being a young writer herself, Dr. Promise Okekwe

never forgot the children. She delved into children's literature with the publication of the children's book entitled, "The Street Beggars" which earned her The Matatu Prize. According to her, she always feels for the child exposed to the cold and the dangers in the street but hopes that "someday soon they will wake up to explore their talents and have a meaningful existence if the people molesting them will have a reorientation and if the government also will make more effort to save the Nigerian child". Her other children's books include, "Three Naughty Girls"

(2000), "The Spider and His Webs" (1998), "Tales By Heaven's Gate" (1998), "The Secrets of the Palm Kernel", "Sweet Kasara" etc.

In 2003, she bagged the Flora Nwapa prize for prose with her novel, "Fumes and Cymbals". She is an Azikiwe Fellow in Communication as well as Stiftung Kulturfonds, Germany. She has also enjoyed fellowships in the U.S.A, Italy, and has traveled extensively in Europe, Africa and Asia as a scholar, playwright and a poet. Her trilogy entitled, "A Trilogy of Tomorrow's Yesterday, comprising "Hall of Memories", "Zita zita" and "Fumes and Cymbals" have recently been released.

She also expresses herself profoundly in abstract paintings using the medium she is very conversant with which is a fusion of text and painting. Her exhibitions are informal and characterized by improvisations and very artistic innovations. She has participated in group and solo exhibitions with her paintings, "See Where the Mind Goes" (Stephanie's gallery, Denton, Texas, U.S.A; Pat's Place, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria etc.

Born in 1968 and being the only child in the family, Promise ran the risk of being spoilt but according to her, her mum "helped a lot in that regard as she insisted that I learnt how to do everything, how to take care of myself and others and how to be occupied instead of feeling lonely and how to challenge myself to live a good life".

Dr. Promise Okekwe hails from Enugu State, Nigeria. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Literary Studies from the University of Calabar and a Masters and Doctorate degrees in Communication and Language Arts from the University of Ibadan. All these she achieved in just a little over a decade (1986-1997).

This Literary icon also runs a non-governmental organization (NGO) called "The Lumina Foundation"

to support knowledge acquisition for the edification of man and to positively impact on the poor reading culture in Nigeria.

Dr. Promise as she is fondly called, says her role model has always been Toni Morison because of the sincerity of her writing, her fearlessness in pursuit of the truth and the fact that her "femaleness" does not limit her but enhances her total being instead.

On her driving force, she says, she never compromises hard work. "I want to be who I am and ride the storms of life till I get to the shore", she said.

She advises young people who wish to take to writing to be disciplined and determined. According to her, "They have to be sharp-witted and take nothing for granted. They need versatility and have minds of their own and above all, be creative and open to criticism and should always dream great dreams", she quipped.

At an early age, when most adults in the age bracket battle with a first degree, Promise already obtained a Ph.D. with more than 27 volumes of award winning books in her kitty.

This astonishingly beautiful lady is clothed with strength, dignity and knowledge.

She is currently the Head, Corporate Affairs, Liberty Bank Plc and so she is not only a novelist, poet, playwright, social worker, painter, she is also a banker.

Call it, "Jack of all trades and master (or is it mistress) of all?" and you won't be wrong.

Dr. Promise Ogochukwu Okekwe is married and has a child.