



# CARAVAN REPORT FOR THE 19TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STI / HIV AIDS - ICASA 2017

SOFITEL HOTEL IVOIRE, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 04 to 11 December 2017

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## Abbreviations/Acronyms

ICASA	-	International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infection
NYSC	-	National Youth Service Corps
UNAIDS	-	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	-	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	-	World Health Organization
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
OCAL	-	ORGANISATION DU CORRIDOR ABIDJAN-LAGOS
ARV	-	Antiretrovirals
INJS	-	National Institute of Youth and Sports
SAA	-	Society for AIDS in Africa

## **II INTRODUCTION**

From the 04<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017, the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) held in Abidjan at SOFITEL HOTEL IVOIRE. This biennial meeting, held alternately between Anglophone and Francophone countries, brought together several actors involved in the fight against AIDS from many countries in Africa and the rest of the world. Actors include but are not limited to UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, youth organizations (NYC, OCJ, ROJALNU, Africa Young, NGOs, organizations working with women and girls, LGBT communities, organizations of People Living with HIV / AIDS, resource persons, etc. this particular edition of ICASA was themed "AFRICA: ENDING AIDS - DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY" (Africa: A Different Approach Towards the end of AIDS). ICASA targets the 90:90:90 objective by UNAIDS which aims that 90% of people living with HIV get know their HIV status, 90% of people living with HIV who know their status are placed on treatment and 90% of people under ARV have an undetectable viral load. This edition of ICASA 2017 was punctuated by two major events: the youth caravan along the Lagos-Abidjan corridor and the conference proper in Abidjan.

## **III PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES ALONG THE LAGOS-ABIDJAN CORRIDOR**

### **HIV/AIDS Film Show at NYSC Camp, Iyanalpaja, Lagos.**

ICASA 2018 pre-conference activities kicked off on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Lagos Nigeria with an HIV & AIDS FILM SHOW at the NYSC Camp, Iyanalpaja tagged 'Know Your Status'. The film called 'Inside Story' featured a young man who despite his poor background dared to be an international footballer but due to unprotected sex with a 'trusted' girlfriend ended up with HIV. Not being aware he was infected, he relocated from Africa to the United Kingdom and passed the virus unto other ladies while in the football academy. At some point his health became a barrier to achieving his goals but when he painfully decided to adhere to treatment, he regained his strength and rose to the top of his career and was won over by his infected girlfriend. The film was a thrill and delight to tens of Youth Corpers who watched amidst tears, laughter, bewilderment and loud cheers. This was a means of awareness creation in the language understood by today's youths. This activity was championed by the Youth Caravan Coordinator, Mr Martin-Mary Falana. After the film show, all 10 Nigerian delegates who either flew or travelled by road into Lagos State retired to the hotel that was reserved for them to prepare for the long road trip scheduled to take off 5am the following day.

## PICTURES

### Media Chat With Benin Republic First Lady

Before the media chat with the First Lady of Benin Republic, the 10 Nigerian delegates comprised of 5 females and 5 males were received by ORGANISATION DU CORRIDOR ABIDJAN-LAGOS (OCAL) at the Krake Borders. Given that it was December 1<sup>st</sup> which marks the World AIDS Day, the delegates were given t-shirts which read 'DROIT A LA SANTE' and 'RIGHT TO HEALTH' and they took part in awareness creation activities at the Krake borders.

## PICTURES

At 10h 50mn, the Nigerian Delegation led by the Coordinator of the Youth Caravan ICASA 2017 was warmly received by that of 10 selected youth from Benin Republic at the Martyrs' Square in Cotonou.

At 11h 30mn under the leadership of Dr. Yasmine of UNAIDS Benin and Dr. Alain AZONDEKON, Director of the Inter Army Hospital of Cotonou, the now 20 Delegates went to the Foundation of the First Lady of Benin, Mrs. Claudine TALON with whom they had a MEDIA CHAT. Being a good mother, the First Lady gave wise advice to her children: to behave well throughout the caravan, to have responsible sexual behavior everywhere, to be the messengers of the good behavior towards the youth in Africa. She also affirmed her commitment, her willingness to be the voice of youths in the political decision-making bodies and her determination to support initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of young people. In a very relaxed atmosphere, the First Lady responded to the different concerns of each other. At the end of this exchange session, she offered a lunch to both delegations at Villa Livingstone. At 3:30 pm the delegation started heading for Lome, Togo.





## International Debate, Young People and the 90:90:90 Target, Togo

### i) At The Hilacondji Borders

At 6:15pm, the caravan in a luxurious bus decorated in the colors of ICASA arrived at the Benin-Togo border. On site, the delegation was greeted with jubilation, the sound of fanfares and staff of OCAL. She then visited the information unit of OCAL. In fact, these information units are installed at each border along the corridor and their role is to raise the awareness of corridor users. Mass awareness was created at the Hilacondji borders. The delegation was escorted to Lomé where the delegates spent the night.

### ii) At The University Of Lome

Always with the aim of giving a special stamp to this caravan ICASA 2017, it was planned a competition of verbal argument in Lomé between Benin and Togo. This activity took place at the University of Lomé on Saturday 02 December 2017 at the Confucius Institute Conference Room at 9am. Already on the scene, before the arrival of the authorities and the delegation of the caravan, the choir of the University of Lomé was well installed and embellished the party through songs and dances. It was also in this festive atmosphere that the guests were installed. The party was opened by the words of welcome of the Director Country UNAIDS Togo Dr. Christian MOUALA to the entire delegation before reminding the youth, the responsibility that is theirs in the fight against AIDS. Moreover, he did not fail to recall the objectives that motivate the organizing of this competition of verbal contest to know how to develop in the young people, the art of speaking in public before wishing a good competition to the different teams.

Four (4) teams were entered for this competition including two for Benin and two for Togo and will have to compete in the semi-final. The first semi-finals between the two teams of Togo on the theme "sexual abstinence is a utopian ideal." According to the format chosen by the organizers, one team will represent the parliamentary majority and the second team the parliamentary opposition. Team 1 from Togo therefore represented the parliamentary majority and answered in the affirmative in relation to the theme. It consisted of:

- 1- APEDO Yaovi Mawulé, Executive Director of the NGO JIMAH
- 2- NOVON KWAZO René NGO ACT
- 3- ADEGBENYA Noëlie Psychosocial mediator at AMC.

Team 2 represented the parliamentary opposition and had to refute this thesis. It consisted of:

- 1- LABAN Kossi Atim, Executive Director of the association the manager
- 2- AKOLLY Kafui Koffi Executive Director of the Association of Volunteers for the Promotion of Young People (AV-Youth)
- 3- ABOUYO Naana, Accounting Secretary at the NGO Action Santé pour Tous (AST)

At the end of this confrontation, Team II won by a score of 13 points against 11 and thus qualified for the final.

The second semifinal was between the two teams from Benin. The theme of the meeting was: "My right to health is only a chimera". The parliamentary majority consisted of:

- 1 AGBOOLA Fadil representing HIA
- 2 TOKO CHABI Kifayath representing MAJ / ABPF
- 3 DAVI Urban representing ROJALNU

It was for them to answer the question in the affirmative.

Team II representing the parliamentary opposition consisted of:

- 1 SALAMI Aboubakar Head of Social and Sports Affairs BEN / OCJ
- 2 WEMENE Gérard representing the HIA
- 3 OJOUOYE Madjidi representing the HIA

At the end of the match, the team I representing the presidential movement won with a narrow score of 14 points against 13, 50. So she was qualified to face Togo in the final.

The theme of the grand final between Togo and Benin was:

"The end of AIDS, an elusive horizon. Togo's post-draw team represented the presidential movement and Benin represented the parliamentary opposition. It should be remembered that for all competitions each member of a team had 4 minutes to play for 24 minutes in total. At the



end of this confrontation, Benin had a tight score of 15.75 against 15.50 for Togo. Thus Benin was crowned best team of the ICASA 2017 Caravan Competition. All participating teams were treated to VLISCO products and a dictionary of the French language. Togo was honored with the prize of the best competitor and it is Mr Rodrigue AKOLLI who took it away. He received a plane ticket from Ethiopian Airlines for a destination of his choice in Africa. The awarding of these various prizes marked the end of the competition.





Thus, the delegation of Togo composed of ten people (including 4 women and 6 men) joined the caravan ICASA. The caravan left the University for the Togo-Ghana border.

At the border, the delegation visited the OCAL information center and raised awareness among the population, all in an atmosphere of joy and music.



### Stopover in Ghana

After long hours of traveling, the now 30 delegates stopped briefly in front of Shoprite in Accra, Ghana where 12 Ghanaian Delegates had been waiting. After all necessary bus inspections and refuelling, the now 42 delegates started heading for the city of TAKORADI which was chosen to host the caravan. Before their arrival to Takoradi at 1 am, the INTERNATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION and mass awareness creation had already taken place. The caravan was greeted by the UNICEF Ghana Representative in Takoradi at 1 am. At the scene, the entire caravan team was dressed in UNAIDS Ghana T-shirts before heading to a popular night club. The delegates were advised against taking part in club activities as there won't be any preventive measures just in case violence erupts. Joined by the delegation of Ghana, the caravan took the road

towards Abidjan at 4am. She arrived in Abidjan on Sunday, December 03, 2017 at 12H. She was lodged at the National Institute of Youth and Sports (INJS) still called 'VillageFrancophonie'.

### Pre-Conference at Abidjan with the Minister of Youths



Monday, December 4th at 9 am, the Ivorian Minister Youth sent his Director of Cabinet to the VillageFrancophonie, to wish AKWAABA that is to say 'Welcome!' in the Ivorian language to the Caravan Youths. After all necessary introductions, the Director of the Cabinet took the floor to welcome the young people. He expressed his sincere desire for the Caravan Youths to get more skills and be representatives of all learnt in our various countries. He went further to state that in Cote D'ivoire, 2 of every 3 person with HIV is a youth, this is a concern. As young people, we discover new things in life. Everything is allowed but not all is useful. So they are creating communication with the system of UN Nations and ELF to establish and bring more people into the fold and welcome youths because they won't be able to do anything without them. He noted that back in the days, HIV was threatening and people run from it. But today we have more youth to be responsible for our health and actions. He hoped we go back and share our experience with them.

UNICEF representative, Dr. KONANE equally welcomed the youths for coming to identify with the Ivorian Youths. He asked us to go out and sensitize our youth. He also lamented the high rate of HIV / AIDS among youths before urging the caravan to raid Abidjan neighbourhoods in order to educate their peers.

In response, the Youth Caravan Coordinator thanked the Government and partners. He said it is sad that the youth are most hit with HIV but also the first to make a change. The youths have the energy, mind and intelligence. He called on government to support them more. The 90-90-90 goal need the youth to make it happen. This interaction took place in the INJS conference room.

### ***Reception by the Minister of Sports***

At the end of the meeting, the director of the cabinet led the delegation to SOFITEL HOTEL IVOIRE with the help of a cruise boat on the lagoon, to the sound of the fanfares and was warmly received by the Honourable Minister of Sports in person. This day was mainly devoted to acquiring conference badges and identifying the different sites to host the events.

## **PICTURES**

### **IV. PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES**

#### **a) *The Opening Ceremony***

The opening ceremony held on December 05, 2017 with Mrs. Marie PIERRE PORIER, Regional Director of UNICEF for Central and West Africa, as the Master of Ceremonies. It was placed under the blessing of the traditional chiefs who first invoked the blessings of our ancestors for a perfect success of this event. After this prayer, next were speeches by different personalities. This was among other things



Dr. Iahad Ahmed ABDELRAMMAN, President of CASA 2017, President of Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA), Dr. Raymonde GOUDOU KOFFIE, Minister of Health and Public Hygiene, Mr. Michel SIDIBE, Executive Director of UNAIDS, Dr. MATSHIDISO Rebecca Moeti, Mr MABINGUE NGOM, Regional Director UNFPA Central and West Africa and Mr. Martin-Mary Falana.

From the various presentations, it would appear that the achievement of the 90:90:90 objectives remains a major challenge and requires strong action both at the political level and at the level of international organizations. It should be noted that for the 19th ICASA conference, 19 committees were set up.

Apart from the opening ceremony, the caravan team took part in the conferences debates.

***b) The Satellite Conference***

Several satellite sessions were organized during the conference period. They aimed at providing a platform for exchange between governments, technical and financial partners, the private sector, civil society organizations and young people on investment opportunities to end the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.



Specifically, satellite sessions were convened to

- Share positive experiences (at national or regional level) on HIV prevention among young people and its integration into sexual and reproductive health services

- Strengthen partnership with the private sector, development actors for more funding for HIV and other reproductive sexual health services.
- Strengthen youth leadership for greater involvement in the response to HIV / AIDS and respect for their right to sexual and reproductive health.

For the satellite conference to which the youths were invited, the theme developed was ***Youth Leadership in the Response to HIV / AIDS in Africa, Challenges and Perspectives***.

The different panelists of this session were:

- The Regional Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for West and Central Africa
- Madam Minister of Health and Hygiene of the Ivory Coast
- Mr DIALO President of AFRICA YOUNG representing youth

Each one of them made a presentation which resulted in a debate in plenary.



### ***c) The community village***

The community village is an integral component of the ICASA program's momentum. It was open to both registered participants for the conference and the general public.

The village hosted community discussions, gave participants the opportunity to interact with leaders and during NGO and government activities throughout the main stage conference. Participants and visitors are encouraged and invited to visit the village exhibition areas and networking areas. Several discussions were held on the main stage of the community village decorated in the colors of CONDOMIZE. Amongst others, the Debate hosted by the First Lady of Benin, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, the Secretary General of ICASA 2017, International Ivorian Footballer Gervinho. For two days, these different personalities came to discuss with the public around a given theme.

- The theme developed on the first day, Tuesday 05 December 2017 was: **‘Should the condom be made available in schools?’**
- The theme developed on Wednesday 06 December 2017 was: **‘Should the housewife remind her husband to keep the condom by him during official trips?’**

Around these themes, opinions and comments were shared. It must be remembered that this debate generated a lot of enthusiasm among the numerous public who participated and enriched the debates.

#### ***d) CONDOMIZE***

CONDOMIZE is an animation set in the Community Village. Its role is to animate the village through games, entertainment to raise awareness about HIV / AIDS. The animations of CONDOMIZE were used as a strategy to bring together the public before and after the debates with distribution of prizes to the winners at the end of the draws. CONDOMIZE distributed raffle draw tickets to participants and proceeded at the end of an activity to draw the winning numbers. At the CONDOMIZE stands, large batches of condoms, t-shirts, sunshades, beads, handbags and lubricants were distributed. During the period around two million (2000000) condoms were distributed.





#### ***e) Caravan Youths HIV/AIDS Community Outreach***

On Thursday December 6th at 3pm, the caravan, under the leadership of Dr. KONAN raided one of Abidjan's important neighborhoods, Yopougon, precisely in the Kuwait district.. The goal was to create mass awareness on STI / HIV / AIDS. The delegation was greeted by the traditional leader of the said district who welcomed the youths and blessed the meeting. Mr Martin-Mary FALANA, ICASA 2017 Caravan Coordinator spoke on behalf of the delegation and thanked the people of Yopougon Kuwait. He then called for the commitment of all the youth of Africa in general, but Ivorian in particular so that under our generation AIDS is totally eradicated from the African continent. He did not fail to remind the people of Kuwait that having HIV is not a death sentence. Today thanks to the progress of medicine, a person carrying HIV / AIDS can for example give birth to healthy children, safe from the virus..Hence, the need for everyone to know his status. It should be noted that an HIV/AIDS Screening mobile van was set up in the community for screening and family planning. The various steps involved in wearing a male and female condom was demonstrated to the population. This session was rich in color to the sound of music and dance. It is in this atmosphere that the delegation took leave of the population of the Kuwait district (Yopougon) at 18h30mn to go to the residence

#### **PICTURES**

#### **V CLOSING CEREMONIES**





### *a) Community Village Closing Ceremony*

The closing ceremony of the community village took place on Friday, December 08, 2017. It was marked with a special debate. The theme developed was: **'Negotiation for Safer Sex: What is the Challenge For Young People?'** Many people participated in the debates and enriched their contributions. At the end of the discussions, the floor was then given to the caravan coordinator Mr Martin-Mary FALANA. On behalf of all the countries in the team of this caravan, he thanked the organizers of ICASA 2017 and reaffirmed the commitment and determination of everyone to be the voice of new approaches to the eradication of AIDS from our beloved continent. To end speculations as to where the next ICASA will take place,

Global fund representative present encouraged the youth to keep pushing, keep challenging, keep demanding and leave no one behind. Youths were reminded that the activities of CONDOMIZE were not only about the gifts or t-shirts but the message. She said youths will be supported and encouraged to keep going on. His Royal Majesty – King of Toho, Uganda remarked that ideas were shared, innovations discovered and this was a very innovative way of sharing ideas and information. Without involving the community, no total success story will be recorded in ending HIV. He appreciated and admired the energy of the young people. There's need for us to commune to choke this disease. He noted that HIV may have started with our parents' generation but it can end in our generation. He rounded off by saying "If you ever come to Uganda, visit the Kingdom of Tooro"

The Secretary General of the Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA) and Mr. Jean Luc BODEA in turn thanked all the actors who animated the various stands through their various exhibitions and the services offered to the public before declaring the activities of the Community Village closed.

### *b) Main Conference Closing Ceremony*



The closing ceremony of ICASA 2017 took place on Saturday, December 09th, 2017 at 10am. It gathered all the actors invited to this conference. It was marked by speeches by the political and administrative authorities of the Ivory Coast and the heads of international institutions involved in the fight against AIDS. Essentially, we can take from the different speeches commitments, advocacy and especially unanimity to invest in young people. Just before the ceremony certificates were handed to participants and volunteers. At the end of the ceremony, Kigali, Rwanda was announced as the next destination for ICASA 2019.

### ***c) Experience at the Borders***

Special gratitude/appreciation to UNAIDS, UNFPA and other partners who made the Caravan possible, from Nigeria through to Abidjan. Also appreciation to OCAL (Organization Du Corridor Abidjan-Lagos) for aiding access at the borders

### **Challenges**

- d) Communication planning between ICASA and the youth Caravan
- e) Caravan didn't start from Nigeria (Lagos)

## **VI Challenges and Recommendations in reaching 90:90:90 Targets**

The 90:90:90 Target has recorded quite some success. One remarkable success which has been recorded by UNAIDS Togo is the digitization of sensitization about HIV in Togo. They maximised the use of internet and social media in general to improve response.

However, challenges/gaps prevail across Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo, and Ghana as identified below.

- Inadequate youth participation in policy development and the design of programs that affect them.

- Inadequate awareness on the target 90:90:90
- Inadequate reagents
- Lack of capacity building for health workers on HIV leading to increased stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV
- Failure to follow people living with HIV
- Lack of information and necessary training of young people to offer services to their peers
- Low investment in young people who are involved in resolving goals 90.90.90.

***Recommendations:***

- A necessary effective structure that will involve and help young people at the grassroots level
- Develop key messages about 90:90:90 objectives and strengthen the communication skills of service providers
- Free services are needed to improve treatment adherence
- Providing relevant platform to raise awareness about 90.90.90 goals eg social media among others
- - centers adapted to young people and suitably equipped for the dissemination of information
- Providing more reagents and access to them
- Involve psychological care
- Begin a process of *demedicalization* of HIV testing for youth associations



Our own recommendation

Our participation in ICASA 2017 allowed us to understand the scope of the event and make some recommendations to the National Executive Office of our OCJ institution.

ICASA is an international conference that aims to eradicate HIV / AIDS on our continent. And this fight is carried out in favor of the young people who constitute the most vulnerable layer. The OCJ, with its prestige, its efforts and its prowess in the fight against STIs HIV AIDS in Benin deserves a strong involvement in the participation of the youth of Benin in this great international meeting. This necessarily involves advocacy and lobbying for the African AIDS Society and the UNAIDS country representative in Benin. This approach will make it possible to increase the number of places of the OCJ and to receive directly the invitation of ICASA.

## CONCLUSION

The achievement of the 90:90:90 targets in 2030 remains a major challenge. It is clear that these objectives still have Plon in the air despite the efforts made at the national and international levels. A different approach to achieving these goals was therefore necessary. These are the dynamics of the 19th International Conference on AIDS.

The success recorded would not have been possible without the support of the ICASA Secretariat. We are grateful to Luc Bodea and his team, the UN partners in the Countries on the Caravan, Her Excellency, the First Lady of Benin Republic, the Team of Organization of Abidjan-Lagos Border and the Youth Volunteers themselves were wonderful.