

**YOUTH DELIVER THE FUTURE
INVESTING IN YOUTH PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT:
RESEARCH THAT IMPROVES POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

**Abuja, Nigeria
April 27-29, 2008**

**Welcome Speech
By
Professor Oladosu A. Ojengbede
Chairman of the National Steering Committee**

Her Excellency, the First lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Hajia Turai Yar' Ardua. Our honorable Ministers of Health, Youths and Development, Women Affairs, other partners from the Gates Institute, all other partners, distinguished participants at this international conference from all over the world, invited media organizations, ladies and gentlemen.

I am highly privileged to welcome you all to this unique international conference on Young People's Health and Development holding in Abuja- the Federal Capital Territory that symbolizes the center of Unity and Peace in Nigeria.

This conference is uniquely designed to assemble researchers and policy makers together to freely interact and share knowledge that will promote and better prepare our youths for the new world that we all desired now and in the future. Therefore, the theme of this conference employs the slogan of "Youth Deliver the Future."

The youth forms about 40% of Nigerian population, and they can therefore not be neglected by any responsible government. In addition, the unacceptably high poor reproductive health indicators of our youth is a challenge. Therefore, this conference is auspicious to us in Nigeria because of the recent commitment of the Federal Government under the leadership of His Excellency, Alhaju Umaru Yar'Adua at setting a new path for the country by inaugurating the Vision 2020 committee on National Development. I am very sure that Nigerians in particular and the world at large eagerly await this policy document. I therefore assured that major outputs from this conference shall be forwarded to the government.

Perhaps, if the adults of today were adequately informed and enabled, the world they have been delivered would not have been an asphyxiated one requiring today's daunting resuscitation.

It is on this premise that we at the Centre for Population and Reproductive Health, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, a partnership program funded by the Gates Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, USA, have engaged a high gear by establishing a graduate program of Masters of Public Health focused on Adolescent and Young Person's Health and Development. We sincerely hope that Nigerian youth that are opportune to be trained in this citadel of learning to bridge the gaps of the existing knowledge and skills in the country.

Abuja is tantalizingly interesting to explore and so we invite all to find time to have moments of relaxation. WE do hope that the programme put in place will generate follow-up programs and actions that have evolved from research and experiences shared.

I most sincerely thank all members of the National and International Steering Committees for their great efforts put together at ensuring the realization of this dream. Finally, we appreciate the support received from several partners listed on the conference website and others that came on board later.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, you are most heartily welcome to this great city, Abuja. Thank you all.