

The 14th Annual International Day of Dignity & Respect

March 11, 2012



IDEA Nigeria members in Zamfara State celebrate the 14th Annual International Day of Dignity and Respect, March 11, 2012. On this occasion, the Zamfara government gave the women members of IDEA 49 goats. *Photo Courtesy of IDEA Nigeria.*

“... We successfully fought for respect for human rights for a member in Kogi State who was denied the right to travel on a pilgrimage to Mecca, after paying his money for more than five months, all because of his status as a person affected by leprosy. And, IDEA Nigeria fought for the recognition of the marriage of one of its members in Kebbi State ... we intervened on behalf of a member who was being forcefully asked to divorce his wife on account of leprosy and successfully won the case ...”

-- Alhaji Shehu S/Fada, IDEA Nigeria

IDEA Nigeria: Integration, Dignity...



IDEA Nigeria Taraba State Executives. *Photos Courtesy IDEA Nigeria.*



Some of the 20,000 IDEA Nigeria Members from Zamfara State.

“It is eight years since I took on the mantle of leadership of our great association which is designed to create integration, dignity, equality and advancement for all our members. We must remember that we are not alone because the word IDEA resonates across the entire world for associations of persons affected by leprosy. Eight years is a long time for anyone to occupy this kind of position. What is important, however, is what I have been able to achieve during that period, working with the rest of the executive committee and membership of our association. I shall outline for you some of the modest achievements we have made over the years.

“The first thing we did was to ensure that we were a legal association and therefore embarked upon getting the association registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). It was also necessary to ensure that we had federal government recognition and as such we registered with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development which is the supervising ministry for all disability affairs in the country. Most importantly, we sought to be recognized by the umbrella body of persons with disabilities . . . At its annual convention in Minna, Niger State, in 2004, IDEA sought and was granted recognition by the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities as a cluster disability group . . .

“We then embarked upon establishing state branches of IDEA and today we can be proud to say that we have 34 state branches. We have recorded modest successes nationally in gaining respect and dignity for our members. In the first place, we advocated, on behalf of our members, for monthly allowances, children’s education and employment in some states such as Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara, and some members were gainfully employed in states like Zamfara, Sokoto and Bauchi. Secondly, we advocated on behalf of our members for vehicles to ease their transports and to be independent and we successfully succeeded in some states like Zamfara, Sokoto and Kano . . . Obviously we cannot say that we have eradicated the problems facing persons affected by leprosy entirely, but we have succeeded in creating a better level of awareness on the issues . . .”

-- Alhaji Shehu S/Fada, Outgoing Chairperson, IDEA Nigeria

Equality, Respect



IDEA Nigeria visit to Yobe State, 2008. Photo Courtesy IDEA Nigeria.

IDEA Nigeria held its Annual Meeting on November 30, 2011. Elections were held and Mohammed Ahmed was elected the new Chairman, replacing Alhaji Shehu S/ Fada, who had served the maximum two terms. Mary Aliemeke was elected Women's Leader. Together with FCT (Federal Capital Territory), the following State chapters, were represented: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Kogi, Lagos,

Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara. Representatives from the Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities, The Leprosy Mission International, and the German Leprosy Relief Association were also present.

Some of the accomplishments reported by the different States included the following: *Akwa Ibom State* works in partnership with an association called "Women with Disabilities"; *Lagos State* is now recognized by the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities; *Kebbi State* -- IDEA Nigeria is now registered in the 21 local Government areas of Kebbi State; *Imo State* -- IDEA Nigeria has been able to visit some Local Government Agencies in Imo State, to sensitize them on the importance of coming together to fight for their rights; *Benue State* works in partnership with two local government agency branches in Vandeikya and Ukum, and also works in partnership with NKST Rehabilitation Hospital, Mkar; *Borno State* has its own letterhead stationery.

Plateau State is registered and partners with the Joint Association of Persons with Disabilities, the National Human Rights Council and the National Emergency Management Agency; *Oyo State* formed a Cooperative Society and Farmers' Union to end street begging; *Rivers State* has 83 members and with funds realized from monthly dues from the members, Rivers State has opened a Bank Account; *Delta State* is working on registration with the Ministry of Women Affairs; *Edo State* has access to micro-credit groups and has obtained scholarships for children of people affected by leprosy; *Yobe State* reported that their registration process is on-going.

Kaduna State has had land donated to it by the Government of Kaduna State; *Ogun State* registered to become a member of the Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities and also made an advocacy visit to the Permanent Secretary concerning their rights; *Kano State* reported that the Kano State Government introduced many empowerment programs which supported people setting up businesses of their own; *Ebonyi State* used flyers to create awareness about leprosy and made an advocacy visit to Rotary International.

HANDA, People's Republic of China

The International Day of Dignity & Respect has been celebrated every year in China since 1999 in order to promote the dignity and respect of people affected by Hansen's disease in China, and to improve the awareness and understanding towards Hansen's disease. On this special anniversary, HANDA launched a series of public education and advocacy activities not just to celebrate the 14th anniversary but also to promote the dignity and respect of our people. The activities started with commemorative activities on March 11, 2012. On this special day, different education and advocacy activities were held in public areas in three main cities where HANDA offices are located: Guangzhou, Guangdong Province; Nanning, Guangxi Autonomy Region; and Kunming, Yunnan Province.

Guangzhou: Activities in Guangzhou included a photo exhibit to highlight people's abilities and show daily life in order to increase awareness and eliminate prejudice and discrimination. The photo exhibit will later move to universities in Guangzhou.



Members of HANDA perform a song by Lin Zhi Ming (fourth from right). Chen Guanzhou (front left) and Kong Haobin (front middle) were the first persons affected by leprosy in China to obtain passports and travel abroad.



Handa Vice-President Liu Zhenxi (left) with Xu Zhi Shun celebrate March 11 in Guangzhou.



The March 11 celebration at a downtown shopping mall attracted hundreds of people.



Dr. Michael Chen, Secretary-General of HANDA, is interviewed as part of the ceremony. Photos Courtesy HANDA.

Concern for Individuals, the Environment, and the World



He Pu Village prior to improvements.



Tree planting at He Pu Village. Photos Courtesy HANDA.

Guangxi: The Guangxi team has been working in 26 leprosy villages and 11 communities with a population of 740 people affected by leprosy for years. Among these is He Pu Leprosy Village, which merged this year with two other leprosy villages. It contains 125 people affected by leprosy with 60 family members, and became the second biggest leprosy village in Guangxi. People in this village have faced great discrimination and rejection. They cannot go back home, even if they have families outside. Their children dare not to expose that their parents are people affected by leprosy. Under the leadership of the Guangxi committee, visits were made to the local government and the people finally succeeded in getting their identification cards and also had their living subsidy increased.

The March 11 activities in He Pu Leprosy Village included a photo exhibit with the theme of “today in history” to review the March 11 activities and the long journey that people have taken to pursue their dignity and respect. In addition, photos of the earthquake in Japan were shown to appeal to people to respect life, and show concern for our environment. Talent shows were held and 80 trees were planted. In addition, the participants worked together to install recreational facilities in the village to enrich the villagers’ lives.

Yunnan: Activities were organized in collaboration with Yunnan Mass Media. On March 3, there was also a photo exhibit that included life stories of individuals affected by leprosy.

On March 10-12, there was a hiking tour from Xiang Yun leprosy village to Huang Cao Bai village. People from different professions joined the tour together with people affected by leprosy.

-- Dr. Michael Chen, HANDA/IDEA China Representative

Bernard K. Punikai'a – International Human Rights Advocate



Friends of Bernard Punikai'a gather at Kalaupapa, Hawaii, as he is laid to rest. (Left to right: Eddie English, Jim Albertini, Wally Inglis and Father Felix Vandebroek). *Photo by Henry Law.*



Bernard Punikai'a (seated) with his close friend, Jose Ramirez, Jr., at an IDEA workshop in Fontilles, Spain. Both Bernard and Jose participated in the First International Day of Dignity and Respect in 1999. *Photo by Pamela Parlapiano.*

March 11 has been recognized in different ways over the years. Three years ago, Bernard K. Punikai'a, IDEA's President for International Advocacy was laid to rest. It was fitting that his funeral took place on IDEA's International Day of Dignity and Respect since Bernard had spent his whole life working to secure his rights and the rights of others. Excerpts from his speeches, from International Leprosy Congresses to the United Nations, were read at his funeral, including the following:

“When injustices accumulate over a long period of time, the human spirit can no longer accept such conditions, and three things occur: First, individuals realize that they have to assert themselves and speak out publicly in order to be seen as people, not a disease. Second, individuals realize that one cannot fight discrimination alone, so they network with others who have had Hansen's disease. And, third, they reach out to caring people in the community to become partners in overcoming restrictive policies, archaic attitudes and discriminatory actions.

“It's ultimately about empowering yourself. You have been put in a box and it's time for you to kick the door open unless you enjoy living inside a little box – that little box whose walls are people's misconceptions about us, about what we can and cannot do . . .

“Speaking out, networking with others, and reaching out to the community – these are ways to advance one's own empowerment towards a better life, a life without stigma, a life without rejection, a life without fear.”

-- Bernard K. Punikai'a, IDEA's President for International Advocacy, 2000-2008

“A Source of Light”



Sol Kaho'ohalahala (far left), who had relatives sent to Kalaupapa, sings "The Queen's Prayer" as part of the opening ceremony for the exhibit. Also pictured are (left to right) Aulani Shiu, Kumu Hinaleimoana Wong Kalu, Clarence "Boogie" Kahilihiwa, Ivy Kahilihiwa and Sister Alicia Damien Lau.



Keoki Strickland, student at Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha, island of Kauai, was in a play his school did on the story of Kaluaikoolau and his family, who refused to be separated from each other and sent to Kalaupapa in 1893. Photos by Wayne Levin.

“A Source of Light, Constant and Never-Fading. The Relationship Between the People of Kalaupapa and Hawaii’s Royal Family” opened at 'Iolani Palace in Hawaii in March, 2012. The exhibit will be on display through December and will be seen by thousands of visitors from around the world as well as Hawaii residents. The focus of the exhibit is on the very personal relationship between King Kalakaua, Queen Kapiolani, Queen Liliuokalani and people who were sent to Kalaupapa because they had leprosy. The exhibit was developed by Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa with support from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, The Atherton Family Foundation, and IDEA.



Kippen de Alba Chu, Executive Director of 'Iolani Palace (second from right) joins descendants of Ambrose Hutchison and John Unea, Sr., who were sent to Kalaupapa in 1879 and 1893 respectively. The photo on the panel, which was taken by Wayne Levin, is of the family of John Unea gathered in front of 'Iolani Palace. Photo by Henry Law.

In Memory of Chief Mamoudou Ali – A Defender of Rights



(Left to right): Shehu S/Fada, IDEA Nigeria, with Abdou Yohanna, Issa Harouna and Chief Mamoudou Ali, IDEA Niger.



Chief Mamoudou Ali. Photos Courtesy IDEA Niger.

After the death of Maman Kanta, the President of IDEA Niger's Maradi branch a few months ago, IDEA Niger is in shock again after the death of one of its founding members, Honorable Chief Mamoudou Ali. The National Vice president of IDEA Niger died on Monday, January 23, 2012 in Niamey after being hospitalized for a couple of months. Chief Mamoudou was recognized as the head of all persons affected by leprosy in Niger. He was the President of the local branch of IDEA Niger in Niamey. He was known as a defender of rights, not only for persons affected by leprosy, but for all persons with disabilities in Niger. The presence at his funeral of the Niamey authorities, social and health public workers, leaders of NGOs working for the integration of people with disabilities and the large number of members coming from round the country to attend the funeral ceremony showed how respected a person he was.

As the IDEA Niger Representative, I was so proud to work with the late Mamoudou as he greatly facilitated the implementation of IDEA in Niger and the local branches around the country. IDEA Niger mobilized a special delegation of members coming from Zinder, Maradi and Tillaberi to visit his family and present our profound regret to all the affected persons in Niamey.

-- Abdou Yohanna, IDEA Niger Representative

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Addresses for Correspondence

Dr. P.K. Gopal
President, International Relations
58 Selvam Nagar, Collectorate P.O.
Erode 638-011 INDIA
Phone: 91-424-226-7395
E-mail: ideaind@sancharnet.in

Ms. Mary O'Friel
Administrative Coordinator
699 Main Street
Ashby, MA 01431-2309 USA
Phone: 1-978-386-0048
E-mail: ideaofriel@verizon.net

Ms. Anwei Skinsnes Law
International Coordinator
32 Fall St., Suite A; P.O. Box 651
Seneca Falls, NY 13148 USA
Phone: 1-315-568-5838
E-mail: alaw@idealeprosydignity.org