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ADDING MULTIMEDIA NBA, WNBA, Africare and ExxonMobil Launch New Initiative to Engage and Empower Nigeria's Youth

Hall of Famer Hakeem Olajuwon, former NBA player Obinna Ekezie and WNBA All-Star Swin Cash tip off "Power Forward," a program to foster life skills and build health knowledge through basketball in 10 Abuja schools

ABUJA, Nigeria--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The National Basketball Association (NBA), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), Africare and [ExxonMobil](#) today announced the launch of "Power Forward," a youth engagement initiative that will use basketball to develop health, leadership and life skills in Nigeria. Nigerian native and Hall of Famer Hakeem Olajuwon, fellow countryman and former NBA player Obinna Ekezie and three-time WNBA champion Swin Cash joined leading Nigerian government officials in tipping off the program today during a two-day launch event in Abuja.

Over 50 Students from several high schools in Abuja, Nigeria participated at the launch ceremony of the Power Forward program sponsored by ExxonMobil, NBA/WNBA and Africare. Picture shows the students at the launch event with Nigeria's Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; NBA Hall of Famer, Hakeem Olajuwon; former NBA player, Obinna Ekezie; WNBA All Star, Swin Cash and executives from the 3 partner organizations. (Photo: Business Wire)

"Young people are the future of our country," said Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, Nigerian Minister of Sports and Supervising Minister for Youth

Development. "The Power Forward initiative will teach young Nigerians teamwork, communication and persistence—the same skills they need to grow into future leaders in their communities."

"Power Forward" is being introduced at 10 public and private high schools in Abuja and will engage 300 students, with equal representation of boys and girls. The NBA, WNBA, Africare and ExxonMobil have worked with local school and education officials to develop the innovative program. Africare collaborated with YEDI (Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative) to create the initiative's comprehensive life skills element.

This includes a curriculum that teaches leadership skills and builds health awareness through a combination of classroom and athletic activities. Students will progress along a clear path, and be evaluated at different stages, so they have goals to strive toward during the program. Each school will have a coach assigned to oversee the curriculum, guide students through lessons and monitor progress. The partners have committed to ensure each institution has the supplies, support and basketball facilities it needs to make this program a success.

"Nigeria's vibrant youth and sports culture makes the country an ideal place to launch this new initiative to equip tomorrow's leaders with the skills they'll need to thrive," said Amadou Gallo Fall, NBA Vice President, Development – Africa. "The NBA and WNBA are committed to working with our partners across Africa to use the power of basketball to positively impact social change. Together with ExxonMobil and Africare, we will promote the core values of our game to help young people learn how to succeed both on and off the court."

The launch was marked by a two-day "tip-off" event held at the Government Secondary School in Wuse and the Old Parade Ground in Abuja. Olajuwon, Ekezie and Cash joined 100 youth participants on the court for a series of basketball drills. Basketball is Nigeria's second most popular sport with increased interest at the grassroots level across the country following the national team's first-ever qualification in the Olympic Basketball Tournament in 2012. Over 20 current and former players with Nigerian descent have played in the NBA, more than any other African country.

"The objectives of the initiative are at the heart of what our federation strives to achieve with the young people we work with: getting them to stay in school and be useful members of society, and cultivating a sound mind in a sound body," said Tijani Umar, President, Nigeria Basketball Federation. "This way, the future of the game is also guaranteed in our country. It is therefore natural for us to support this program."

"We are proud to team up with the NBA, WNBA and ExxonMobil to bring this program to Nigerian youth," said Darius Mans, President of Africare, the program's primary implementing partner. "Each organization brings unique skills to this dynamic partnership, and the sum of what we can do together outweighs what each of us could have done alone."

"Power Forward" is aligned with ongoing efforts of the Nigerian government, such as the *Saving One Million Lives* campaign, to drive economic prosperity and improve public health, particularly among youth. This program will bolster these efforts by teaching crucial skills to Nigerian youth. The program is designed so that the initial participants, who will all be in their final three years of high school, can then mentor younger students, magnifying the program's impact.

"This is an opportunity to help young people in Nigeria develop important skills they need through an innovative community-based program," said Mark R. Ward, Chairman and Managing Director of ExxonMobil Upstream subsidiaries in Nigeria. "Nigeria's young people want to make a positive difference in their communities. Our goal is to provide them with the tools to do so."

In addition to the tip-off event in Abuja, the partnership will include additional milestone events in Nigeria and Washington, D.C. later in the school year. NBA and WNBA players, legends, coaches, and trainers will unite to call attention to the importance of youth empowerment and allow both boys and girls to meet positive role models. Through these events, the partners hope to raise awareness of the importance of investing in youth and galvanize new commitments for action.

About Africare:

Africare is a leading non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to addressing African development and policy issues by working in partnership with African people to build

sustainable, healthy and productive communities. Since 1970, Africare has provided well over \$1 billion of assistance and support through more than 2,500 projects in Agriculture & Food Security; Water, Sanitation & Hygiene; Women's Empowerment; and Health, HIV & AIDS that have impacted millions of beneficiaries in 36 countries in Africa. Visit www.africare.org for more information.

About ExxonMobil:

ExxonMobil and the ExxonMobil Foundation engage in a range of philanthropic activities that improve basic education, promote women as catalysts for development, and combat malaria and other infectious diseases in developing countries. In 2012, together with its employees and retirees, ExxonMobil, its divisions and affiliates, and the ExxonMobil Foundation provided \$256 million in contributions worldwide. Additional information on ExxonMobil's community partnerships and contribution programs is available at www.exxonmobil.com/community.

About the National Basketball Association (NBA):

The NBA is a global sports and media business built around three professional sports leagues: the National Basketball Association, the Women's National Basketball Association, and the NBA Development League. The league has established a major international presence with games and programming in 215 countries and territories in 47 languages and NBA merchandise for sale in more than 125,000 stores in 100 countries on 6 continents. NBA rosters currently feature a record 92 international players from 39 countries and territories. NBA Digital's assets include NBA TV, which is available in more than 61 million U.S. homes, and NBA.com, which averages more than 42 million page views per day, more than half of which originate from outside of North America. The NBA is the No. 1 professional sports league on social media, with more than 475 million likes and followers globally across all league, team, and player platforms. Through NBA Cares, the league and its teams and players have donated more than \$225 million to charity, completed more than 2.6 million hours of hands-on community service, and created more than 830 places where kids and families can live, learn, or play.

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available:

<http://www.businesswire.com/multimedia/home/20131119005512/en/>

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