



**Health Initiative for Safety and Stability in Africa**

...enhancing population health in Africa

Newsletter | February 2016

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Readers,

There is something incredibly exciting about new beginnings and a new year ahead. We get to start all over. The possibilities are endless with a new year facing us like a blank page. What do we want to write on it? What we will do? It's exciting to think about and then do something about it.

Building from previous Issues, our newsletter will feature information about prevention and a variety of public policy issues affecting people living with HIV across the country. It will also feature most of our activities of fiscal year 2015 – and includes inspiring success stories from our several projects.

#### LASSA FEVER SPREADING FAST

Lately, Lassa fever has been raising a lot of concerns in Nigeria; it seems to be taking over Ebola affecting several communities in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has offered free treatment to dozens of victims of the latest outbreak of

Lassa fever, a sign of how 2014's Ebola epidemic has West African nations paying closer attention to the health of their citizens. The country was among the seven nations that saw Ebola cases in 2014. Though only seven people in Nigeria died from Ebola, the virus's arrival sparked considerable panic. The latest Lassa outbreak has stirred similar memories. The current outbreak is believed to have started in December 2015. The country is setting up two field clinics and dressing medics in biohazard suits to deal with the disease. We fought off Ebola; we can fight this off too. Welcome to 2016.

Omatsola Oritsejafor  
Editor

A handwritten signature in white ink on a green background.





## HIFASS completes the Safe Pregnancy Project (SPP) in Benue State

- 3067 pregnant women received ANC/PMTCT services after referral
- 15 monthly review and update meetings were conducted
- Commemorated 2014 World AIDS day in Tarka LGA
- Distributed gifts to peer group members who delivered at the facilities after referral at Tarka LGA.
- Formed 4 Community based organisations (CBO) in the 4 LGA's of intervention namely  
Tarka- Volunteer Mothers  
Vandeikya- Women of help  
Makurdi- Women's care for healthy life  
Otukpo- OpiatohaKa-Ene

### The Story Behind the Success

The success for each project requires expertise in a wide variety of areas. The project had just 4 team members who were very effective in project execution, coordinating 4 LGA's miles apart from each other. These are the Project Coordinator, Program Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Finance Officer. A total of 70 mentor mothers were recruited and trained, the mentor mothers carried out mobilization of pregnant women for peer sessions which they conducted. The mentor mothers also provided referral, tracking and follow up services for pregnant women to ensure uptake of services at the health facilities.

### Project Activities included:

- Advocacy visits to community gatekeepers, LGA's and Health facilities.
- Identification and selection of community volunteers as mentor mothers
- Training of 70 selected community volunteers as mentor mothers.
- Baseline assessment of utilization of MCH/PMTCT services
- Monthly review meeting with mentor mothers
- Community stakeholders meetings
- Peer sessions between mentor mothers and pregnant women
- Home visits by mentor mothers
- Provision of counselling, referrals, tracking and client follow-ups services.
- Routine visits to Health facilities receiving referrals from mentor mothers
- Distribution of appropriate Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials.
- HIV counselling and testing of couples in communities
- Monthly meetings with LACA and mentor mothers for better collaboration and referrals
- Formation and registration of CBO's by peers who graduated from the peer sessions
- Provided linkages between peers who graduated from the peer sessions and skill acquisition centres

### Achievements include:

- Conducted 20 advocacy visits to community gatekeepers
- Identified and trained 70 mentor mothers
- Mobilized 4,893 pregnant women for peer sessions in project coverage areas.
- Held 3,150 peer sessions across intervention sites



Working Team

# LET'S TALK Health

## LASSA FEVER in Nigeria

**Col Felix Adeoye (Rtd)** | WHO External Competency Assessment (ECA)  
Trainer/Facilitator, WHO Certified Level 1 Expert Malaria Microscopist,  
Laboratory Advisor, HIFASS | fadeoye@hifass-hfi.org

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic fever caused by the Lassa virus which was first described in the town of Lassa in Borno state, Nigeria. The animal reservoir, or host, of Lassa virus is a rodent, commonly known as the "multimammate rat (*Mastomys natalensis*)," which gets infected with Lassa virus and do not become ill, but can shed the virus in their urine and faeces. The incubation period of Lassa fever ranges from 6-21 days. Death usually occurs within 14 days of onset in fatal cases. The onset of the disease, when it is symptomatic, is usually gradual, starting with fever, general weakness, and malaise. After a few days, headache, sore throat, muscle pain, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, cough, and abdominal pain may follow. In severe cases facial swelling, fluid in the lung cavity, bleeding from the mouth, nose, vagina or gastrointestinal tract and low blood pressure may develop. Protein may be noted in the urine. Shock, seizures, tremor, disorientation, and coma may be seen in the later stages. Lassa may not be as dangerous as Ebola but as at 9th January the death toll rose to 35 with 81 cases. By January 16th the number of deaths had risen to 44. On the 22nd January 2016, the Honourable minister of Health, Professor Isaac Adewole stated that the country currently has 212 cases of Lassa fever in



### TRANSMISSION

Humans usually become infected with Lassa virus from exposure to urine or faeces of infected *Mastomys* rats. Lassa virus may also be spread between humans through direct contact with the blood, urine, faeces, or other bodily secretions of a person infected with Lassa fever. The most likely transmission mechanism for the current Lassa fever outbreak is person-to-person transmission. While rats are the likely source of initial infection, it is extremely unlikely, given the geographical distribution of cases that there is any on-going zoonotic source of infection. Therefore, to break the chains of transmission of the Lassa fever virus,

people must trust the health authorities enough to inform them of any signs of illness and not seek alternative sources of relief. Those infected and affected must trust that the healthcare workers' that they report to will treat them and care for them humanely in the presence of overwhelming historical evidence to the contrary. Sexual transmission of Lassa virus has been reported.

### Key facts

- Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness of 1-4 weeks duration that occurs in West Africa.
- The Lassa virus is transmitted to humans via contact with food or household items contaminated with rodent urine or faeces.
- Person-to-person infections and laboratory transmission can also occur, particularly in hospitals lacking adequate infection prevent and control measures.
- Lassa fever is known to be endemic in Benin (where it was diagnosed for the first time in November 2014), Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and parts of Nigeria, but probably exists in other West African countries as well.
- The overall case-fatality rate is 1%. Observed case-fatality rate among patients hospitalized with severe cases of Lassa fever is 15%.
- Early supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment improves survival.

### Lassa fever Prevention Tips

- Avoid contact between rats and human beings
- Block all rat hideouts
- Store foodstuff in rodent proof containers
- Cook all foods thoroughly
- Always wash hands thoroughly after contact with a sick person

### PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Prevention of Lassa fever relies on promoting good "community hygiene" to discourage rodents from entering homes. Effective measures include storing grain and other foodstuffs in rodent-proof containers, disposing of garbage far from the home, maintaining clean households and keeping cats. Because *Mastomys* are so abundant in endemic areas, it is not possible to completely eliminate them from the environment.

Vanguard newspaper of 25th January 2016 reported "Lassa fever: 4,400 rats killed in six Lagos markets as part of the efforts to curb the spread of Lassa fever in Lagos state

Family members should always be careful to avoid contact with blood and body fluids while caring for sick persons. Healthcare staff should always apply standard infection prevention and control precautions when caring for patients, regardless of their presumed diagnosis and not assume every fever is malaria. "When caring for patients with Lassa fever, further transmission of the disease through person-to-person contact or nosocomial routes can be avoided by taking preventive precautions against contact with patient secretions. These include basic hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and use of personal protective equipment, safe injection practices and safe burial practices."



# HIFASS WAS THERE

## Nigeria and United States

### Flag-Off Ebola Vaccine Study and Clinical Research Center in Abuja

The U.S. Department of Defense's Walter Reed Program, in collaboration with the Nigerian Ministry of Defense Health Implementation Plan, on April 30, 2015 commissioned the flag-off of an Ebola Vaccine Study and Clinical Research Center in Abuja. The launch of the Ebola Vaccine Study Center in Abuja, coincided with the 10 years anniversary of partnership between the Ministry of Defence, Health Implementation Programme (MODHIP) and the United States Department of Defence, Walter Reed Programme-Nigeria (USDOD WRP-N). For 10 years, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Nigerian Ministry of Defense have worked together to enhance HIV prevention, care, and treatment. This partnership has not only endured, it has grown into a model for the way the two militaries can work together effectively. The work that this partnership undertakes, fighting the spread of infectious diseases within the military forces and throughout Nigerian communities, is as important as it was 10 years ago.

Ambassador James Entwistle was joined by the Minister of State for Defense Col, Austin Akobundu (rtd), to open the Ebola Vaccine study center.

The Minister of Defence, Lt. Gen. Aliyu Gusau, represented by the Minister of State for Defence Colonel Austin Akobundu (rtd) said the magnitude of devastation brought by the outbreak of the virus in 2014 necessitated the research, "We must prepare to prevent the occurrence of future outbreaks and protect our citizens from such occurrences. I wish to state unequivocally that the current effort to commence vaccine trial against Ebola is a welcome development.

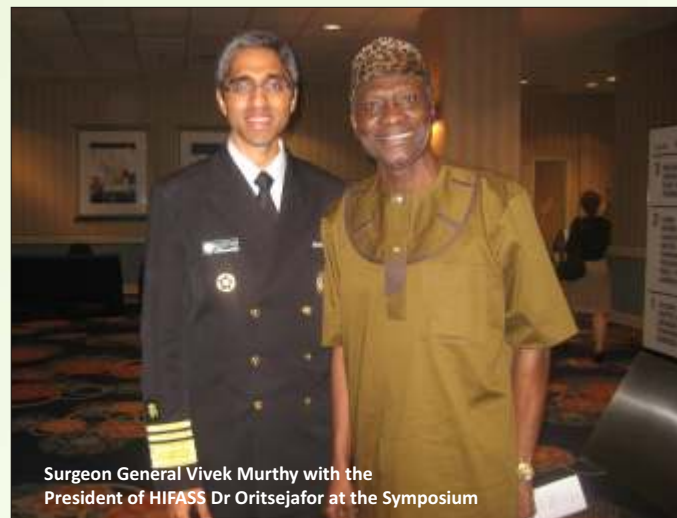
## 50th USPHS

### Scientific & Training Symposium Anniversary

The President of HIFASS, Dr Roland Oritsejafor joined other dignitaries in Atlanta Georgia, USA from May 18-21, 2015 to celebrate the 50th symposium anniversary (Golden Anniversary) of the PHS Commissioned Officers foundation.

The memorable event focused on "Public Health diversity in a more global world" and the agenda was packed with sessions to advance scientific and clinical skills, enhancing knowledge of public health strategies for responding to the population we serve.

As special attention was given to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which required the largest ever U.S government effort to help fight a global disaster. The PHS Ensemble Concert dedicated songs to the Ebola responders and the people of West Africa.



Surgeon General Vivek Murthy with the  
President of HIFASS Dr Oritsejafor at the Symposium

The new surgeon general, Vivek H. Murphy, MD, MBA (Vice Admiral US Public Health Service) motivated everyone talking of his commitment to overcoming barriers that keep us from achieving our best health and the need for us, together, to tell the world our stories, taking advantages of available new tools of communication.

## SI Review Meeting

HIFASS was invited to participate in the SI review meeting of the military HIV program which took place on May 7 -8, 2015 at Top Rank Hotel, Gimbia Street, Area 11, Abuja. Participants were drawn from the 24 NMOD project sites spread across the federation, HIFASS, HIP and DOD. The participants were made up of civilian and military personnel. The main objective of the meeting was to introduce the new tools for generating program data, disseminate new PEPFAR indicators for HIV programming, and provide feedback on the just concluded data quality assurance exercise and treatment audit using the RADET tool.



Cross section of participants

## MOD HIP appoints Brig Gen NAA Hussain as new DG

Ministry of Defence Health Implementation Programme (MOD HIP) has appointed Brig Gen NAA Hussain as new Director General for the programme.

At the handing and taking over of leadership ceremony which took place on Friday 31 July 2015 at the HIP Liaison Office, the out-going Director General Maj Gen AE Life Ajemba (rtd) stated that "Everything that has a beginning must have an end, change is inevitable and I thank everyone for the opportunity to serve in the programme". After his remarks a brief was given on his achievements since he took over just under a year ago.

The in-coming DG, Brig Gen Hussain in his remarks thanked God as this was a day of positive turn around for all. He appreciated the American partnership and the role of HIFASS in the programme. He solicited for demonstrable transparency as well as support and prayers for the programme.

The ceremony attracted several guests which included the MD HIFASS Mr Tuedon Uweja, the Country Director DOD/WRP-N Mr Robbie Nelson, The Director Medical Service Ministry of Defence Mrs Ikoku and other reputable Military personnel.

Mr Robbie Nelson commented that "the future is bright for the NMOD-DOD HIV Program and in the last 5 years activities have quadrupled". He looks forward to working with the new DG.

## Galilee International Management Institute visits HIFASS

The Director of the Centre for Planning & Development of GIMI- Mr Alon Navot travelled to Nigeria to meet with the Management of HIFASS in August, 2015, to discuss future collaborations between the two organisations. A courtesy visit was also made to the MOD-HIP office to meet with the DG.



Brig. Gen. Alon Navot, Mr. Tuedon Uweja, MD of HIFASS, Dr. Patrick Matemilola and Dr. Ismail Alto Sada

## LOPIN-3 Inaugural Performance review and update meeting

October 13, 2015, LOPIN-3 organised an inaugural performance review and update meeting for sub-grantees. The meeting was held on at Channel View Hotel, Calabar. This was the first of the proposed quarterly meeting to review sub-grantees performance, build capacity and ensure quality OVC support services. The meeting had 46 participants comprising of 4 collaborating partners from the state ministries, 13 sub-grantees, program and M&E officers and technical staff on the LOPIN-3 project.

The meeting presented update performance of year 1 activities, provided feedback on data collection, share best practices on OVC care, protection and support services within each LGA and promote collaboration amongst CSOs to strengthen ability to achieve project deliverable.

## HIFASS joins other CSO's in the FCT to attend the CSO quarterly meeting with FACA

On Thursday 20th July 2015 at Top Rank Hotel, Annex Wing Abuja, HIFASS being represented by Mr Bola Adekogbe and Mr Murphy Opatotun met with 18 Civil Society Organizations providing services such as PMTCT demand Creation, Female Sex Workers, OVC and HBC. FACA organised this forum to bring the CSOs under the HAF II for FCT to one table to discuss and share challenges, progress, best practices and next steps.

The methodology used for the meeting was as follows:

- Presentation of activities conducted, achievements, challenges, best practices and next steps
- Review of M&E information
- General Discussions

The Project Manager, FACA (Dr Okoro) stated that the meeting was important as this would avail other organizations struggling to identify CSOs doing well in their field and learn from them. He also stated that it was an opportunity to know if new schemes being implemented in the project were working. He then stated that the focus of the meeting was on the Prevention thematic area of the project though presentations will also be taken from CSOs implementing OVC and HBC projects. Presentations were made by different CSOs highlighting their successes and solutions were proffered by other participants to organizations with challenges.

*"The meeting provided a learning opportunity for me. It gave an insight into how HIFASS can implement income generating activities at grass root level. Furthermore, it shed light in the impact HIFASS and other CSO's have made through the HAF II project in FACA. I am proud HIFASS is part of the organisations implementing the PMTCT demand creation under HAF II".*

Murphy Opatotun, M&E Officer



# PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT



## 3 Days

## Adherence counselling Training

The NMOD-USDOH organised a 3 day Adherence Counselling Training at Clinical Training and Research Centre 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hosp. Kaduna from 10-12 March 2015. The training was aimed at improving clients' retention in Care and Treatment of People Living with HIV (PLHIV). Participants included Nurses, Pharmacists and Counsellors.

*"This training gave me the required skill and knowledge for supporting clients on ART and also future supervisory visits to site."*

Rita Sunday, Technical Program Officer/Counsellor

## Anglia Ruskin University: 2nd International Seminar on Public Health

On Tuesday, 21 April 2015, 3 of HIFASS staff attended the 2nd International Seminar on Public Health hosted by Anglia Ruskin University UK. Dr. Fiona McMaster focused on "Innovations in Health Communication: Strategies for Cost-Effective Behaviour Change." Participants included health professionals, public and private organizations located in the Federal Capital Territory and environs. A wide range of participatory and interactive methodology such as brainstorming, plenary discussions, and individual and small working group sessions was adopted during presentation to encourage active participation between the facilitator and the participants

## Workshop on New USAID & CDC Rules & Regulations

Over the past year, the USAID and CDC Financial Management and Compliance rules modifications have been in the pipeline to be implemented. Essentially some of the old regulations which governed the award given to HIFASS and other Non-Governmental Organisations relying on the CDC or USAID funding have been revised or updated and some new rules were added. Therefore, a workshop was organised for financial management and compliance for Non-Governmental Organizations relying on USAID funding to present new, updated regulatory information and guidance, as per the rule changes effective December 26, 2014. The workshop was held in Abuja for 2 days.

LOPIN-3 Chief of Party, Dr A. Adetunji and the LOPIN-3 Director, Finance and Admin Mr James Adedayo at FHI 360 office complex. The second batch which was held on the 27th and 28th July, 2015 was attended by the Finance and Admin Manager Mr Simeon Adede and the Contract and Compliance Officer Miss Anuoluwapo Adegboye at Bolton White Hotels.

The workshop examined in detail the updated regulations for USAID grants and cooperative agreements, demonstrated how to navigate the regulations to find answers to questions, model an award review process to maintain compliant implementation, define USAID jargon for effective communication, explore the structure of USAID and how to build cooperative relationships with key players, Identify situations when it is appropriate to seek guidance from USAID or headquarters, discuss when approvals, waivers and extensions are required and how to obtain them and help prepare your organization to meet the criteria for successful audits.

The purpose of the workshop was:

1. To assist NGO's to understand the overall donor environment, the US government's role in donor assistance, and the US government-related rules and responsibilities that come with a cooperative (or grant) agreement.
2. Understand the grantor/grantee relationship and which officials/employees have which roles in the processes.
3. Clarify, understand and discuss what needs to be done by the recipient to ensure that the transition to the revised and new rules results in financial/program compliance and success and how this will in turn lead to a successful Audit,
4. To streamline the guidance for Federal awards to ease administrative burden
5. Strengthen oversight of USG funds to reduce risks of waste, fraud, and abuse.
6. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of USG awards to ensure the best use of their funds that is expended annually
7. To properly administer/audit the agreement



Cross section of participants at the Training

*"The workshop was very enlightening and was a good avenue to network with other NGO representatives. I came to understand that as an NGO, complying with the new and updated rules will affect our ability to win grants"*

Contract and Compliance Officer-Anuoluwapo Adegboye

## QuickBooks

### Inventory and Reporting Systems Training

On the 17-19 September, 2015 an exercise was organized to teach participants the operations of QuickBooks Inventory and Reporting Systems at the LOPIN-3 Conference Room, Calabar, Cross River State.

The training was facilitated by Fajasco Nigeria Limited to train LOPIN-3 Project staff. The training comprised of 18 participants drawn from HIFASS, SUCCDEV and CAACA. This selection was based on job functions; members of staff who currently handle or can assist in administrative functions, and those who work in the Finance unit.



Participants at the Training

## Workshop on

### Local Partners in Nigeria REGION 3

#### (Lopin-3)

### FY 16 Annual Work Plan Development

A five day workshop was held for the development of Lopin-3 FY 16 Annual Work Plan from August 17 to 21 2015, in Ikom Cross River State. The objective of the workshop was to:

- Review of FY 15 work plan performance
- To develop LOPIN-3 general work plan for FY16 and come up with activities and timelines and;
- To share and incorporate our state partners work plan into LOPIN-3 project

HIFASS and the LOPIN-3 consortium partners Calabar Arch-Diocesan Action Committee on AIDS (CAACA), Catholic, Diocese of Abakaliki Succour and Development Services Initiative (SUCCDEV) and People to-People Health Foundation coordinated the workshop. Also there was involvement of States Ministries of Women Affairs and Child Development (SMWACD), State AIDS Control Agencies, Civil Society partners and other government agencies.

Dr Ademola Adetunji, the Chief of party in his welcome remarks thanked the state partners and the LOPIN-3 consortium partners for creating time to attend the

meeting. He explained to the group that the LOPIN-3 project was not re-inventing the wheel in Cross River and Ebonyi states, but was only present to lend support to what both states were already doing in addressing issues on OVC care and support. Also support in the area of Gender considerations and HIV prevention to enhance the quality of lives of OVC household and ensure sustainability.



Participants at the workshop

## 3Days Course on ACSM

The communications manager of HIFASS program attended a 3day training organised by the Academy for capacity building initiatives and Health Systems and Project Consultants LTD on Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization on September 21-23, 2015. The training took place at the Gracious Hotel Garki 2, Abuja. The training objectives were to Orient participants to the basic concepts of advocacy, communication, and social mobilization for building programs and also provide participants with specific knowledge, skills, and resources to plan, implement, and evaluate effective ACSM interventions.

*"At the end of this training I was able to understand the concept of ACSM and the benefits of incorporating it in any of our programs, activities and events, and also how to use advocacy and social mobilization to build new partnerships."*

Omatola Oritsejafor, Communications Manager

## 3DAYS MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) TRAINING

2 of HIFASS program staff attended a training organised by Health Systems and Project Consultants LTD on M&E on November 2-4, 2015. The training took place at the Gracious Hotel Garki 2, Abuja. Areas covered includes Definition of M&E terms and their differences, Importance of Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit, Developing an indicator matrix, Logical framework/Logframe, M&E framework, M&E Plan, implementation plan and Result framework, Data collection, flow/use, analysis and management plan and Financial monitoring and importance of project Audit.

*"I understood that M&E is an integral part of all program/projects and learnt how to develop M&E indicators, plan and framework."*

Johnbosco Ubason, Program Officer





### Community Outreach on Prevention and control of HIVAIDS and Malaria Epidemics in Nyanya Area C organised by African Women Acquisition Development Centre (AWADC)

On 23rd April 2015, HIFASS gave support to African Women Acquisition Development Centre (AWADC) to carry out Community Outreach on Prevention and control of HIVAIDS and Malaria Epidemics in Nyanya Area C FCT. Approximately 222 people were reached with Health Talks, Counselling, HIV and Malaria tests, Blood pressure checks, Malaria drugs and Condoms.



Working team

### HIFASS conducts free HIV testing in Kwali LGA to mark World AIDS Day 2015

World AIDS Day is one of the eight official global public health campaign marked by the World Health Organization (WHO). Nigeria currently has the second highest burden of HIV in the world. At the end of 2013, UNAIDS estimated that 3,200,000 Nigerians were living with HIV, and about

75percent of those living with HIV were not aware that they were infected. The theme for this year's World AIDS Day celebration is "Getting to Zero: End AIDS in Nigeria by 2030."

This year Health Initiatives for Safety and Stability (HIFASS) organized a 4 day community outreach to mark the World AIDS Day 2015 in Kwali LGA, FCT. The event began with a road show in collaboration with other organisations such as Innovative Solution to Community Development Initiative (ISD), Foundation for Community Health, Right and Development (FOCHRID), Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO Nigeria), DKT international, LACA, Rhema Foundation, Give Unto others Strangers, Orphans and Widows (GUOSOW), Health , Kwali community members and Primary health care (PHCs) union. The road show was to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS in the Kwali community with distribution of condoms and IEC material. After the road show, there was free HIV counselling and testing for community members organised and conducted by HIFASS.

*"The World AIDS Day is an avenue for us and many other stakeholders fighting the scourge of HIV and AIDS to reach out to communities' especially rural communities to create awareness on the virus and also carry out testing so people can know their status."*



HIV Testing



### Community Outreach in Sheretti, AMAC, Abuja

The NYSC Batch a, FCT (Reproductive Health HIV and AIDS CDS Group) organised a one day community outreach in collaboration with HIFASS and Caritas Nigeria on the 10th of December, 2015 in Sheretti, AMAC, Abuja to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS and other non-communicable diseases and Communicable diseases.

*"Most people in the rural areas do not have the opportunity to check or know their HIV status. The aim of our outreaches is to reach rural communities informing them of the dangers of not knowing their status and also keep community members healthy."*

Tonia Adekola, NYSC Corp member, Batch a FCT

# RECRUITMENTS



Recruitment process at HIFASS HQ, Abuja

**SINM-HAR-** For several years, HIFASS has been recruiting skilled health professionals to establish free and comprehensive HIV care and prevention services for the benefit of all Nigerians in 24 NMoD program sites across the country. In the last one year HIFASS has employed 10 new staff to cover 7 sites. The positions include Snr Pharmacist, Lab Scientist for RV 329,352 and M&E Officer/DES at 68 NARHY, Lab Assit for RV at 368 CHC Yaba, Study Nurse and Study Coordinator at DHQ MC, Lab Scientist at DHQ MC, Medical Officer 68 and Medical Records officer NARH Yaba. M&E Officer/DES at 45NAFH MK, Program Administrative Specialist at 345AMH Kaduna, Medical Officer II at Military Hospital PH, Medical Officer II at 82 DIV Enugu, Prog Pharmacist and Pharmacist Tech at 45 NAFH Makurdi.

**LOPIN-3-** As part of its obligation to hire qualified and experienced professionals under the LOPIN 3 activity, HIFASS employed staff to fill the following positions; Receptionist, OVC Officer, OVC Intern, Gender and HIV Specialist, Grants Officer, Finance Intern and Accounts Assistant for LOPIN-3, Calabar and Ebonyi Offices.

**HQ-** 2 new staff was recruited for the Headquarters office which includes a Janitor and Logistician.

## 2015 SPECIAL RECOGNITION

It's my pleasure to reflect on the previous year and how HIFASS have touched our communities through its personnel and activities.

### FACA recognises HIFASS as Best Performing CSO in the FCT

The FCT Agency for Control of AIDS (FACA), in partnership with the World Bank and National Agency for the Control of AIDS (FACA) awarded 18 Civil Society Organisations

contracts to implement the HAF HIV/AIDS Programme Development Project 2 (HPDP 2).

Health Initiatives for Safety and Stability in Africa (HIFASS) was contracted for 2 years as one of the CSOs to provide demand creation for Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) amongst pregnant women and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) in 7 wards within the Federal Capital Territory. The project is expected to meet the needs of approximately 1790 beneficiaries within 4 LGAs in the FCT- AMAC (Karshi, Orozo and Nyanya), Bwari (Ushafa), Gwagwalada (Dobi and Paiko) and Kwali (Kwali Central) by April 2016.

18 months into the project implementation, HIFASS has been able to meet the project target before the completion of the project. In July 2015, FACA identified HIFASS as the "Best Performing CSO" out of 18 Civil Society Organisations contracted to implement the HAF in the FCT.

### HIFASS staff bags excellence Award as Nigerian Top Executives in the Public Administration for 2015

We would like to congratulate Agholor Okoh, OVC Advisor (HIFASS- LOPIN 3 Project) on being rated among the 6% of Nigerian Top Executives in the Public Administration for 2015. Mr Okoh is one of those "silent" hard working people contributing to the advancement of HIFASS and to the people of Nigeria. Well done!!!

### HIFASS President receives Special Recognition Award

On Saturday November 28, 2015 the Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) in collaboration with National Agency for Control of AIDS (NACA) organised a Cultural Night of Tributes in commemoration of World AIDS Day 2015. The event recognised individuals and organisations that have contributed to the fight against HIV. The President of HIFASS, Dr Roland Oritsejafor was given an HIV/AIDS champions award for his contribution in fighting HIV issues within the military and communities around barracks and also establishing Health Initiative for Safety and Stability (HIFASS) an NGO with key intervention roles in HIV management.





## STORIES FROM THE **FIELD:** SITE VISIT TO LOPIN-3 PROJECT SITES



Entry meeting with the visiting team at HIFASS LOPIN-3 project office, Calabar

A team of supervisory team and communication experts from Project HOPE and HIFASS visited Cross River and Ebonyi State in the week of September 14 2015 to conduct field visits to some of our sites in Cross Rivers and Ebonyi States under the LOPIN-3 project with a view to gathering evidence-based information for fundraising and communication for the project. The visit gave an opportunity for both teams to be fully immersed in the needs LOPIN-3 addresses exposing the team to the hardest parts of what LOPIN-3 does. Several interviews were conducted on women, children and families who are in need of services and those who are benefitting from and participated in the services and care that LOPIN-3 provides and supports.

## Our Vulnerable **CHILDREN** Stories of Hope

### UCHECHI'S RECOVERY FROM MALNUTRITION IN NIGERIA

Uhuotaru community, Ohaozara LGA, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, 18 September, 2015 - Uchechi runs out excitedly as she heard the sound of a vehicle arrive her home. As the team approach her compound she smiles shyly running back to her mum. Just two years old, she lives with 12 other family members in a thatched home, made of mud in a deep rural community two hours away from the city centre in Ebonyi State the eastern part of Nigeria.

Uchechi may look like any other little girl, but she is very lucky to be alive. In March 2015, she was identified as a malnourished child on the verge of dying. Her family is convinced that her recovery – facilitated by the direct intervention of LOPIN-3 project is direct help from God.

Uchechi is the 4th child of her mother Onyiyechi who is pregnant for her 5th child and the 9th child of her Father Chibueze Uzonwogo in other words she is born into a polygamous family. Chibueze is a well-digger and

Onyiyechi the mother has no income generating activity. Uchechi and her siblings live in an overcrowded one room with her mother. From all indications, to have a meal a day is a struggle.

On Tuesday March 17, 2015, during an outreach at Ugwulangwu autonomous community in Ohaozara LGA of Ebonyi State. Oluchi Chialuka a staff in the LOPIN-3 project drew the attention of the team to a very ill child who she suspected was suffering from HIV.

Uchechi appeared pale and had no appetite; she was stunted and had rashes in her buttocks. At the outreach, she was weighed, measured and checked for other illnesses. Distressingly, they discovered that this little girl was battling two deadly diseases at once: Diarrhoea and Malnutrition. She was very weak and couldn't walk in fact her ribs were clearly counted which was a result of severe Acute Malnutrition.



Uchechi at 1 year 7 months when she was first found

Chronic Malnutrition is a common problem in Nigeria. The UNICEF study showed that malnutrition is the underlying cause of morbidity and mortality of a large proportion of children under-5 in Nigeria. It accounts for more than 50 per cent of deaths of children in this age bracket.

Uchechi's condition was so severe that she was immediately referred to Federal Teaching Hospital (FETHA 1) Ebonyi State which is about 3-4 hours' drive from Ugwulungwu. The clinical assessment showed Uchechi had pitting oedema sunken eyes and weight loss, weighing 6.5kg.

For two weeks, Uchechi fed on highly specialized therapeutic feeding, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Ebonyi State was very supportive in ensuring Uchechi received full treatment. After a critical 3 weeks Uchechi made a full recovery and returned back to her village. Today Uchechi is visibly healthier and measured in the healthy "Green Zone. She has more hair on her head and is no longer underweight. Also LOPIN-3 provided her mother with clothing and nutritional support while in hospital including basic care needs and Hygiene Education.



**Before**



5 months after treatment, Uchechi is now healthier and has recovered from severe malnutrition

*"I sincerely thank LOPIN-3 for their kind hearts and efforts in saving the life of my little daughter. Our heart is full of joy we lack words to express how we feel seeing our daughter healthy again."*

Uchechi's father, Mr Chibueze Uzonwogo

## Kingsley the sole provider of the family

It is hard to imagine a teenage child assuming responsibility for a household that may include siblings, or an ailing parent or grandparent. A child-headed family is one in which both parents have died and the children have not found alternative guardians within their extended family or community. This is what we were faced with at Ikwo L.G.A Ebonyi State in the south eastern region of Nigeria.



Kingsley and his siblings

September 18, 2015, as we were shown around by Otueze Kingsley M&E officer LOPIN-3 project. We met 15 year old Kingsley in front of his home in Ishiake Igude, Iwo L.G.A Ebonyi State which seemed very lonely and quiet; he stood staring at us alongside his two siblings Abigail and Isaac. Casually, one of the team member asked "where are your parents, where is your father?" Kingsley replied saying "there! My Father is there, where you are standing" pointing towards the direction we stood. One could sense the trauma in his voice. In shock we quickly stepped aside having realised we were standing over his father's grave.

Kingsley is only 15 years old. He is the oldest of a family of 4, including two boys and two girls. Kingsley was in primary school when his mother died in July 2015. Just a year before he had lost his father, he had no choice but to start caring for her brother and sister.

*"It was very difficult for us when our mother died. I have to take care of my siblings. I have to buy their daily food, school levies as well as medicines when one of them was ill. I am the head of the family. It is really difficult because I don't have a fixed monthly income as I am still in school myself. I started selling sweeping brooms I made from fibres of palm fronds from palm trees in my compound so that we could survive. Domestic works such as farming for food behind our house, fetching water, cooking and cleaning were shared among my brother and sister."*

*"Finding money for our daily needs led me sometimes to beg because what I was gaining from my commerce was very insignificant. The proceeds from my sale are not sufficient to cater to the needs of the family. One of my*



*small sisters Chinwe is said to have gone to the city, I cannot confirm her whereabouts".*

Since identifying them, Kingsley and his siblings are now enrolled by the LOPIN3-Project; which aims to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children in area 3- Cross River and Ebonyi States (LOPIN-3). They have also received the following services; Psychosocial Support (Counselling Support), Nutrition Education and support, HIV testing and counselling (HTC) and also Legal Protection (Birth Registration).

The LOPIN-3 project faces extreme challenges as we come face to face with the reality of life for thousands upon thousands of children living in poverty dwellings and infected or affected by the HIV/Aids pandemic. Children trying to cope, trying to raise their siblings and trying to keep whatever remains of the family, together. This is only one orphan's story....

## Loveth returns to School



Loveth's first day at school

In 2011, Lovett and Blessing Edet lost both parents due to a prolonged unknown illness. Since then 16 year old Blessing assumed the responsibility of the head of the home caring for her 14 year old sister Lovett after her eldest sister left them to work as a maid in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. LOPIN-3 came in contact with these girls through a community volunteer who identified them on 24th May, 2015 during Orphans and Vulnerable Children enrolment process in Akamkpa Urban of Akamkpa LGA in Cross River state, Nigeria. They were immediately enrolled by the LOPIN3-Project. Akamkpa LGA is 40 kilometres away from Calabar the State capital. Lovett and Blessing have lived there since the death of their parents. In order to survive they did all sorts of menial jobs while in some cases men try to take advantage of them in the process. The girls soon became an object of ridicule in the community and

people often avoided.

In order to restore the girls' self-esteem, LOPIN 3 carried out an advocacy on the 6th of October, 2015 to the principle of Akamkpa Government Secondary School on the possibility of re-enrolling Lovett back to school, having heard the story of Lovett, the principal was moved and agreed to re-enrol Lovett back to school with waiver of first term school fees and other registration requirements while LOPIN 3 supported with 2nd and 3rd term school fees, JSS 3 examination fee, uniform, books, school bag and school shoes.

Excited Lovett says *"My dream of going back to school after the deaths of my parents have come to reality"*

*"I never expected this kind gesture from LOPIN 3 as my relatives, family members and community have always promised to help us without any positive result. Our once lost hope in life has been restored"* Blessing

The following week, 14th October, 2015, Lovett returned to school while Blessing who is the head of the household has started learning a trade, which will go a long way to support their household. Also both of them have been placed under the guidance of the community volunteer in their locality.

Lovett and Blessing's story is in essence a typical one. As a girl child who is double-orphaned, they are particularly vulnerable. Their story is a reminder of the psychosocial challenges orphans and vulnerable children face. Challenges such as lack of material resources, including food and clothes, limited possibilities to attend school on a regular basis, vast responsibilities and reduced possibilities for social interaction all contribute to causing worries and challenges for the child heads of households. Also most of these children face stigmatization and, to a great extent, ignored and excluded from their community.

Agholor Okoh, OVC Advisor LOPIN-3 Project

# SOCIAL DIARY

## Weddings

- Clinic Manager, 82 Div Enugu, Ogueri Pricillia wedded on August 29, 2015 in Owerri Imo State.  
Congrats Mr and Mrs Nwagwu
- Logistician, LOPIN-3 Project, Elijah Nwachukwu wedded on August 27 and 29, 2015 in Amuzukwu Ibeku, Abia State.  
Congrats Mr and Mrs Nwachukwu
- Data Manager, 68 NARH Yaba, Kehinde Aribisala wedded on Sept 5, 2015 in Akute, Ogun State.  
Congrats Mr and Mrs Aribisala
- Pharmacy Technician 45 NAFH Makurdi Omoko Joy on Sept 5, 2015 wedded in Delta State.  
Congrats Mr and Mrs Chukwumerije
- M&E Officer/DEM, DHQ Abuja, Ibrahim Obafemi wedded on Nov 28, 2015 in Lokoja, Kogi State.  
Congrats Mr and Mrs Obafemi
- Human Resource Assistant, HIFASS HQ, Kehinde Araego wedded on October 3, 2015 in Abuja. Congrats Mr and Mrs Sanyaolu



Mr and Mrs Nwachukwu



Mr and Mrs Chukwumerije



Mr and Mrs Nwagwu (standing next to the bride is, Susan Oporum, HR Manager, HIFASS)



## Baby Dedications

- Mr. Justin Etim ICT Officer LOPIN-3 Project and his wife dedicated their baby on August 9, 2015



Mr Etim with family and friends at the event

- Mr Emmanuel Elias Idoko, Logistician LOPIN-3 Project also dedicated his baby on August 27, 2015.

- Tosan Iyalaju, Logistician HIFASS, dedicated his baby on September 13, 2015

## You gain some and you lose some

- We regret to announce the resignation of 2 of HIFASS staff at the Headquarters Office.

Murphy Opadotun Program Officer M&E and Emmanuel Musa PC/Mobilization officer.

Thank you Murphy and Mallam Musa for a job well done wishing you the very best in your future endeavours.



Mallam Musa and Murphy at World AIDS day 2015 event in Kwali

- We warmly welcome on board Shinnom Musa our new Community Mobilization Officer and Mr Gbenga Ogunjinrin, Logistician.

## Burial

- The life of late Pa Adeyinka, father-in-law of Mr. James Adedayo, Finance and Admin Director, LOPIN-3 Project, reverberated across the length and breadth of Ibadan on Saturday 24 October, 2015 as family and friends bade farewell to an extraordinary life. Pa Adeyinka died at age 81.

May his soul rest in peace.

- Sr. Chibuzor Iloh, Admin Assistant LOPIN3 Project, buried her father Mr. Benedict Iloh, on the 7th of January, 2016. May his soul rest in peace.

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- FCT Agency for the Control of AIDS (FACA)
- People to People Health Foundation Nigeria (PPHFN)
- Calabar Arch-Diocesan Action Committee on AIDS (CAACA)
- Succour and Development Services Initiative (SUCCDEV)
- Cross River State Agency for the Control of AIDS (CRSACA)
- Ebonyi State Agency for Control of AIDS (EBSACA)
- Women's Rights and Health Initiatives (WRAHI)

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- Agholor Okoh, OVC Advisor LOPIN-3 Project, Cross River State
- Otueze Kingsley M&E officer LOPIN-3 Project, Ebonyi State
- Oluchi Chialuka Capacity and organisational development advisor LOPIN-3 Project, Ebonyi State
- Omonefe O. Eruotor Desk and Communications Officer LOPIN-3 Project, Cross River State
- Jon Brack, Photographer, Project Hope

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