



Caritas Stylus

A Caritas Nigeria Newsletter



Standardizing Maternal and Child Health Initiatives through Baby Shower - Pg 11



Addressing Education Needs in Imo State - Pg 7



Caritas Nigeria Empowers Staff through Accountability Training - Pg 31

Caritas Nigeria-supported CBO Validation Meeting in Bayelsa State - Pg 6

The ACCESS Project Retreat in Enugu State - Pg 9

Improving HIV Outcomes Through Strategic Review and Implementation - Pg 13

Enhancing Community-Based Healthcare Performance - Pg 18

Field Visit on the Families Matter Program in Imo State - Pg 22

Promoting HIV-Free Births in Imo State - Pg 28

Review and Strategy Meeting for FY24 in Imo State - Pg 33

Caritas Nigeria Commemorates 2024 World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with a Series of Events in Edo State - Pg 37

EDITORIAL

Empowering Communities, Transforming Lives

Welcome to this month's edition of the Caritas Stylus newsletter. As we reflect on our journey and the incredible impact we have made together, it is clear that our collective efforts are truly transforming lives and empowering communities across Nigeria.

In the realm of health, our dedicated teams have been working tirelessly to provide essential medical services and health education to beneficiaries through our HIV and TB interventions. Our outreaches in communities have successfully reached thousands, offering critical care and spreading awareness about HIV and TB prevention, testing, care and treatment to thousands of people. The stories of individuals regaining their health and dignity are heart warming reminders of why we do what we do as Caritas Nigeria.

On the humanitarian front, we have continued our mission to support displaced persons, refugees and host communities through agriculture, livelihoods, protection, and education interventions to help them rebuild their lives. Our emergency response teams have been on the ground, providing relief to communities affected by conflicts and natural disasters while also supporting communities to be proactive in responding to natural disasters resulting from the effect of climate change. The resilience and strength of these communities inspire us every day, and we are committed to standing by them as they rebuild their lives.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of our work. By introducing sustainable climate-smart farming practices and innovative technologies, through our BSLiC and humanitarian projects, we are helping farmers increase their yields and improve food security. Our agricultural training programs have empowered countless farmers, ensuring they have the tools and knowledge needed to thrive. The impact is not just seen in the fields but felt in the homes of those who now enjoy better livelihoods.

Furthermore, through our vocational training and microenterprise initiatives we are creating new opportunities for economic growth for vulnerable households. From providing skills training to supporting small businesses, we are fostering a culture of self-reliance and entrepreneurship. These efforts are not only boosting incomes but also instilling a sense of pride and purpose in individuals and communities alike.

Recognizing how important it is to raise awareness and sensitize people about issues affecting the society, we have organized webinars with both local and international participation to share latest laudable initiatives and achievements on the INTEGRATE TB Project of which Caritas Nigeria is the first organization in Nigeria to implement community based integrated service delivery using an AI – enabled X-ray to screen for TB and Cardiopulmonary conditions. Innovations and lessons learned on this project have been compiled into an insightful manual by team with the support of Qure.AI and was launched during the webinar. Similarly, we have organized seminars to commemorate significant world days such as the World Environment Day and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons aimed at educating people on the issues, as one of the strategies of prevention.

At the heart of sustainable development is good governance. We believe that transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance is essential for long-term progress. Our advocacy and capacity-building programs are aimed at strengthening local and regional institutions to promote civic engagement and bring about development of the people. By empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes, we are laying the foundation for a more just and equitable society. It is our prayer that the government of the day listens to the cry of the common man, as Nigerians appeal to the President to implement pro-poor policies to alleviate the current hardship on us all.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our mission of creating lasting change. None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our partners, donors, volunteers, and staff. Together, we are making a difference, one community at a time.

We hope you reading this edition of the Caritas Stylus.

Staff Writers/Contributors

Johnson Ezea
Emmanuel Mbonyam
James Chokom
Marcus Onuh
Emmanuel Nnacho
Mercy Barkindo
Rose Chijioke Onuzuruike
Michael Essang

Reviewer

Doris Mbaezue

Line Editors

Dr. Amana Effiong
Dr. John Oko
Rev. Fr. Peter Babangida Audu

Editor

Cecilia Agrinya-Owan

Editor-in-Chief

Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, Ph.D.



Editor

Cecilia Agrinya-Owan

cagrinya@ccfng.org
communications@ccfng.org
info@ccfng.org

THE GAZE IS CONSTANT!

From the Executive Secretary/CEO's Desk

Beloved Friends and Readers,

For the month of July, we would like to share with you our convictions that our gaze towards the poor and the vulnerable, the marginalized and all people of concern has been constant. We are readily available at our duty posts. Looking at the various activities, meetings, trainings, workshops, and other capacity strengthening initiatives, and the outdoor visits to the health facilities and the encouraging interactions of our staff with the patients and other people of concern in the various states and regions where we intervene, one gets the satisfaction that, Caritas Nigeria is working for the fullness of life for all her beneficiaries.

Especially, in Nigeria today, the need for such commitment is urgent. The situation of hunger and disease, poverty and insecurity of life and property, high cost of living and unbearable inflations, all compound and make life nasty and uninteresting. One would require a double dose of resilience to remain focused. The temptation to give up and resign to fate is enticing. Nothing seems to make sense. Those who have the duty to ensure some modicum of sanity in the system are busy pushing shadows. Anarchy and a sense of hopelessness seem to hold sway among the poor and those at the fringe of society.

But we would not like to resign to fate. That explains the efforts and the sacrifices on the part of the Staff of Caritas Nigeria to go the extra mile to ensure that, people under our mandate are served. Hope among the downtrodden is possible through the good actions and support of others. We are therefore confident that our work will not be in vain. The bad time will soon be over for a new dawn in the fullness of life.

We shall be continuously grateful to our numerous friends, funders, partners and stakeholders for their support and encouragement, without which we will be unable to do anything. We promise them our commitment to the course of our mandate and assure them of our unwavering solicitude for the well-being of the people of concern in our charge. It is true that the times are bad, that the Nigerian economy is nose-diving, and Nigeria has remained largely the poverty capital of the world, but a new day and a new hope are possible. It is for that day and time that we continue to struggle and keep our gaze constant on the people for whom we have been called to serve and support, for their happiness and peace.

Yours in the Service of Caritas

Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD
Executive Secretary/CEO



Caritas Nigeria's Deputy Executive Secretary's Working Visit to our Regional Offices



On July 1, our Deputy Executive Secretary (DES), Rev. Fr. Peter Babangida Audu, embarked on a productive working visit to our Abia State office, engaging directly with staff and gaining valuable insights into their daily operations. During his tour of our regional workspace, he observed work processes and interacted with employees at all levels.

In a related development, our DES visited our Imo and Enugu State offices within the month, aiming to engage with staff and reinforce our principles rooted in the Catholic faith. During his visit, Fr. Audu celebrated the Holy Mass for the staff, providing a moment of reflection and spiritual nourishment for the employees. He also engaged in sectional and one-on-one interactions with various units and new hires, gaining valuable insights into the work environment and the relationships among staff, including ad-hoc employees.

Fr. Audu praised the staff's resilience in combating HIV transmission and tuberculosis, encouraging the team to maintain their efforts. To better understand the operational challenges affecting the ACCESS program in the state, he held a closed-door meeting with several Unit Leads and staff. He also proposed systems-strengthening solutions to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of our programs.

Likewise, the DES visited our staff in Damaturu, Yobe

State on July 29 to interact with newly recruited staff members, work from deep field locations, and address identified challenges. In a plenary session with all staff members on the UNHCR Northeast Protection Project, the ECHO SAHaRA Project, and the German Federal Foreign Office-funded Food Security and Humanitarian Protection Project, he encouraged staff to embrace team spirit, collaboration, solidarity, and humanity to achieve the organization's overall goals, knowing that they are ambassadors of Caritas Nigeria and the Church. He also visited one of the communities, Abujan Mai-Mala IDP settlement, where the UNHCR-funded Protection Project is implemented. At the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, he extensively interacted with the settlement's leadership, encouraging them to continue living harmoniously with their hosts.

This open dialogue was instrumental in highlighting Caritas Nigeria's Executive Management's commitment to addressing staff concerns, enhancing their work conditions, and strengthening the bond between leadership and staff. The visits allowed staff members to share their experiences, concerns, and recommendations for advancing the organization's growth. Fr. Audu emphasized the importance of cordial interactions in fostering a conducive and productive workplace. This visit is part of Management's ongoing efforts to strengthen staff well-being and the connection between leadership and employees.

Photo Gallery



Fr. Audu with our team in Yobe State



Fr. Audu with our team in Imo State

Photo Gallery



Fr. Audu with our team in Abia State



Fr. Audu with our team in Enugu State

Promoting Healthy Eating Habits Amongst Women in Borno State



Caritas Nigeria conducted a food demonstration for over 200 vulnerable women in the Wurang community, Biu Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State to promote healthy eating habits and well-being in communities. This activity, which took place on July 2, was part of our broader efforts to combat malnutrition under the Emergency Food Security and Protection project, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Caritas Norway.

Our team educated the women, including pregnant women and lactating mothers, on the preparation of nutritious meals using locally available ingredients. This nutrition intervention aimed to empower the beneficiaries with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their families' health while promoting a sustainable approach to eliminating malnutrition in children and enhancing nutrition within the community.

Through hands-on demonstrations and practical advice, the participants learned how to create balanced meals that meet the nutritional needs of their families, ensuring a healthier future for their children. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering well-being and resilience in vulnerable communities by addressing the root causes of malnutrition.



In his speech, Rev. Fr. Zacharia Samjumi, Secretary-General (SG) of the CSN, expressed his joy at seeing young students participate, emphasizing the importance of educating them about their role in preserving the planet. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Abuja Environmental Protection Board also spoke, highlighting government initiatives such as good agricultural practices, tree planting, and waste management.



Our team provided an overview of our plastic waste recycling projects, including the creation of interlock pavers from sachet water bags and plastic bottles. We also took the opportunity to educate attendees about the Times and Fortunes of Lake Chad. The session concluded with a Q&A segment, allowing participants to share ideas on effective waste management and commit to implementing their new knowledge in their communities.

The seminar was made more engaging with artistic elements; students performed a touching poetic recital on Mother Earth, and members of the Catholic Women's Organization presented a musical rendition of environmental care.



Building Staff Capacity through the PMD-Pro Training



On July 2, our new staff implementing the Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project, funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation, received a comprehensive one-week training in Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD-Pro), aimed at building the capacity of staff members in the art and science of project management.

Facilitated by our Institutional Capacity Strengthening team, the training was designed to equip the 20 participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage and execute projects. The primary

objectives included familiarizing the staff with project management principles, enhancing their ability to plan, execute, and monitor projects, and ensuring they can apply these skills in real-world scenarios.

With each module carefully crafted to provide both theoretical knowledge and practical application, these sessions incorporated interactive lectures, group discussions, and hands-on activities to foster a deeper understanding and retention of the concepts being taught. Our new team members will be well-equipped to contribute to the successful execution of the B-SLiC project goals, ensuring that our initiatives are managed with excellence and efficiency.



Caritas Nigeria-supported CBO Validation Meeting in Bayelsa State



On July 3, our team in Bayelsa State hosted a CBO validation meeting at the Medical University in Yenagoa, the state capital. The meeting aimed at reviewing CBO's activities and validating TB/HIV data reports, a critical measure to improve data quality and enhance the effectiveness of community-level interventions.

The meeting was attended by our lead CBO, Health and Care for the Vulnerable Initiative, alongside other sub-CBOs, namely, the Network of People Living with HIV, Benny's Development Initiative, and the Synergy Development Initiative. Participants engaged in in-depth discussions on strategies for scaling up TB and HIV Testing Services (TB/HTS) at the community level and addressing program challenges.

By fostering collaboration and ensuring accurate data reporting, Caritas Nigeria and its partner organizations are committed to enhancing the quality of TB/HIV programs and driving positive health outcomes in Bayelsa State.

HIV and Tuberculosis Medical Outreach at the University of Nigeria Nsukka



Our dedicated staff working on The Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) and the Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) projects in Enugu State collaborated with Aldora Cares Nigeria Initiatives to conduct a health outreach at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) on July 4. This initiative aimed not only to help students know their HIV status but also to promote their mental and sexual health by raising awareness about the dangers of risky sexual behaviours and drug and substance abuse.

The health education session was followed by extensive HIV testing services in which students

participated enthusiastically. In addition to HIV screening, the team offered tests for tuberculosis, malaria, diabetes, and other clinical issues, ensuring a broad spectrum of health concerns were addressed. To support better health outcomes, pharmaceutical drugs, including vitamins and supplements, were dispensed to manage identified health issues and address nutritional deficiencies.



Addressing Education Needs in Imo State



With the support of PEPFAR through the CDC, we made a significant contribution to the educational landscape in Imo State as part of our ACCESS project strategies. In collaboration, with our community-based partner, Rosita Unique Care Foundation, we donated 17 classroom seaters to the Community Secondary School, Umunumo Ehime in Mbano LGA of Imo State on July 5.

This generous intervention addresses a critical shortage in the well-populated institution, where the scarcity of desks had previously forced many students to sit on the classroom floors or window edges to receive lessons, a situation that had been a major impediment to creating a conducive learning environment, affecting both the comfort and concentration of the pupils.

The excitement of the pupils upon receiving their new desks was evident; they would no longer endure the discomfort and indignity of sitting on the floor during lessons. The new desks symbolize not just physical comfort but also a renewed sense of dignity and respect for the students. This improvement in the learning environment is expected to have a positive impact on student morale, attendance, and overall academic performance, as it enables a more structured and engaging classroom experience.



Empowering Women and Youth in the Northeast with Eco-Friendly Stoves Production

As part of our efforts to mitigate climate change, we took a significant step towards empowering vulnerable women and youth in the northeast region by distributing start-up kits to 200 individuals who completed a 3-week training in eco-friendly stove production. The beneficiaries, who gathered for the intervention on July 5, were drawn from eight communities across Bama, Gwoza, Madagali, and Michika LGAs in Adamawa and Borno States, and are set to transform their lives and communities with the skills they have acquired.

Each beneficiary received start-up kits to enable them to produce and sell eco-friendly stoves, contributing to sustainable livelihoods and environmental conservation. This initiative, a part of the Comprehensive Humanitarian Emergency Response and Economic Recovery for Sustainable Livelihoods in Nigeria (CHEERS-flex) Project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Caritas Norway, aims to increase household incomes and stimulate local economies in targeted communities while promoting environmentally friendly practices.



 **Caritas**
NIGERIA ...fullness of life for all

The ACCESS Project Retreat in Enugu State

On July 9, our ACCESS Project team, led by the Chief of Party, Dr. John Oko, gathered in our Enugu State field office for a 5-day retreat. The event brought together state management teams, thematic area leads, and technical staff from our ACCESS project states of Abia, Imo, and Enugu. The retreat focused on reviewing and analyzing the key performance indicators from the project's previous quarter.

Participants engaged in strategic discussions to address all identified gaps, aligning their efforts with PEPFAR's strategic direction. Presentations from various thematic areas were aimed at enhancing HIV testing services, tuberculosis response, Advanced HIV Disease (AHD) interventions, and improving data quality in pharmacy and supply chain management.

Breakout sessions facilitated a deeper understanding of approaches to harmonize technical assistance visits to Caritas Nigeria-supported health facilities across the states. The retreat culminated in the development of a clear roadmap to advance HIV case-finding, set targets and timelines, and improve overall performance on the PEPFAR-funded project.

Photo Gallery



Strategic Retreat to Strengthen HIV Response in Abia and Enugu States

To align efforts and improve effectiveness in our HIV response in Abia and Enugu States, we organized a three-day retreat for the staff of our ACCESS project. Held from July 8 – 10, this retreat featured several key presentations and interactive sessions aimed at bolstering our program's impact. Unit Heads shared strategies to enhance communication between state teams and their backstops from our country office in Abuja.

Key topics included optimising antiretroviral consumption, improving EMR data triangulation, and strategies to boost viral load coverage (VLC) and viral load samples (VLS). The integration of Quality Improvement (QI) activities into other program areas was also a central discussion point. The teams also recommended targeted training to close knowledge gaps, harmonized standards for technical visits, and defined strategies to improve viral load coverage, among other critical aspects of the program.

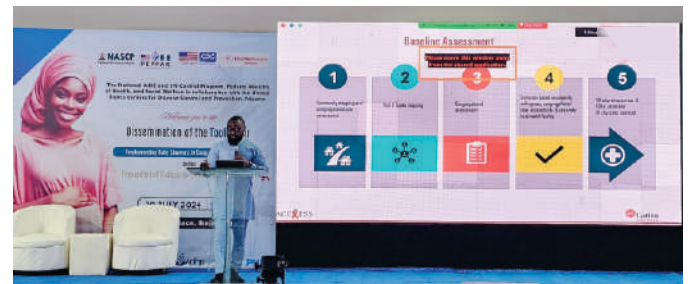
Breakout sessions allowed teams to brainstorm solutions to address identified gaps, review data, analyze key performance indicators, develop work plans to ensure a strong finish for quarter 3, and outline activities for the next quarter. To enhance staff well-being and increase workplace productivity, the retreat in Enugu concluded with a mental health awareness presentation by our Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Raphael Aguanunu. This session provided valuable insights into common mental health



Standardizing Maternal and Child Health Initiatives through Baby Shower

In a significant move to combat mother-to-child transmission of HIV, CDC Nigeria and the Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria launched the “Baby Shower Toolkit” in Lagos on July 10 to standardize and enhance baby shower activities nationwide, focusing on improving maternal and child health outcomes.

As a key partner in this effort, Caritas Nigeria was represented by Dr. John Oko, Chief of Party for the ACCESS Project, and Dr. Chukwudi Onwuchekwa, Senior Technical Advisor for Pediatric ART. During the event, the Caritas Nigeria delegation highlighted our unique strategy known as the Congregational Approach. This approach involves partnering with religious leaders in communities to increase HIV testing coverage for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children. It ensures prompt linkage to treatment for those diagnosed with HIV and facilitates timely testing of HIV-exposed infants.



Caritas Nigeria and Other Consortium Members Launch the Lake Chad Crisis Response

Caritas Nigeria, in partnership with the Justice, Development, and Peace Commission (JDPC) of Maiduguri Diocese, held a two-day project inception meeting in Maiduguri to launch the “Food Security and Humanitarian Protection for Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis” project. This initiative, targeting Northeast Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, and Chad, is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office through Caritas Germany.



The meeting, held on 11 July, provided a valuable opportunity for partners to develop an integrated work plan for implementing food security, nutrition, livelihood, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and child protection interventions across three LGAs in Borno State, namely; Magumeri, Gwoza, and Kaga. The project is designed to provide vulnerable populations with reliable access to nutritious food, boost their livelihoods, and strengthen protection mechanisms for children.



Improving HIV Outcomes Through Strategic Review and Implementation

Our ACCESS project technical teams from Abuja and the Imo State field office gathered in Owerri on 11 July to conduct a performance review which aimed to identify areas for improvement and enhance health outcomes for people living with HIV in the region. Discussions addressed performance metrics, communication between Caritas Nigeria staff and facility staff, and gaps in project deliverables. The objective was to refine approaches to achieving project goals and improve overall effectiveness.

Participants were organized into units for focused brainstorming sessions, where they identified challenges affecting their deliverables. They developed realistic steps to enhance results in areas such as data collection, performance indicators, viral load sample coverage, and stakeholder communication – a measure that ensured the highest possible impact on the health and well-being of PLHIV.



Caritas Nigeria Hosts TB Laboratory Interface Continuous Quality Improvement (TBLICQI) Workshop

On July 11 and 12, Caritas Nigeria organized a crucial workshop for the Enugu State Government representatives and staff from four key technical departments – Laboratory Services, Quality Improvement, Clinical Services, and Strategic Information. The workshop, which had in attendance healthcare workers from five Caritas Nigeria-supported service delivery facilities, focused on enhancing the Tuberculosis Laboratory Interface Continuous Quality Improvement (TBLICQI) program in their various facilities.

The same session was held in Imo State on July 14, with a focus on addressing challenges in tuberculosis (TB) testing, patient management, data documentation, and the development of appropriate treatment regimens. The program provided healthcare professionals with structured strategies to prevent new TB cases and effectively manage existing ones. Facilitated by Caritas Nigeria's team in both states and supported by the staff from our country office, the workshop aimed to monitor and evaluate various processes within the TBLICQI program.

Key activities included reviewing process mapping, the continuous quality improvement model, and utilizing quality improvement tools such as Pareto and Fishbone diagrams. Participants engaged in detailed discussions to identify implementation challenges, review key deliverables, and develop an action plan. The workshop concluded by outlining the next steps to ensure the success of the TBLICQI program under the ACCESS project.



New Home Economics Laboratory Established in Awom-na-ebo Technical Secondary School, Abia State



In a significant effort to enhance educational infrastructure, Caritas Nigeria, with generous support from PEPFAR through the CDC, equipped and handed over a state-of-the-art home economics laboratory to Awom-na-ebo Secondary Technical School, Amawaom in Ikwuano LGA of Abia State on July 14. The newly established laboratory is designed to foster self-reliance and economic stability by providing students with practical skills in cooking, sewing, and home management. These skills are crucial for personal development and future vocational opportunities, empowering students to better prepare for their futures.



The handover event was graced by representatives from various government ministries, highlighting the collective commitment to improving educational opportunities and infrastructure for young students. This initiative reflects a shared vision to support and enhance the quality of education, ensuring that students gain valuable skills that will benefit them in their personal and professional lives.



Onboarding of New Hires of the GFFO-funded Project



We had an induction program in Maiduguri on July 15 to welcome seven (7) new Caritas Nigeria staff members and integrate them into the project, Food Security and Humanitarian Protection for Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis in Northeast Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, and Chad. The intervention is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) through Caritas Germany. The induction provided an overview of Caritas Nigeria's organizational structure, HR policies, safeguarding measures, financial reporting procedures, and humanitarian policies. Additionally, the program included sessions on career development, equipping the recruits with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their roles and contribute effectively to the project's goals.



Advocating for Community Engagement and Support toward Food Security and Livelihood

In partnership with the JDPC of Maiduguri Diocese, on 15 July, our GGFO project team organized a community entry meeting in Karnowa and Kellumeri communities within Magumeri LGA of Borno State, as part of our broader stakeholder engagement efforts for the food security and humanitarian protection project. During the meeting, community leaders and members warmly welcomed the initiative which aims to enhance their safety and well-being. The discussion centered on reintegrating individuals previously registered for cash transfers and livelihood interventions but not included in the last disbursement cycle of the ECHO-funded SAHaRA project.

Following the community engagement, the team, accompanied by Magumeri LGA's Director of Planning, Abbas Aksaira, visited the Chairman of Magumeri LGA, Alhaji Abdulkadir Bukar Yaro, who expressed his appreciation for the humanitarian efforts reaching remote areas and assured his support for the project's success. The focus also included effective monitoring of gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection cases, with an emphasis on establishing feedback mechanisms for reporting fraud or harm within the project communities. This holistic approach underscores our commitment to community welfare and transparent, impactful humanitarian support.



Enhancing Community-Based Healthcare Performance



On July 16, our team, in collaboration with the South Saharan Social Development Organization, hosted the first-semester Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) Public-Private Mix Performance Review meeting in Enugu State. The meeting focused on evaluating the performance of our partner CBOs in the areas of tuberculosis case-finding and HIV testing for presumed pregnant women across 17 project local government areas (LGAs).



Serving as a vital platform for assessing and discussing the progress of the CBOs, emphasis was laid on providing program updates and addressing any areas of concern. Presentations by partner organizations covered key topics such as

weekly and monthly reporting, client sample management, tuberculosis case-finding efforts, linkage data for each LGA, and the use of digital reporting tools like Comm TB and mWater applications.



Strengthening TB/HIV Integration Services in Bayelsa State

During an on-site data verification, Caritas Nigeria staff conducted a series of courtesy visits to key stakeholders from 16 – 19 July. These included the Director of Public Health, the State AIDS and STI Control Program (SASCP), and the State Agency for the Control of AIDS (SACA). The primary aim of these visits was to enhance TB/HIV integration services in Bayelsa State, a critical component in the fight against TB and HIV.

The Director of Public Health commended Caritas Nigeria for organizing a coordination meeting that facilitates program review under the DPH's guidance and fosters collaboration among implementing partners. The DPH expressed eagerness for the next coordination meeting, highlighting its importance in achieving unified efforts.

SASCP and SACA officials also pledged their unwavering support to ensure the success of the Global Fund Nigeria TB/HIV Reach, Integration, and Impact Project (GF-N-THRIP). Their commitment underscores a shared goal of improving the healthcare delivery system in Bayelsa State. These strategic visits aimed to build strong relationships, provide a platform for open communication, and support effective engagement with state actors.



Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Vulnerable Children in Enugu State

To improve educational outcomes for vulnerable children, on July 17, Caritas Nigeria, with funding support from PEPFAR through the CDC, awarded a block grant to Obiagu Road Primary School in Enugu State. The grant included a donation of essential stationery items such as whiteboards, markers, marker fillers, and dusters. This initiative was carried out in partnership with Twinning for Health Support Initiative.

The school headmistress, Nnenna Ani, gratefully received the items on behalf of the pupils, teachers, and the parent-teacher association. Ani highlighted how the new whiteboards would facilitate classroom presentations, and the colourful markers would make learning more engaging and interactive, thereby fostering a more supportive and effective educational experience for the children.



Strengthening Collaborations for Enhanced Humanitarian Impact in Borno State



On July 17, our team in Borno State Caritas Nigeria, in partnership with the JDPC of Maiduguri Diocese, paid an advocacy visit to key officials of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Borno State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). The discussions, led by Sai'd Alkali, Desk Officer of NEMA's Borno State Chapter, and Abdullahi Suleiman, SEMA's Director of Operations, centred on building robust collaborations for the successful implementation of the "Food Security and Humanitarian Protection for Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis" project.

During the advocacy visit, the key officials pledged their commitment to ensuring that the communities benefit fully from these interventions. Additionally, our team, along with JDPC staff, conducted a community entry meeting in Sheluri and Maramari communities in Magumeri LGA, discussing the project with community leaders. These efforts underscore the importance of collaboration and community engagement in driving the success of humanitarian projects, ensuring that aid reaches those in need effectively and efficiently.



This German Federal Foreign Office-funded intervention, obtained through Caritas Germany, aims to expand its reach to 15 communities across Magumeri, Pulka, and Kaga LGAs. The project will build on the impact of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)-supported SAHaRA project, focusing on comprehensive support including child protection, food security and livelihood, nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).



Field Visit on the Families Matter Program in Imo State



The Caritas Nigeria team, in collaboration with the South Saharan Social Development Organization, conducted a two-day monitoring field visit to the implementation sites of the Families Matter Program (FMP) in Imo State. The FMP, which is implemented in Umuogii community in Owerri North LGA and Umoko community in Onuimo LGA, aims to reduce risky sexual behaviours among adolescents, promote positive parenting, and improve parent-child communication about sexuality and sexual risk reduction, including the prevention of child sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

The visit, which took place on July 17, commenced with meetings with the traditional rulers of both

communities to seek their cooperation in the FMP implementation. Subsequently, the team, accompanied by some traditional chiefs, attended FMP cohort sessions where they witnessed firsthand the program's positive impact. Several mothers shared testimonials about how the program had empowered them with better parenting skills.

Funded by PEPFAR through the CDC, the FMP is a crucial initiative in fostering safer and more supportive environments for adolescents. The collaborative efforts of Caritas Nigeria and community leaders are paving the way for sustained positive change and the well-being of families in Imo State.



Bayelsa State Hosts a Successful TB/HIV Review Meeting



Our team implementing the TB-HIV Reach Impact Project in Bayelsa State held a two-day State TB/HIV Review Meeting with in-state partners on 17 and 18 July. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, including the Bayelsa State Tuberculosis, Buruli-Ulcer, and Leprosy Control Program Manager, Dr Mabel Emudigha, Tuberculosis and Leprosy Supervisors (TBLS); and the State AIDS and STI Control Program Coordinator, and other implementing partners.

The state quarterly TB/HIV review meeting aimed to assess the state's achievements, address program challenges, and chart a path forward for

program improvement. Implementing partners and Tuberculosis and Leprosy Supervisors presented the TB/HIV activities carried out during the quarter, sharing strategies to enhance TB/HIV activities.

The interactive nature of the meeting allowed participants to exchange ideas and suggestions, contributing to a collective effort to improve TB/HIV case management. This collaborative approach is expected to significantly enhance the state's overall achievements in managing TB and HIV.



Empowering Education for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Enugu State

Our Orphans and Vulnerable Children's (OVC) School Block Domain intervention continues to make impactful strides in Enugu State. On July 18, our OVC team, in collaboration with the JDPC of Nsukka Diocese, distributed school desks to the pupils of Community Primary School in Alor-Uno, Nsukka West LGA of the state. The generous donation was made possible by PEPFAR through the CDC.

The desks were received with immense gratitude by the LGA's Education Secretary, Alice Giginna, and the school's headmistress, Victoria Onah. The school's community expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the new desks, which bring the pupils one step closer to achieving their educational dreams. The joy of the students was evident as they performed a cultural dance to celebrate the occasion, adding a festive spirit to the desk handover ceremony.



Caritas Nigeria's Central Operations Meeting in Abuja

On July 18, Caritas Nigeria's Operations Team met in our country office to enhance interdepartmental collaboration and boost overall productivity. Chaired by our ACCESS Project Chief of Party, Dr. John Oko, the meeting brought together Heads of Finance, Grants & Compliance, Admin, Communications, Human Resources, Internal Audit, Knowledge Management, and Business Development, as well as various Regional and State Leadership.

During the meeting, each unit and department provided updates on their initiatives, achievements, challenges, and plans. Key topics discussed included staff attitudes towards work, workplace security, maintenance of work tools and gadgets, and adapting to changes in government regulations. Realistic recommendations were made to improve staff efficiency in delivering our mission.

The gathering highlighted the importance of cohesive teamwork and strategic planning in advancing Caritas Nigeria's mission to support and uplift communities. Cecilia Agrinya-Owan, the Senior Advisor of Communications, facilitated the meeting and reminded participants to prioritize stewardship, one of Caritas Nigeria's core values, in their daily duties.

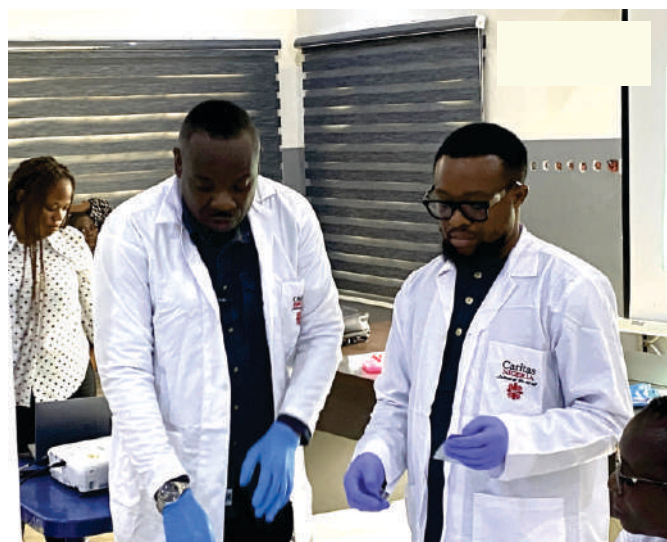


New Community Testers Join the Fight Against HIV in Abia State

We are thrilled to announce the successful orientation of new community HIV testers in Isialangwa North, Ukwa West, Umuahia South, and Aba North LGAs of Abia State. The training, which took place on July 19, was co-facilitated by a representative from the Abia State Primary Health Care Development Agency and incorporated a practical session aimed at equipping our new testers with essential skills and knowledge.

The orientation covered fundamental topics such as basic facts about HIV testing, the importance of integrated HIV testing services, and the linkage between community-based and facility-based healthcare. Practical aspects like daily reporting and monitoring, group community testing models, and the community testing structure were also emphasized.

To ensure the new testers were fully prepared, hands-on mentoring was provided on HIV testing procedures and the use of forms and registers. This practical training built their confidence and competence, ensuring they can deliver high-quality testing and maintain accurate records. By equipping our community testers with these skills, we are better positioned to reach more people and improve health outcomes.



Quarterly Review Meeting in Abia State



Our Grants and Compliance team in Abia State held a quarterly review meeting on July 19 with our in-state partners to assess effectiveness and identify growth areas. Key discussions focused on performance targets, funder regulation updates, internal controls, and financial management. To address these areas, the Caritas Nigeria team introduced new strategic channels and provided hands-on training to standardize processes.

These steps aim to enhance the proper management of funds, improve efficiency, and ensure reporting consistency. This collaborative effort demonstrates our commitment to strengthening partnerships, optimizing resource use, and maintaining high standards of compliance and accountability in all our operations.



Promoting HIV-Free Births in Imo State

As part of our Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) program strategy, our team in Imo State organized a Baby Shower outreach on July 21 at the Immaculate Conception Parish, Nkwo-Emeke in Emekukwu community, Owerri North LGA of the state. This event aimed to enlighten pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers about sustainable practices that reduce the incidence of new HIV infections among infants and young children.

During the outreach, we educated the women on the importance of antenatal care, regular check-ups, and measures to ensure their children are born HIV-free and lead healthy lives. Participants, including women and children, were tested for HIV, and those with minor ailments received medications. We also presented neo-natal kits (mama packs) to 42 pregnant women as a gesture of support.



Empowering TB/HIV Programs through the South-South Zonal Review Meeting

Key actors in the fight against TB and HIV in the South-South region convened in Port Harcourt, Rivers State for a zonal review meeting held from July 23 – 27. Donor organizations, implementing partners, including Caritas Nigeria, state program managers, and representatives from the National Tuberculosis, Buruli Ulcer, and Leprosy Control Program were in attendance to jointly assess the progress of TB/HIV programs in the zone and frame strategies to strengthen interventions.

During the meeting, we highlighted our achievements in the zone and Bayelsa State, where the Public-Private Mix TB notification rates increased from 2% to 28%. Our active participation in TB/HIV cluster training, monthly supportive supervision, community outreaches for Childhood Testing Week, and coordination meetings were equally showcased as a model of effective program implementation, to improve health outcomes in the South-South region.

Key lessons learned to enhance TB case-finding included the establishment of a situation room to track program activities and the development of pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation plans. Challenges, such as the stockout of Category 1 TB drugs, were identified and immediate steps were set in motion to resolve them.



The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria Launches the Apostolate of Pastoral Care for Migration

To address the several challenges arising from migration and displacement, the Migrants and Refugees Unit of the Church and Society department at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) launched the Apostolate of Pastoral Care of Migration in Nigeria under the theme: *Fostering Collaborative Engagement of Church and State for Migrants and Refugees*. The two-day event, which was held from 25 through 26 July, drew Priests, Religious, and lay faithful from across the Catholic dioceses in Nigeria, to collaborate with the Church to foster a lasting solution and bring succour to migrants and refugees in the country.

In his opening speech, Most Rev. Yohanna Bulus, Bishop of Kontagora Diocese and Episcopal Chairman of the Migrants and Refugees Unit, noted that the unit exists to aid people in need of assistance while on the move. As a direct response of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) to the plights of refugees, he added that the unit adopts the pastoral orientations and initiatives of the Universal Church in addressing migration crises, providing pastoral care and coordinating in-country migration-related activities.

Representatives of key stakeholders, like ECOWAS, RECOWA, and IOM also delivered goodwill messages, underscoring the Catholic Church's commitment to building stronger networks, promoting dignity, and advocating for human development. A panel discussion equally revealed the commitment of other stakeholders who work to support the cause of migrants and refugees.

At the event's closing Mass, the Bishop Chairman, represented by the Deputy Secretary General of the CSN, Rev. Fr. Michael Banjo, launched Prayer Manuals designed to ask for God's help for those who have been forced to flee their homes, those who are far away from home, and those with little or no hope of returning home. Participants were encouraged to disseminate the knowledge gained from the training in their respective parishes and dioceses, ensuring a broad and impactful support system for migrants and refugees throughout Nigeria.



Caritas Nigeria Empowers Staff through Accountability Training

Our Program Accountability Unit organized a comprehensive training from 24 through 26 July in our country to empower Caritas Nigeria's Accountability Focal Persons (AFP) from our project locations with the right tools to tackle accountability issues during program implementation.

The training aimed to foster transparency in our interventions. To kick-start the capacity-building activity, the ACCESS Project Chief of Party, Dr John Oko, enjoined the participants to discharge their duty of protecting Caritas Nigeria's image and beneficiaries.

The flexible sessions ensured the full participation of every staff, making the sessions very interactive and interesting. Staff were also assigned to share their knowledge in areas that relate to their field of work, bringing synergy through questions and answers from other units. Staff also gained insights from practical questions posed to suggest the ideal response to sensitive situations, such as exploitation.

It is expected that going forward, the empowered AFPs will commit to updating our Senior Management Team on our accountability efforts across our offices and project locations.



Photo Gallery



Review and Strategy Meeting for FY24 in Imo State

With the end of the financial year 2024 (FY24) approaching, our team in Imo State convened a strategic meeting with HIV Testing Services (HTS) assistants, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) nurses, and Enhanced Adherence Counselling (EAC) focal persons from our supported health services. The meeting, held from July 23-25, 2024, focused on assessing the performance and challenges of these critical thematic areas.

The discussions began with a review of the achievements and targets in HTS, treatment retention, and EAC performance for the year. Participants emphasized the importance of standardized protocols for patient screening, the intensification of community case-finding through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), accurate documentation, and increasing public awareness of HIV testing.

Strategies were developed to distribute self-test kits to high-risk populations through community health workers and peer educators, alongside the regular training of healthcare workers on Provider-Initiated Testing and Counselling (PITC). These measures aim to ensure a successful close-out of FY24 and continued progress in combating HIV/AIDS in the region.



Baby Shower Events in Enugu and Imo States to Prevent Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV

In line with our ongoing efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, our team in Enugu State organized a Baby Shower event on July 28 at St. Anthony's Church in Oji River LGA. This event, part of the PEPFAR-funded ACCESS Project, provided an integrated health talk to expectant mothers and their partners, offering a holistic approach to pregnancy support and guidance.

Our medical personnel conducted screenings for HIV, tuberculosis, and blood sugar levels, as well as routine health checks for both the mothers and their partners. Each expectant mother received a maternal health kit to promote safe delivery and hygiene. The event also featured a dance competition, adding a lively and stress-relieving element to the day.

Similarly, our team in Imo State held a Baby Shower event on July 28 at St. Barnabas Church in Okwudor community, Njaba LGA. The event aimed to educate participants on the risks of HIV and other diseases that can be transmitted from mother to child during childbirth, along with preventive measures.

Our medical team provided blood pressure checks, malaria and HIV screenings, and other necessary tests for the expectant mothers, their partners, and breastfeeding mothers. Minor ailments were treated on-site, and pregnant women were encouraged to attend regular medical checkups. Each expectant mother left with a neo-natal kit (Mama Pack), to ensure safe delivery. This initiative, supported by PEPFAR and CDC, reflects our dedication to preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and supporting maternal health.



Photo Gallery



The OVC Quarter 3 Review Meeting in Enugu State



On July 30, the Orphans and Vulnerable Children's (OVC) program team in Caritas Nigeria's Enugu field office conducted a quarterly review meeting with partner Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). During the meeting, each CBO presented data on the progress of National Identification Number (NIN) registration, crucial for children's enrollment in the National Health Insurance Scheme.

The presentations also highlighted success stories from Care & Support and Household Economic Strengthening Interventions for HIV-positive children. Additionally, updates were provided from the Care Plan Achievement Assessment (CPAA) for the possible graduation of HIV-positive enrolled children under the PEPFAR-funded ACCESS Project.

The meeting included participants from the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of Nsukka and Enugu Dioceses, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect, the Global Health Awareness Research Foundation, Twinning Support for Health Initiative, and representatives from the Ministry of Children, Gender Affairs, and Social Development. This collaborative effort demonstrates our commitment to enhancing the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV.



Caritas Nigeria Commemorates 2024 World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with a Series of Events in Edo State

In alignment with the 2024 World Day Against Human Trafficking, Caritas Nigeria's Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) team in Edo State organized a series of collaborative events under the theme "Leave No Child Behind." These events aimed to raise awareness and educate the public about the dangers and signs of human trafficking, with a particular focus on protecting children from exploitation.

The activities commenced on July 26, with a sensitization campaign at Uselu Market in Egor Local Government Area (LGA). This campaign, organized by the Edo State chapter of the Network Against Child Trafficking Abuse and Labour (NACTAL), involved distributing informational and educational materials (IECs) and delivering awareness messages to market-goers. This initial outreach sought to engage both buyers and sellers, providing them with crucial information about the risks and signs of human trafficking.

On July 29, the Caritas Nigeria AHT team facilitated a Town Hall meeting in Ekiadolor Community, Ovia East LGA, to further the commemoration of the 2024 World Day Against Human Trafficking. The meeting, co-facilitated by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Benin, gathered around 50 community members, including young people, parents, caregivers, school owners, and other influential figures. The participants were enlightened on the various forms of human trafficking affecting children, such as forced labour, street begging, and illegal adoption, and preventive measures to effectively combat this issue.

Representatives from NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command educated the attendees on the agency's trafficking in persons (TIP) response mechanisms and identified "red flags" that could indicate trafficking, assuring the community of anonymity for those who report suspected cases. Additionally, JDPC Benin discussed issues related to gender-based violence, particularly child molestation and exploitation, and informed participants about the support services available to victims.

The series of events concluded on July 30 with a road walk organized in partnership with NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command and other NGOs and government agencies. This awareness walk, starting from the NAPTIP Benin Zonal office, was aimed at projecting the year's theme, "Leave No Child Behind in the Fight

Against Human Trafficking." Participants distributed IEC materials and used loudspeakers to spread anti-trafficking messages to the public.



Faith Leaders Gather in Kigali to Address Africa's Economic Challenges

From July 17 to 19, 2024, faith leaders from 13 African countries convened in Kigali, Rwanda, to address Africa's pressing issues of overhanging debts and to discuss measures to strengthen the continent's economy. Nigeria was notably represented by Most Rev. Hyacinth Egbebor, the Bishop of Bomadi Diocese and a board member of Caritas Africa, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, and Caritas Nigeria's Good Governance Lead, who is also a member of Caritas Africa's Policy and Advocacy committee.

The gathering united a diverse group of religious leaders and policy advocates to formulate strategic responses to Africa's debt crisis. The discussions centred on the debt burden's economic impact on African nations and the need for sustainable economic policies that can foster growth and development. Participants shared insights on the socio-economic challenges faced by their respective countries, emphasizing the moral and ethical imperatives for economic justice and sustainable development.

The religious leaders highlighted the critical role of faith communities in advocating for economic policies that prioritize the well-being of the poor and vulnerable. He stressed the importance of transparency, accountability, and good governance in managing national resources and debts. Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, known for his outspoken views on social justice, echoed these sentiments, calling for a collective effort for accountability and promotion of economic policies that do not further marginalize the already disadvantaged populations.

The communique issued at the end of the meeting encapsulated the collective resolutions and commitments made by the faith leaders. It called for immediate debt relief for the most indebted countries, the establishment of transparent and accountable governance structures, and the adoption of economic policies that are inclusive and sustainable. The document also emphasized the necessity for continuous dialogue between faith leaders and policymakers to ensure that the voices of the marginalized are heard and addressed in economic planning.



Caritas Nigeria Quarter 4 Project Coordination meeting held in Abuja.

On 31 July, @caritasnigeria held its quarter 4 Project Coordination meeting, focusing on reviewing the progress of various project units. The meeting, which was chaired by our #ACCESS project Chief of Party, Dr. John Oko, had in attendance the heads of programs and leads of our Health, Emergency and Humanitarian Response, Protection and Migration, Research and Development, Knowledge Management, and Good Governance programs.

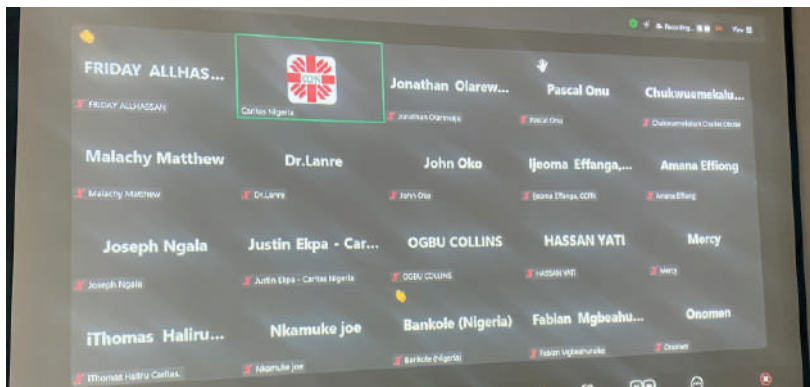
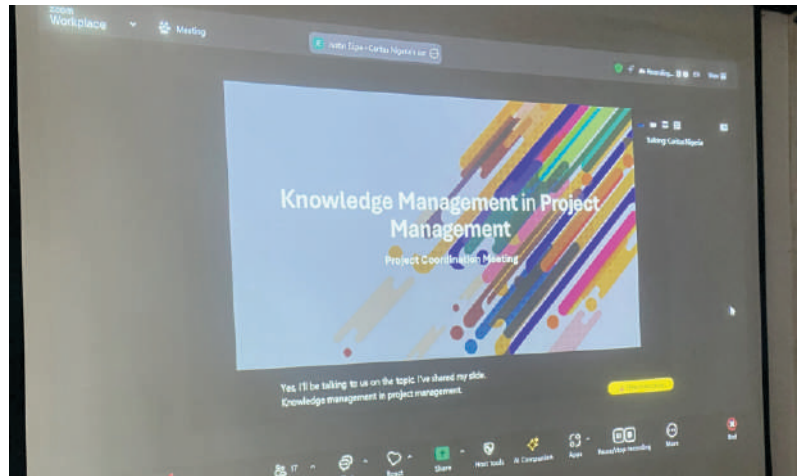
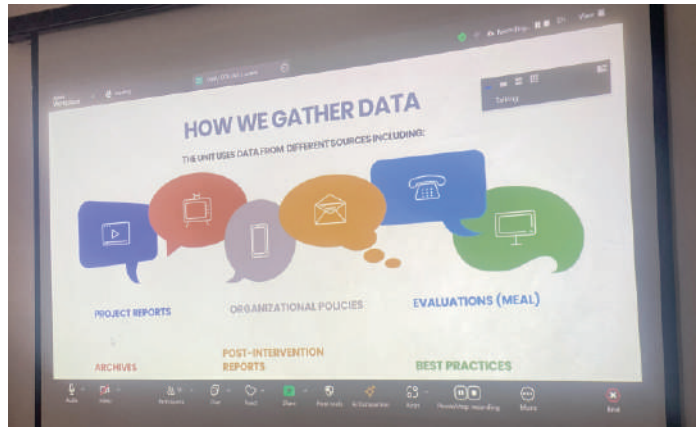
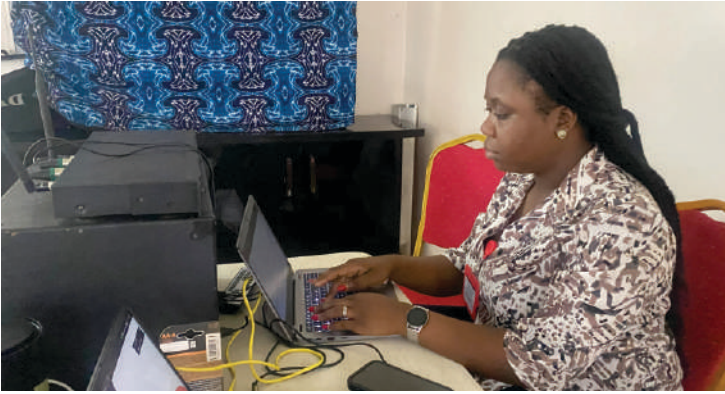
The meeting brought together 26 staff members who actively participated in evaluating the progress and challenges faced by the different units. This collaborative effort aimed to ensure that all projects are on track and aligned with the organization's overall goals, fostering an environment of shared learning and accountability.

In a closing remark, the Program Director of our #ACCESS project, @soxmana, emphasized that such meetings foster accountability and encourage motivation across all projects, contributing to a more cohesive and effective organization.

Photo Gallery



Photo Gallery





Caritas NIGERIA

presents a special

WEBINAR

The Use of AI-enabled Portable Digital X-Ray Machines for Integrated Screening of Tuberculosis, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Chronic Respiratory Diseases in Communities: Lessons Learned and New Opportunities



Dr Rena Fukunaga
US CDC



Dr Emperor Ubochioma
NTBLCP



Jai Bassi
Qure.AI



Okoye Chidimma
CCFN



Tuesday, July 30, 2024



12:00 PM – 1:15 PM (GMT+1)

Presenters

Moderator: Dr Rena Fukunaga - US CDC

Dr Emperor Ubochioma - NTBLCP

Topic: Integration of AI-enabled X-ray technology in TB screening in Nigeria

Jai Bassi - Director, Client Success
(Global Health) Qure.AI

Topic: Overview of AI technology, its benefits, and challenges

Okoye Chidimma - Project Coordinator,
INTEGRATE TB, CCFN

Topic: Integrated Community Screening
Using AI-Enabled X-Ray: Lessons
Learned and Success Stories

Panel discussion with experts from WHO Nigeria,
Stop TB partnership, and a consultant cardiologist.

Webinar Objectives

- ❖ Launch the New Field Manual
- ❖ Promote Technology Integration
- ❖ Share Experiences and Insights
- ❖ Encourage Global Collaboration



<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/d6df425d-ea2e-4c93-be52-1e72b7d86e48@ed343ffd-ab23-4c41-9da9-c2daf2fe9700>



Caritas Stylus

A Caritas Nigeria Newsletter

Laudato si'



*Plant a Tree Today...
Save Our Earth!*

 **Caritas**
NIGERIA ...fullness of life for all

 **Caritas Stylus**
A Caritas Nigeria NewsLetter