



Caritas Stylus

A Caritas Nigeria Newsletter



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**Caritas
NIGERIA**

...fullness of life for all

EDITORIAL

This edition of the Caritas Stylus, reminds us of Caritas Nigeria's dedication to its mission of advancing the wellbeing of all and promoting integral human development.

At Caritas Nigeria, our commitment to driving positive change remains unwavering, and we are excited to share the latest developments, and human-interest stories from the communities where we work. Through our interventions and activities, we have seen progress and the impact we have had on the lives of vulnerable groups. By engaging with different stakeholders and communities advocating for policies, collaborating with partners we continue to tackle issues around the humanitarian and development sphere across the communities we serve.

Caritas Nigeria's dedicated efforts in delivering services to vulnerable and underserved communities in hard to reach areas through its humanitarian and development interventions, continues to yield positive outcomes, and reinforcing our commitment to our mission. Despite the numerous challenges in Nigeria, compounded by insecurity in most communities where we work, this newsletter highlights the remarkable resilience and dedication of our staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and partners.

In another development, to review its strategic direction and improve organizational effectiveness, the Senior Management Team (SMT) of Caritas Nigeria, took a step back to hold its Annual Retreat with the theme *"Reimagining Who We Are in the Context of Our Practices and Programming"*. This was an important activity aimed at evaluating and realigning the organization's goal towards achieving its vision.

Finally, we believe that together, we can tackle the most pressing challenges, transforming lives and creating sustainable impact. We will continue to build on these successes, lessons learned from the challenges, and strive to enhance our impact. Join us in celebrating these achievements and gearing up for the impactful work ahead with optimism and a renewed commitment in ensuring *fullness of life for all*.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes,



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Strengthening Livelihoods: Caritas Nigeria's Poultry Farming Initiative in Badagry



been warmly received by the community, with beneficiaries expressing optimism about the positive impact on their livelihoods. The provision of these poultry farming inputs not only addresses immediate nutritional needs but also offers long-term economic benefits, helping families to achieve greater stability and self-reliance.



On 3 May, 2024, over 200 beneficiaries, enrolled in the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation-supported Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project, received livestock packages to kick start their poultry farming ventures. Each beneficiary was provided with a comprehensive package that included 10 noiler chicks, a drinker, a feeder, and half a bag of chicken feed. These resources are designed to support sustainable poultry farming, improve food security, and provide a steady source of income for the beneficiaries.

Caritas Nigeria and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation remain committed to supporting vulnerable communities through practical and sustainable agricultural initiatives. By enhancing local capacity and providing essential resources, these organizations are making significant strides in fostering sustainable development and improving the quality of life for individuals and households in Badagry and surrounding areas.

The distribution event marked a crucial step in promoting agricultural self-sufficiency and economic resilience in the region. The initiative has



Caritas Nigeria Senior Management Team holds Annual Retreat to Strengthen Processes and Programming



The Caritas Nigeria Senior Management Team (SMT) held their annual retreat in Lagos, focusing on the theme "Reimagining Who We Are in the Context of Our Practices and Programming." This cornerstone event is essential for strategic planning and reflective discussions that propel the organization's mission forward.



In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary/CEO, of Caritas Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD, extended heartfelt

gratitude to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for their unwavering support since the inception of Caritas Nigeria. He emphasized that this support is the backbone of Caritas Nigeria's mission to assist the needy and embodies the compassionate ethos of the Church. "The CBCN's steadfast support propels us towards achieving our core mission of service and compassion," Rev. Fr. Obodoechina stated.

The first day of the retreat was packed with significant activities designed to advance the organization's objectives. A major focus was the review of Caritas Nigeria's 7-year Strategic Plan (2023-2030), ensuring it remains aligned with the overarching goals of the organization. This strategic review is crucial as it allows the SMT to reflect on past achievements and challenges, and to adjust plans to better meet future goals.

Additionally, the team engaged in critical discussions about fostering new alliances and partnerships. These collaborations are deemed essential for the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. By building strong partnerships, Caritas Nigeria aims to enhance its reach and impact, ensuring that its programs are both sustainable and far-reaching.

As the retreat progressed, the SMT members delved into strategic deliberations aimed at boosting the effectiveness of Caritas Nigeria's operations. These discussions are integral to reimagining the organization's practices and programming. They focused on innovative approaches and best practices that could be adopted to better serve the community.



Enhancing Agricultural Productivity in Ekiti State



In a significant boost to local agriculture, Caritas Nigeria, in collaboration with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, launched the distribution of agricultural inputs to over 80 smallholder farmers in Ise-Orun Ekiti LGA, Ekiti State. This initiative is part of the Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project, now in its second year.

Prior to the distribution, beneficiaries participated in a capacity-strengthening program focused on climate-smart agriculture, received essential farming inputs including knapsack sprayers, cowpea, and maize seeds to improve their farming practices and overall productivity.

Key dignitaries graced the event, highlighting the significance of this initiative. Among the attendees were the Provincial Leader of St. Louis, the Chairman of Ise-Orun LGA, Royal Fathers including the Arinjale of Ise and the Oluwuro of Orun, the Baale of Afulo, Chief Jude Ibikunle, and other community members. Their presence underscored the collaborative effort and community engagement essential for the success of such initiatives.

This initiative is a testament to the power of collaborations and community involvement in fostering grassroots resilience, promoting self-sufficiency, and driving sustainable development. By focusing on rural areas where agriculture plays a pivotal role, Caritas Nigeria and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation are helping to build a more sustainable and vibrant future for these communities.



Photo Gallery



Empowering Religious Leaders to Combat Pediatric HIV in Enugu State



As part of our commitment to the Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project in Enugu State, our dedicated team, with support from our country office staff, recently conducted a crucial training session aimed at building the capacity of religious leaders and other key stakeholders. This 2-day training focused on leveraging the congregational approach to enhance pediatric HIV case-finding and bolster efforts in the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV.

The training emphasized the pivotal role of faith leaders in fostering community engagement and raising awareness to combat HIV stigma and discrimination. By mobilizing their congregations, these leaders can significantly increase HIV testing, treatment uptake, and retention in care, particularly among pregnant women in our supported service delivery facilities across Enugu State.

Participants included a diverse group of influential figures such as the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and Health Coordinators of Enugu Diocese, religious leaders from 12 Catholic parishes and 3 Anglican Churches, parish health advisors, and representatives from the Local Action Committee on AIDS, the State Agency for the Control of AIDS, and the National AIDS/STI Control Programme.

The training highlighted practical strategies for religious leaders to effectively communicate the importance of HIV testing and treatment within their communities. It also provided insights into reducing stigma and fostering a supportive environment for individuals affected by HIV.

This collaborative effort underscores the power of faith-based approaches in addressing public health challenges. By empowering religious leaders and other stakeholders, we are making significant strides towards eliminating pediatric HIV and ensuring that all children and mothers have access to the care and support they need.



Strategizing for Success: Caritas Nigeria's Implementation Science Team in Owerri for ACCESS Project Planning

Caritas Nigeria's Implementation Science Team is currently in Owerri, Imo State, one of our key ACCESS project locations, for a critical planning meeting focused on developing evaluation questions for the project. This meeting is a crucial step in ensuring the effectiveness and impact of the Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project.

The planning session brings together experts and stakeholders to formulate comprehensive evaluation questions that will guide the project's assessment and monitoring processes. These questions are designed to measure the project's success in improving HIV prevention, testing, treatment, and care services across the state.



Communications Week and World Communications Day: Exploring AI's Role in Evangelization and Social Development

In celebration of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, communications week and the forthcoming World Communications Day, the Communications Directorate of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, with support from Caritas Nigeria and other partners, hosted a compelling public lecture on May 8, 2024. The event, themed "Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelization and Social Development," gathered notable speakers and participants to discuss the transformative potential of AI in today's world.



The keynote address was delivered by Most Rev. Lucius Ugorji, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and Archbishop of Owerri. He underscored the importance of leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) for positive outcomes, emphasizing its potential in evangelization and the promotion of love and unity over hate and division. "We must use AI to advance our mission of spreading the gospel and fostering societal harmony," Archbishop Ugorji asserted.

A key highlight of the event was a dynamic panel discussion featuring distinguished experts, including our Executive Secretary/CEO, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD. The panelists delved into the multifaceted role of AI technologies in shaping human progress while stressing the need for ethical vigilance. They highlighted the dual nature of AI as both a powerful tool for development and a potential source of ethical dilemmas, advocating for its responsible use to serve the common good.

The event drew a diverse audience, including His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Emeritus Archbishop of Abuja, and Most Rev. David Ajang, Bishop of Lafia Diocese and Bishop Chairman of the CSN Communication Directorate. Priests, religious members, and representatives from Catholic secondary and tertiary institutions in the Abuja Archdiocese also participated, reflecting the broad interest and engagement with the topic.

This gathering not only celebrated the CBCN Communications Week and World Communications Day but also served as a platform to critically examine the intersection of technology, faith, and social development. It reaffirmed the Church's commitment to utilizing AI as a force for good, driving forward the mission of evangelization and societal advancement.



— Photo Gallery —



Empowering the Sisters of Saint Louis: Comprehensive Training in Akure

In a bid to enhance the participants' capabilities in key areas critical for organizational success, Caritas Nigeria facilitated an extensive training session for the Sisters of Saint Louis Congregation, from April 29 through May 4, 2024 in Akure, Ondo State, as part of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation-supported Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project.

With 30 participants in attendance, the training focused on four main areas: Resource Mobilization, Advocacy Strategies, Stakeholder Engagement, and Policy Comprehension. Each session was tailored to provide the participants with the essential knowledge and skills needed to effectively address challenges and excel in their roles within the congregation, which is a valued partner in the B-SLiC project.

The training was a resounding success, providing the Sisters of Saint Louis with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in their roles. This enhanced capacity will significantly contribute to the overall goals of the B-SLiC project, fostering sustainable development and vibrant communities.



Strengthening JDPC Directors with Essential Skills in Abuja

Caritas Nigeria, committed to advancing the well-being of all through participatory measures, organized an intensive three-day training session for newly appointed Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Directors from May 8 to 10, 2024, in Abuja. This initiative aimed to equip the directors with the essential skills needed to effectively implement humanitarian and development programs in their respective dioceses.

The training brought together 16 dedicated participants and covered a comprehensive curriculum, including Proposal Writing, Report Composition, Grant Management, Effective Advocacy Methodologies, and a review of Catholic Social Teaching. Each session was designed to ensure that the directors are well-prepared to drive positive change at the grassroots level.



Caritas Nigeria Supports JDPC's Philanthropy and Social Change Initiatives



In Lagos State, our Deputy Executive Secretary (DES), Rev. Fr. Peter Audu, attended the Awards and Fundraising Dinner organized by the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos. The prestigious event, held under the theme "Philanthropy and the Social Dynamics of Change," was graced by the Archbishop of Lagos and our Board Chairman, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins.

The evening featured in-depth discussions on how strategic philanthropy can drive lasting social impact. Speakers highlighted the importance of targeted philanthropic efforts in fostering community development and

addressing societal challenges. Attendees, moved by the cause, donated generously to support the JDPC's programs, underscoring their commitment to social transformation.

In recognition of their significant contributions to community development, several individuals and organizations were honored during the event. These awards celebrated their dedication and impactful work in advancing justice, peace, and human dignity.

Rev. Fr. Peter Audu, representing our Executive Secretary/CEO, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD, expressed Caritas Nigeria's ongoing commitment to community development and our role in catalyzing positive social change through strategic partnerships. His presence at the event reaffirmed our support for the JDPC and its mission to create a more just and equitable society.

The Awards and Fundraising Dinner was a resounding success, highlighting the power of philanthropy and collaborative efforts in driving social progress. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the JDPC and other stakeholders to build stronger, more resilient communities.



Enhancing Collaboration with Imo State Health Sector



On May 10, 2024, the Caritas Nigeria team in Imo State, led by State Team Lead Dr. Jonathan Olarewaju, paid an important advocacy visit to Dr. Prosper Success Ohayagha, the State Commissioner of Health, who was recently reappointed for a second term. This visit aimed to further improve collaboration between Caritas Nigeria and the Government of Nigeria in the health sector.

During the visit, our team highlighted the benefits of the ongoing partnership between the state government and Caritas Nigeria. The reappointment of Dr. Ohayagha was seen as a testament to the significant progress made in the health sector under his leadership, which has been characterized by effective collaboration, numerous achievements, and an open-door policy.

Dr. Ohayagha praised Caritas Nigeria for its substantial contributions to community health in the region. He expressed his continued commitment to supporting the implementation of The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)-funded ACCESS project in the state. This project focuses on enhancing HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care services, significantly impacting community health outcomes.



Boosting Agricultural Productivity in Lagos State Communities



As part of the Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project strategic objectives, more than 3,000 farmers, received essential agricultural inputs, including insecticide/pesticide sprayers and high-quality seedlings, in Ijede (Ikorodu LGA) and Ibayeiku (Badagry LGA) communities in Lagos State. These resources are expected to significantly improve farm yields, contributing to the overall agricultural development of the communities.

With this initiative, farmers are expected to significantly boost to their farming efforts through the transformative agricultural initiatives funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Implemented under the Building

Sustainable Livelihoods for Vibrant Communities (B-SLiC) project by Caritas Nigeria, these interventions are designed to enhance agricultural development, food productivity, and economic resilience in the region.

The distribution event was attended by key stakeholders, underscoring the importance of this initiative. The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos was represented by Rev. Fr. Bassey O. Okoro, while Dr. Oluwarotimi Omotola, the Special Adviser to the Governor of Lagos State on Agriculture, also graced the occasion. Other notable attendees included Royal Fathers and representatives from various government ministries, such as Agriculture and Food Security, Local Government and Community Affairs, Youth and Social Development, and Women Affairs.

This collaborative effort highlights the commitment of Caritas Nigeria and its partners to support local farmers and drive sustainable agricultural practices. By equipping farmers with the necessary tools and resources, we aim to foster vibrant communities that thrive on enhanced food security and economic stability.



Strengthening TB Diagnostic and Treatment Services: Caritas Nigeria's Workshop in Enugu State



Our team in Enugu State recently conducted a three-day workshop focused on Tuberculosis (TB) Laboratory Interface Continuous Improvement. This initiative aimed to bolster the knowledge and understanding of healthcare workers on continuous quality improvement and the TB diagnostic cascade, enhancing our TB treatment services in the state.

The step-down training was attended by frontline workers from several Caritas Nigeria-supported service delivery facilities, including Udi General Hospital, Asata Poly Clinic, Ntasi Obi Specialist Hospital, Faith Foundation Mission Hospital Nsukka, and General Hospital Agbani. Participants were selected from the technical departments of these facilities, encompassing Laboratory, Quality Improvement, and Strategic Information sectors.

During the workshop, participants received advanced training in effective work practices essential for implementing the Tuberculosis Laboratory Interface Continuous Improvement

strategy. This approach is crucial for improving the uptake of HIV/TB treatment under the PEPFAR-funded ACCESS project. The training emphasized the importance of integrating quality improvement measures and effective diagnostic techniques to enhance patient outcomes and streamline TB treatment services.

The workshop succeeded in significantly enhancing the participants' skills and knowledge, preparing them to implement best practices in their respective facilities. This initiative underscores Caritas Nigeria's commitment to improving healthcare delivery and combating TB and HIV in Enugu State through continuous education and capacity building.



Curbing Pediatric HIV in Enugu State



As part of our ongoing efforts to curb pediatric HIV and prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Enugu State, the Caritas Nigeria team, implementing the Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) Project, organized a series of "Baby Shower" events. These activities are funded by The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The events took place at St. Joseph Catholic Church Ugwuogo, Nike, and St. Bridget Catholic Church, Asata, Enugu State. Across both locations, a total of 478 individuals, including expectant mothers, men, and children, benefitted from various health services provided by our team. These services included HIV testing and counselling, blood pressure checks, and blood sugar screening.

In addition to these health checks, the Caritas Nigeria team conducted sensitization sessions focusing on health and wellness, particularly targeting women. Participants received valuable insights into HIV risk behaviors that impact safe childbirth and the benefits of breastfeeding. The team emphasized the importance of early testing and treatment to ensure healthy outcomes for both mothers and their babies.

Positive clients identified during the events were promptly enrolled for treatment at the nearest Caritas Nigeria-supported service delivery facilities. This proactive approach aims to curb the perennial transmission of HIV and promote safer childbirth practices.

These Baby Shower events reflect Caritas Nigeria's commitment to enhancing maternal and child health through community engagement and targeted health interventions. By providing comprehensive healthcare services and education, we strive to create healthier communities and prevent the spread of HIV.



Caritas Nigeria Enhances Support for the Boy Child Across Communities

In our continuous effort to support the well-being of the boy child in the communities we serve, Caritas Nigeria is ramping up initiatives to provide boys with unlimited access to essential services. Recognizing the importance of nurturing the boy child, we are dedicated to offering comprehensive support in health, education, and psychosocial interventions, ensuring that boys can thrive and live happily.

Our initiatives are designed to address the unique challenges faced by boys, providing them with the resources and opportunities needed for their holistic development. By focusing on health services, we aim to promote physical and mental well-being, ensuring that boys have access to medical care, nutrition, and wellness programs. Educational support is equally critical, as we strive to offer quality education and learning opportunities that empower boys to achieve their full potential.



Psychosocial interventions form a vital part of our efforts, helping boys develop resilience, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence. These programs include counseling, mentorship, and recreational activities that foster a positive environment for personal growth and development.

As we mark the International Day of the Boy Child, Caritas Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to creating a supportive and nurturing environment for boys. We believe that by investing in their health, education, and psychosocial well-being, we can build a brighter future for the boy child and, in turn, for our communities.



Strengthening Community and School-Based Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking



Caritas Nigeria, in collaboration with UNHCR Nigeria, is reinforcing community participation and engagement as key strategies in the fight against human trafficking. During a recent meeting with the Community Watch Group (CWG) members in Benin City on May 15, 2024, several critical trends in trafficking were discussed. These included the disturbing practice of holding victims hostage in transit countries until they recruit replacements, the impact of parental neglect on children's vulnerability to trafficking, and the positive effects of awareness campaigns in enhancing community vigilance.

The CWG, comprising representatives from various community stakeholder groups, plays an essential role in raising awareness and mobilizing efforts to tackle these challenges. Their involvement is crucial in educating community members and fostering a united front against human trafficking.

Continuing these efforts, on May 16, 2024, our Anti-Human Trafficking team in Edo State conducted a school-based awareness campaign at Ighile Group of Schools in Benin City. This initiative, part of the UNHCR-funded Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) and Mixed Movement project, aimed to educate students about the different forms of human trafficking, including sex work, forced marriage, and labor exploitation.

During the session, approximately 60 students were taught to recognize warning signs and deceptive tactics used by traffickers, especially online recruitment and enticing offers. They were encouraged to be vigilant and reject suspicious proposals. The campaign also addressed negative character traits that could increase their vulnerability to traffickers, promoting self-awareness and resilience among the youth.

These combined efforts of community and school-based initiatives underscore Caritas Nigeria's commitment to combating human trafficking through education, awareness, and community engagement. By empowering individuals with knowledge and fostering proactive communities, we aim to create a safer environment for all.



OVC Community of Practice Review Meets in Abia State

Caritas Nigeria State office in Abia, recently convened its quarterly Orphans and Vulnerable Children's (OVC) Community of Practice Review Meeting. This gathering brought together various networks and stakeholders collaborating with Caritas Nigeria to implement the PEPFAR-funded Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project.



Key thematic areas such as health, education, protection, and economic stability were thoroughly addressed. The 'Healthy' domain focused on improving enrollment and treatment monitoring for children and adolescents living with HIV, highlighting efforts to enhance health outcomes. In the 'Schooled' domain, emphasis was placed on consolidating educational support initiatives to ensure sustained academic progress for OVC.

The meeting commenced with goodwill messages from representatives of the Government of Nigeria (GoN) and key partners. This was followed by a comprehensive presentation on the state's quarter 2 (Q2) progress report, providing insights into the project's advancements. Discussions also included an overview of the Q2 FY24 financial liquidation status, emphasizing transparency in resource management.

The 'Safe' domain discussions underscored the success of protection and gender interventions, with plans to further enhance these outcomes. Updates on the ACCESS project's Household Economic Strengthening (HES) interventions were also shared, underscoring efforts to achieve economic stability for OVC households. Additionally, cross-cutting issues such as quality case management and the dynamics of FY24 program implementation were thoroughly reviewed.



U.S. CDC Delegation Visits ACCESS Project location to Strengthen HIV Care

Caritas Nigeria's Enugu field office recently welcomed a delegation from the United States of America Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC), Nigeria office, for a comprehensive 5-day visit. The delegation met with Program Director - Dr. Amana Effiong, who leads the technical team of the PEPFAR-funded Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project, along with the State Team Lead, key Unit Leads, and other stakeholders.



The purpose of the visit was to ascertain the actual number of patients on treatment and to evaluate the achievements recorded over the past two years. Key areas of interest included; assessing the approaches implemented to strengthen the Community Biometric Program and ensuring overall program compliance, to ensure data quality, improve antiretroviral therapy and OVC services provided by Caritas Nigeria-supported service delivery facilities and community-based organizations (CBOs).

During their visit, the delegation toured several facilities, including the Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Uwani Cottage Hospital, Annunciation Specialist Hospital in Emene, and two CBOs: Twinning Support for Health Initiative and the Network of People Against Child Abuse and Neglect.

Following the site visits, the delegation and Caritas Nigeria team held a roundtable meeting to discuss the outcomes of the visits. They developed a remediation plan to address and correct specific issues and outlined steps to fix identified gaps. This collaborative effort underscores the commitment to enhancing the quality of HIV care and services, ensuring better health outcomes for communities in Enugu.

Make It Possible, on the SCALE Project

To foster stronger collaborations and mutual understanding, Caritas Nigeria hosted a familiarization meeting on the 16th of May, with key leaders from the Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement (SCALE) project, implemented by Palladium: Make It Possible. This important gathering provided a platform for Caritas Nigeria to share detailed information on the progress and achievements of the SCALE project, as well as to discuss the challenges encountered and strategies for overcoming them.

Our Executive Secretary/CEO, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, and Chief of Party, Dr. John Oko, welcomed the SCALE delegation, highlighting the significant milestones and ongoing efforts in the project. They emphasized the importance of collaboration and support from all stakeholders involved to enhance the project's impact.



The SCALE project delegation included Project Director Dr. Omar Zaman Sayedi, Deputy Chief of Party Bosede Eitokpah, and Social Protector and Inclusion Advisor Eric Umoru. During the meeting, the SCALE team provided comprehensive updates on their project's implementation, offering valuable insights into current activities and plans. This exchange of information was invaluable for aligning efforts and ensuring the successful continuation of the project.



Orientation for the New OVC Desk Assistants to Enhance HIV Treatment and Enrollment

In a concerted effort to enhance Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) treatment collaboration and contribute significantly to HIV epidemic control in Imo State, our OVC team in Owerri organized a 2-day orientation session at our field office for newly engaged facility OVC desk assistants.

This orientation aimed to equip the new staff with the essential technical knowledge and skills required to close the treatment gap among pediatrics and adolescents living with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, it focused on improving the enrollment of Children and Adolescents Living with HIV (CALHIV) in OVC services.



The new hires participated actively in the comprehensive sessions, gaining valuable insights into the principles and best practices of OVC case management and service provision. These principles are crucial for effectively supporting beneficiaries currently receiving assistance through The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)-funded Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project.

Through interactive discussions and hands-on training, the new OVC desk assistants learned how to implement and manage OVC services efficiently, ensuring that CALHIV receive the care and support they need. The orientation also emphasized the importance of integrating OVC services with other health initiatives to foster a holistic approach to HIV treatment and care.

This initiative underscores our commitment to strengthening the capabilities of our team members and improving the quality of care provided to vulnerable children and adolescents affected by HIV. By empowering our new staff with the necessary skills and knowledge, we aim to make significant strides in closing the treatment gap and enhancing the well-being of OVCs in Imo State.



Strengthening Pharmacy and Supply Chain Management in Imo

To fortify our pharmacy and supply chain management services under The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and CDC-funded ACCESS project, our team in Imo State organized a pivotal 5-day training session on the management of HIV/AIDS commodities. Held from May 13 to 17, 2024, this initiative was essential to ensure the continuous availability and effective distribution of life-saving medications, while also managing procurement and storage to enhance overall public health.



The capacity-building exercise covered critical areas such as commodity security, the purpose and implementation of logistics systems, the use of standard operating procedure manuals, inventory control maximization, and the tracking of antiretroviral drugs and medications for opportunistic infections. By adopting best practices in storage and inventory management, healthcare workers can minimize wastage of HIV/AIDS commodities, optimize resource use, and improve treatment adherence and outcomes for HIV patients.

The training was attended by pharmacy focal persons from Caritas Nigeria-supported comprehensive care treatment sites, one-stop shops, Government of Nigeria representatives, and the logistics management coordination unit. Participants gained advanced skills in managing inventory levels, which will help reduce stock-outs and overstock situations, ensuring that clients in care consistently receive the medications they need.



By equipping healthcare workers with enhanced knowledge and practical tools, this training supports the overarching goal of contributing to significant public health improvements. Attendees are now better prepared to implement efficient inventory management strategies, thereby ensuring a consistent supply of essential HIV/AIDS medications across our supported service delivery facilities.

This initiative underscores our commitment to strengthening health systems and improving the quality of care for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Through continuous education and capacity building, we aim to sustain the progress made in the fight against HIV and contribute to the overall well-being of the communities we serve.



Promoting Pediatric HIV Case-Finding through Baby Shower Outreach

On May 19, our Imo State office organized a 'Baby Shower' outreach at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Nkwoji Local Government Area. This innovative strategy is part of our ongoing efforts to increase pediatric HIV case-finding and prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

The event commenced with the registration and sensitization of pregnant women attending the church. Caritas Nigeria professionals provided valuable insights into several critical areas, including the benefits of good nutrition practices, conditions that could complicate pregnancy such as HIV infection, and the importance of routine HIV testing for pregnant women and their partners.

Throughout the session, attendees received comprehensive information on maintaining a healthy pregnancy and the significance of early HIV detection and treatment. The healthcare team highlighted the need for regular HIV testing to ensure timely intervention and reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission.

In addition to the educational component, clients with minor ailments were provided with appropriate pharmaceutical drugs. Furthermore, expectant mothers were gifted 'Mama Packs' – kits containing essential neonatal items to support them as they prepare for childbirth.



This outreach is a testament to our commitment to improving maternal and child health in the communities we serve. By combining education, health services, and practical support, we aim to ensure healthier pregnancies and reduce the incidence of pediatric HIV.



Through initiatives like the 'Baby Shower' outreach, we continue to foster a supportive environment for pregnant women, encouraging them to take proactive steps towards their health and the health of their unborn children. Our efforts are aligned with the broader goal of preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and enhancing the well-being of families in Imo State.



Caritas Nigeria Strengthens HIV Management Skills through Intensive Workshop in Enugu



their capabilities in managing HIV infections across our supported health facilities.

Throughout the workshop, interactive sessions allowed participants to apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, fostering a deeper understanding of effective HIV management strategies. By the end of the training, attendees were well-equipped to implement improved HIV care practices, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes across our supported facilities.

This workshop underscores Caritas Nigeria's dedication to continuous professional development and excellence in HIV care. By equipping our healthcare staff with advanced skills and knowledge, we aim to optimize HIV treatment and management, contributing significantly to the overarching goal of epidemic control and enhanced patient care within our ACCESS project states.

Caritas Nigeria's ACCESS Program Director, Dr. Amana Effiong, along with Care & Treatment backstops from our country office in Abuja, conducted a rigorous 5-day workshop, from May 13 to 17, 2024, at our Enugu office. The training session was attended by Care & Treatment staff from Abia, Imo, and Enugu States, focusing on advancing



Celebrating Father's Day with Sportsmanship and Team Spirit

To kick off the Father's Day celebrations at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), the male staff of the agencies of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) organized an invigorating football match on May 23. This event was aimed at energizing and entertaining the CSN community through a spirited outdoor game.



The match featured two dynamic teams representing the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Zacharia Samjumi, and the Executive Secretary/CEO of Caritas Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD. Demonstrating commendable sportsmanship, the friendly tournament concluded with a narrow 1-0 victory for Fr. Obodoechina's team.

Adding to the excitement of the game were notable participants, including the Secretary of the Migration Unit of the CSN, Rev. Fr. Austin Akhogba, and a



talented female staff footballer, Ngozi Chukwu, whose skills brought an extra layer of enthusiasm and color to the match.

This friendly football tournament was more than just a recreational activity; it played a significant role in enhancing the mental and physical health of the participants. It also fostered social interactions and teamwork among the staff. Enthusiastic fans from across the Secretariat showed unwavering support, cheering both teams on until the final whistle.

The event highlighted the importance of camaraderie and physical activity within the workplace, setting a positive tone for the upcoming Father's Day celebrations. It was a delightful demonstration of unity, fun, and the vibrant spirit of the CBCN community.



Photo Gallery



Caritas Nigeria Launches 2024 Life Skills Program in Borno State



Caritas Nigeria, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), is proud to announce the launch of the 2024 Life Skills program in Borno State, building upon the successes of Financial Year 2023 (FY23). This transformative initiative, funded by UNHCR, aims to uplift and empower beneficiaries across key locations including Bama, Banki, Monguno, and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and sustainable development.

In 2023, a comprehensive assessment was conducted to identify individuals who would benefit most from the program. Following meticulous selection criteria, 200 participants were chosen, comprising 150 adolescent boys and girls, alongside 50 caregivers, representing diverse communities within the project areas. These individuals were selected based on their potential to thrive and contribute positively to their communities.

The core objective of the 2024 Life Skills program is to equip beneficiaries with practical and context-specific skills that enable them to realize their potential and make informed decisions. Through a series of tailored training sessions, participants are empowered to develop essential life skills, gain control over their behavior, and embark on a path toward self-sufficiency.

The training curriculum covers a range of valuable skills, including pasta production, soap making, crafting men's local caps, and manufacturing petroleum jelly. These skills are carefully selected to align with the needs and opportunities identified within the project locations, ensuring relevance and effectiveness.

By imparting these essential life skills, Caritas Nigeria and UNHCR Nigeria are empowering beneficiaries to take control of their lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Beyond skill acquisition, the program instills a sense of empowerment and self-confidence, laying the groundwork for sustainable development and improved quality of life in Borno State.

Through collaborative efforts and targeted interventions, Caritas Nigeria and UNHCR Nigeria are committed to creating pathways to prosperity, resilience, and hope for vulnerable populations in Borno State, driving positive change and building a brighter future for all.

Celebrating Fatherhood and Male Contributions



The Father's Day celebration at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) culminated in a memorable grand finale, highlighting the significance of fatherhood and the invaluable contributions of men within the Catholic community. The event, held in honor of male staff working across agencies of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), commenced with a solemn Holy Mass officiated by Rev. Fr. Austin Akhogba, the Secretary of the Migration Unit of the CSN.

During the Mass, Fr. Akhogba delivered a heartfelt sermon, underscoring the pivotal role of men in the family, workplace, and society at large. His message resonated with attendees, emphasizing the importance of male leadership and the nurturing of strong family bonds.

Following the Mass, the festivities continued with a vibrant feast, where Dr. Olanrewaju Olayiwola, Associate Director of Caritas Nigeria's ACCESS Project's Care and Treatment Unit, delivered an insightful health talk. Dr. Olayiwola emphasized the significance of prioritizing health checks amidst busy work schedules, promoting a culture of wellness and self-care among staff members.

The celebration also featured joyous moments of cake-cutting and spirited competition among the agencies, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie within the CSN community. Through lively interactions and shared experiences, attendees bonded and celebrated the essence of fatherhood and male leadership.

As the day concluded, participants departed with a renewed sense of appreciation for the male figures in their lives and a deepened understanding of the importance of their roles within the Catholic community. The Father's Day celebration served as a poignant reminder of the enduring values of love, sacrifice, and unity, inspiring all to continue their journey of service and leadership with dedication and joy.



Empowering Healthcare Workers for Effective Management of Commodities



Caritas Nigeria's regional office in Enugu State took proactive steps to bolster the management of pharmaceutical commodities and enhance pharmaceutical care services on the PEPFAR-funded ACCESS project. From May 17 through 21, 2024, the office organized a comprehensive 5-day training program on Commodities Management and Pharmaceutical Care.

The workshop, attended by key healthcare workers from 25 comprehensive Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) facilities and the Logistics Management Coordinating Unit in the

state, aimed to strengthen their capacities in pharmaceutical care and commodities management. Participants were equipped with essential knowledge and skills essential for safeguarding pharmaceutical supplies, thereby preventing stockouts and minimizing wastage.

The training covered various aspects of commodities management, including procurement processes, storage protocols, distribution mechanisms, and effective inventory management strategies. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of comprehensive counselling for individuals receiving Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy and other essential medications.

By the conclusion of the capacity-building exercise, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies involved in ensuring commodity security within healthcare facilities. They acquired practical skills and tools necessary for efficient procurement, storage, and distribution of pharmaceutical supplies, thereby contributing to the uninterrupted provision of life-saving medications to individuals living with HIV/AIDS.



Celebrating Children's Day: Caritas Nigeria's Heartwarming Gesture in Abia State



In a heartwarming celebration of Children's Day, Caritas Nigeria's team in Abia State joined hands with the state government to commemorate the special occasion. The event, held in recognition of the invaluable contribution of children to humanity, aimed to create a memorable and enjoyable experience for the youngsters.

The festivities featured a plethora of engaging activities tailored to delight the young participants. Children were treated to captivating performances, including march past, drama presentations, cultural dances, and spirited debates, showcasing their talents and creativity to the delight of the audience. To add an extra touch of joy to the occasion, Caritas Nigeria generously donated 200 branded water bottles to the children gathered at the Umuahia Stadium. This thoughtful gesture was motivated by the desire to ensure the hydration needs of the children, especially during outdoor activities, were met, enhancing their comfort and enjoyment throughout the day.

The Abia State Government, represented by the Ministry of Vulnerable Households and Education, expressed appreciation for Caritas Nigeria's active participation in the commemorative events. The government lauded the organization's commitment to children's welfare, recognizing it as a shining example of love, care, and positive influence within the community.

The collaborative effort between Caritas Nigeria and the Abia State Government not only provided a platform for celebrating children but also underscored the importance of collective action in promoting their well-being. Through meaningful engagements and acts of kindness, the event left a lasting impression, fostering a sense of joy, inclusivity, and appreciation for the younger generation.



Improving Maternal Health in Communities



Caritas Nigeria continues to make significant strides in improving maternal health outcomes in Abia State through its innovative Baby Shower program. This initiative, characterized by a community-centric approach, aims to enhance the well-being of both children and expectant mothers by providing essential support and resources.

In a recent event held at the Assemblies of God Church in Amaugwu Osisioma Ngwa, Aba, Caritas Nigeria's team organized a Baby Shower outreach where 70 expectant mothers were the honored recipients of 'Mama Packs,' thoughtfully curated kits containing essential items for childbirth. Additionally, the outreach provided an invaluable opportunity for the women to access HIV testing and counselling services, prioritizing their health and well-being.

The impact of the Baby Shower program was palpable as beneficiaries expressed heartfelt appreciation for the support received. Through prayers and words of gratitude, the expectant mothers conveyed their deep gratitude to Caritas Nigeria and its partners, including The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and CDC, for their unwavering commitment to maternal and child health.

The successful execution of the Baby Shower program underscores Caritas Nigeria's dedication to addressing healthcare challenges, particularly among vulnerable populations. By fostering collaborative community engagement and leveraging partnerships, the organization is making meaningful strides in improving access to essential healthcare services for pregnant women, thereby mitigating the economic and social obstacles they often face.

The Baby Shower program exemplifies Caritas Nigeria's steadfast commitment to promoting maternal and child health, one community at a time. Through compassionate outreach and tangible support, the organization continues to uplift and empower expectant mothers, nurturing a healthier and more resilient future for families in Abia State.



Boosting HIV Care Delivery through Quality Improvement



Caritas Nigeria recently organized a comprehensive Quality Improvement workshop across its regional offices in Abia, Enugu, and Imo States. This workshop brought together over 100 adhoc staff from the regional offices, focusing on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of their programs.

The primary aim of the workshop was to optimize HIV care delivery, enhance patient tracking outcomes, and ensure the long-term sustainability of HIV programs. Participants delved into the concept of patient retention and explored various factors affecting retention, all in the pursuit of improving data quality for the ACCESS project.

Our Program Director ACCESS project, Dr. Amana Effiong, in a welcome address at one of the training in Enugu state, addressed the participants, emphasizing the critical need for quality data across all levels of care. He encouraged attendees to fully engage with the workshop content and apply the insights gained to

their respective facilities, aiming for significant improvements in HIV treatment and care.

The training sessions were focused on implementing quality improvement processes at service delivery facilities. Participants were equipped with basic quality improvement tools, an understanding of the components of various Quality Improvement (QI) monthly report templates, and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT). Facilitators emphasized the practical application of CQI principles, guiding participants through the steps of identifying and analyzing quality issues within their workflows.



This initiative underscores Caritas Nigeria's commitment to enhancing healthcare delivery through continuous education and capacity building. By equipping healthcare workers with the necessary tools and knowledge, we strive to achieve excellence in HIV care and ensure better health outcomes for the communities we serve.



Laudato si'



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