



Caritas Stylus

A Caritas Nigeria Newsletter



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Caritas Day 2024: Celebrating Compassion and Service Across Nigeria

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

We are excited to connect with you again through Caritas Stylus!

Caritas Nigeria continues to broaden its impact, tackling humanitarian and development challenges through strategic partnerships and innovative programs, further strengthening donor trust and support. Within the month, our organization was honoured with the prestigious Citi Foundation 2024 Global Innovation Challenge grant. We are excited to partner with Citi Foundation to provide secure, dignified housing for displaced and marginalized populations in Adamawa and Bayelsa States, as well as support their livelihoods.

In a separate collaboration with the German Federal Foreign Office, Caritas Nigeria and the JDPC launched a financial aid program in Borno State to assist victims of the Lake Chad crisis. Through the Food Security and Humanitarian Protection project, local vendors are facilitating cash transfers to vulnerable populations, offering critical relief to those in crisis-affected areas.

Our celebration of our annual Caritas Day on September 22 demonstrated Caritas Nigeria's commitment to inspiring and uplifting communities across Nigeria, demonstrating a deep commitment to compassion, service, and sustainable development. Moreover, Caritas Nigeria remains committed to internal capacity building, as evidenced by a Program Management Workshop held in Enugu. This workshop focused on enhancing leadership and aligning team goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Likewise, we had the pleasure of co-hosting the Annual General Meeting of the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) in Abuja.

Additionally, Caritas Nigeria's leadership has been actively engaging with state governments to strengthen healthcare delivery. Advocacy visits to Abia and Imo State leadership highlighted the ongoing success of the U.S. PEPFAR-funded ACCESS project, which provides life-saving HIV treatment and care services. These visits reinforced Caritas Nigeria's dedication to expanding healthcare access and building sustainable partnerships with state governments.

On the international stage, Caritas Nigeria Executive Leadership participated in the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress in Ecuador. This gathering celebrated the global Catholic community's unity and faith, emphasizing themes of solidarity and evangelization.

On the global scene still, Caritas Nigeria is enthusiastically looking forward to the 9th Implementation Science Conference, which it is co-hosting with the Nigeria Implementation Science Alliance (NISA) and the Global Implementation Society (GIS), from November 14 – 16, 2024 in Abuja. Organized under the theme, "Driving Change: Everyday Implementation", the conference will gather healthcare professionals and researchers to engage in impactful discussions that will foster improved health outcomes.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work in September!

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From the Executive Secretary/CEO's Desk

Still At Their Service Posts!

1. In Nigeria, today the times are difficult. The average standard of living has gone down drastically. There is hunger and anger in the land. People are not happy. Things seem to have fallen apart. Life seems to be at its lowest ebb. Everybody seems to be complaining about one thing or the other. The Nigerian political and socio-economic situation is sick and malnourished with systemic corruption and executive impunity. One cannot describe what the matter is with the government of the day. It is simply unbearable, the situation of chaos, insecurity, conflicts and general man's inhumanity to man. The situation is indeed unnerving. Yet life goes on.
2. In the light of the foregoing and despite its reality, Caritas Nigeria and her ebullient Staff are still found busy at their duty posts, toiling and moiling for the good of others. The month of September each year brings the fiscal year for Caritas Nigeria to an end. A new year of life and activities begins in October each year. The activities of the Organization till the end of September 2024, have been one of total commitment to the overall well-being of the beneficiaries of the various services being offered by Caritas Nigeria in the 15 states of her intervention across the 36 states of the federation.
3. It is therefore heartening to know that such a group of professionals exist at the corners of our states, standing under the sunshine and the rainfall, serving without counting the costs, but being satisfied with the work they do, work that impacts on the life of the poor and the most vulnerable, living at the fringe of society. That is the reward, that the poor and the neediest are served in dignity and peace. We are deeply grateful to our numerous funders and donors for their unwavering support and commitment to the course of the disadvantaged in our midst.
4. At such a trying time as what we have currently, the tendency is to resign to fate and do nothing. There is a tendency to believe that nothing works, and nothing can be done to improve on the statuesque. But that is not the conviction of Caritas Nigeria and her staff. The opposite is true. At such moments of hopelessness, hope is alive among us. We carry on with our duties to ensure that life goes on. We do not throw away the baby with the bath water. Rather we stand straight at our duty posts, doing the little we can do and ensuring that our work impacts positively on the lives of others.
5. We invite you, good readers, and friends of Caritas Nigeria, to remain resilient in all your good undertakings, especially those services that would have wholesome outcomes on the lives of people around us. It is urgent today to remain at our duty posts, despite the extreme provocations and oddities in our society today, arising from poor governance and corruption among the powers that are. We must not allow the ineptitude of the government of the day to dampen our zeal to work for the common good of society. We would have changed the scenario, restored hope and confidence in our common humanity, if we go on doing our work for the good of others, and by remaining at our duty posts, in season and out of season.

Shalom



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

The Citi Foundation Awards Caritas Nigeria the 2024 Global Innovation Challenge Grant

On 24th September, 2024, Caritas Nigeria was selected as one of fifty (50) global recipients of the Citi Foundation's prestigious 2024 Global Innovation Challenge grant. This award recognizes our organization's efforts to address homelessness of vulnerable groups and will support Citi Foundation's newly launched "Integrative Solutions for Humanitarian Housing Support" project.

Spanning from 1st October, 2024 through 29th September, 2026, the project aims to provide secure, dignified, and sustainable housing solutions for

vulnerable populations across Nigeria, by integrating shelter initiatives with Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WaSH), livelihoods, and durable solutions to displacement. The project will promote self-reliance among internally displaced persons and marginalized communities in Adamawa and Bayelsa States through the integration of the Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) initiative, ultimately empowering low-income families to secure stable housing and build a path toward long-term financial resilience.

2024 Global Innovation Challenge Grantee

Addressing Homelessness

Citi Foundation



Learn more at citifoundation.com/challenge



The German Government Partners with Caritas Nigeria and the JDPC to Support Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis



Before the intervention, our team convened a meeting where forty-six (46) Point of Sale (POS) vendors from Magumeri, Kaga, and Pulka local government areas (LGAs) were briefed on the rollout of a cash transfer program designed to address food insecurity. This initiative is designed to offer timely financial relief to the most affected populations through the POS vendors, who will facilitate the direct delivery of funds directly to recipients in need.

The briefings were held across multiple locations, including Ngamdu's Model Secondary School in Kaga LGA, Magumeri Islamiya School, and the JDPC office in Pulka. The program is set to enhance the resilience of these communities, empowering them to meet their basic needs and rebuild their lives amidst the challenges posed by the ongoing crisis.

On 4th September, Caritas Nigeria, in collaboration with the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of Maiduguri Diocese, provided financial assistance to vulnerable persons under the project, Food Security and Humanitarian Protection for Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis. With funding support from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) through Caritas Germany, the intervention aims to provide essential financial assistance to vulnerable communities who continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing crisis in Borno State.



Caritas Nigeria Engages Abia State Leadership for Enhanced Health and Development

To bolster partnerships and expand healthcare initiatives, Caritas Nigeria's leadership paid an advocacy visit to the First Lady of Abia State, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, on the 5th of September. Led by Dr. John Oko, the Chief of Party (CoP) of the Accelerated Control of HIV Epidemic and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS) project, the delegation underscored the vital role of collaboration in driving community health and development forward, leveraging the opportunity to invite the Governor and First Lady to the upcoming 2024 Nigeria Implementation Science Alliance (NISA) and Global Implementation Society (GIS) Conference.

During the visit, Dr. Oko highlighted Caritas Nigeria's profound impact on the state, especially in the areas of healthcare delivery and community development. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong partnership with the state government to ensure sustainable progress, particularly through ongoing projects like the PEPFAR-funded ACCESS project, which is currently delivering treatment and care services to over 38,000 people living with HIV and providing essential support to more than 12,000 children across Abia State. Also present at the meeting, Mr. Gabriel Gbenyi, Caritas Nigeria's Grants & Compliance Director, shared further insights into our extensive work. He elaborated on how Caritas Nigeria's efforts are transforming lives, delivering comprehensive care, and addressing other critical health challenges across the region.

In response, the First Lady expressed her admiration for Caritas Nigeria's dedication to improving healthcare outcomes in the state. She pledged her full support for the organization's initiatives and expressed her keen interest in attending the NISA-GIS Conference, recognizing the conference's significance in advancing implementation science in healthcare. Her support was echoed by Mrs. Adaeze Emetu, the wife of the State's Deputy Governor, who was also in attendance along with other state officials. In a related development, on September 4, a delegation from our Abia State office, led by the State Team Lead, Dr. Charles Okolie, paid an advocacy visit to the newly appointed State Commissioner for Health, Professor Enoch Ogbonnaya, to further solidify Caritas Nigeria's ongoing efforts in providing quality healthcare services in the state, particularly under the ACCESS project. During the meeting, Dr. Okolie presented Caritas Nigeria's work in the state, emphasizing our commitment to improving health outcomes and highlighting our successes. The Commissioner, Professor Ogbonnaya, expressed his admiration for Caritas Nigeria's extensive impact across the state and expressed enthusiasm about future partnerships.

Both visits concluded on a high note, with a mutual commitment to strengthen ties between Caritas Nigeria and the Abia State government. Both parties pledged to work together to continue improving community health services, particularly in underserved areas. The collaboration promises to expand access to quality healthcare, reduce HIV transmission, and foster sustainable community development in Abia State.



Photo Gallery



Strengthening Partnerships for a Sustainable HIV Response: Caritas Nigeria's Courtesy Visit to Imo State Health Commissioners



On a mission to enhance partnerships and advance healthcare delivery in Imo State, Caritas Nigeria's Senior Management Team paid a courtesy visit to the newly appointed State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Chukwuemeka Michael Ubaka, on 6th September, 2024. Also, in attendance was the immediate past Commissioner of Health, Dr. Prosper Success Ohayagha, who now serves as the Commissioner of Primary Health, Social Services, and Health Insurance. The Caritas Nigeria's delegation comprised Dr. John Oko, the ACCESS project's CoP, the State Team Lead, Dr. Olarewaju Jonathan, and the Deputy State Team Lead, Dr. Andrew Okebugwu.

the HIV response, thanks to the close collaboration between Caritas Nigeria and the Imo State Government. He highlighted significant strides made in key areas, including the capacity building of healthcare workers, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), and community-based HIV prevention and treatment programs.

Additionally, Caritas Nigeria's Sustainability Advisor, Francis Alimigbe, provided a comprehensive overview of the planned transition of the HIV program from Caritas Nigeria to the state government. He outlined the tasks and expectations necessary to ensure a smooth and effective handover and to equip the state to independently manage the program in the long term. In his remarks, Prof. Ubaka praised Caritas Nigeria for its invaluable support in addressing HIV/AIDS in the state, noting the organization's pivotal role in the delivery of life-saving services. He reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with Caritas Nigeria and expressed optimism about the future of the partnership, particularly in addressing healthcare challenges within the state.



The visit aimed to officially welcome the newly appointed commissioners and extend Caritas Nigeria's appreciation for their ongoing support of the ACCESS project funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). During the meeting, Dr. Oko briefed the officials on the positive outcomes achieved so far in



Celebrating Faith and Unity: The 53rd International Eucharistic Congress in Ecuador



From September 5th to 18th, 2024, the Universal Church marked the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress, a gathering of the global Catholic community to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. Representing the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) at the conference, which was held in Quito, Ecuador, were Rev. Fr. Zacharia Samjumi, the CSN Secretary-General, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD, Executive Secretary/CEO of Caritas Nigeria, and Rev. Fr. Peter Audu, the Deputy Executive Secretary of Caritas Nigeria.

The Congress featured an array of cultural and liturgical celebrations that showcased diversity. Attendees witnessed traditional customs and shared experiences that strengthened their bonds of faith. This year's theme, "Eucharist, Source of Dialogue, Solidarity, and Evangelization," encouraged reflections on individual and collective roles in promoting healing, unity, and peace, in a wounded world grappling with uncertainties.



Enhancing Project Delivery through Program Management Workshop



In a strategic effort to enhance leadership, improve management styles, and drive high performance across our program teams, Caritas Nigeria organized a comprehensive 6-day Program Management Workshop from September 2nd to 7th, 2024, in Enugu. The workshop brought together ACCESS project staff from our implementing Enugu, Abuja, Abia, and Imo, fostering collaboration and alignment on key goals for the fiscal year 2025 (Fy25).

The sessions included a review of the processes of the fiscal year 2024 (Fy24), sessions with the programs and Grants & Compliance teams, and a detailed review of FY24 goals and performance metrics. Key focus areas included identifying gaps, addressing challenges, and outlining a clear, actionable budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The participants also explored Agile Project Management tools, examining how they could enhance team efficiency, collaboration, and program outcomes.

In addition to technical discussions, the workshop placed a strong emphasis on team-building and collaboration, encouraging cross-regional knowledge sharing and strategic planning. Each regional team left the workshop with renewed energy, actionable insights, and a clear roadmap for tackling challenges and seizing opportunities in FY25. This workshop reflects our continued commitment to fostering effective leadership and program delivery, ensuring that our teams are well-equipped to meet the demands of the ACCESS project and deliver impactful results for the communities we serve.



Empowering Community Health Workers for Effective HIV and TB Interventions



From September 18th to 19th, Caritas Nigeria, under the Global Fund Nigeria “TB/HIV Reach, Integration, and Impact Project”, hosted a comprehensive HIV Testing Services (HTS) step-down training for key community health actors across locations in Yenagoa, Brass, and Ogbia LGAs of Bayelsa State.



HIV testing protocols, data management, and effective counselling techniques. Participants also received hands-on training with dual HIV/Syphilis test kits, enabling them to conduct testing within their communities confidently. The TBAs were empowered to provide testing for pregnant women under their care using the dual kits, while Community Volunteers gained the expertise to conduct counselling, TB screening, and HIV testing for women who might not have access to healthcare facilities. The volunteers also learned how to refer women who tested positive for HIV to comprehensive care and treatment (ART) sites, in collaboration with Mentor Mothers.

The participants, comprising Mentor Mothers, Community Volunteers, Community TB Workers, and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) from four clusters, were equipped with essential skills to expand HIV and tuberculosis (TB) services at the grassroots level. The Caritas Nigeria team co-facilitated the sessions with representatives from the State AIDS/STI Control Program (SASCP), Bayelsa State TB and Leprosy Control Program (BSTLCP), and community-based organisations (CBOs).

Key topics included the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV, TB screening,

A major focus of the training was the referral of women who tested negative to antenatal care facilities, ensuring their continued monitoring and healthcare support. The importance of accurate documentation and reporting of activities was also stressed, with facilitators providing guidelines on using the correct data management tools at health facilities. Interactive sessions, including role-playing on counselling and testing, fostered an engaging environment where participants shared experiences, learnt best practices, and addressed common misconceptions surrounding HIV and TB.



Caritas Nigeria and the JDPC Onboard New Staff and Conduct Training on Protection Services, Food Assistance, and Best Agricultural Practices

In collaboration with the JDPC of Maiduguri Diocese, Caritas Nigeria onboarded 12 new protection caseworkers and food assistance staff to enhance its humanitarian response efforts in Borno State on the 20th of September. This initiative, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) through Caritas Germany, aims to meet vulnerable populations' pressing food and protection needs in key communities, including Kaga, Magumeri, and Pulka, under the Food Security and Humanitarian Protection for Victims of the Lake Chad Crisis.

The staff underwent comprehensive training designed to strengthen their capacity to effectively address the complex needs of individuals and families affected by

ongoing crises in the region. With food insecurity and protection challenges at the forefront of humanitarian concerns, the newly trained personnel are now better equipped to provide targeted assistance in critical areas of need.

Similarly, we empowered 15 dedicated staff members with essential skills in home gardening, climate-smart agriculture, and post-harvest management techniques. The capacity-building exercise sought to introduce sustainable farming methods and climate-adaptive practices in the project communities, for the ultimate purpose of boosting cereal production while combating the challenges posed by climate change.



Photo Gallery



Caritas Day 2024: Celebrating Compassion and Service Across Nigeria



On September 22, 2024, Caritas Nigeria offices across Nigeria marked the organization's annual Caritas Day with a series of heartwarming activities across the country, embodying the theme "Giving Back to the Community". This year's commemoration started with a media briefing led by Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins, the Archbishop of Lagos and Bishop Chairman of Caritas Nigeria.

Held in Lagos on 19th September, the event highlighted Caritas Nigeria's extensive humanitarian work over the past 14 years, touching on key areas such as healthcare, food security, education, governance, and institutional capacity strengthening. Speaking on this year's theme, Archbishop Martins emphasized the crucial role of collaboration between Caritas Nigeria and local communities in tackling socio-economic challenges. He encouraged individuals and organizations to join hands with the development arm of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) to promote social justice and sustainable development across the country.

The media briefing also provided a platform to launch the Caritas Nigeria Strategic Plan, a key document that will drive our organisation's undertakings from 2024 – 2030. The document, which aligns with the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goals, outlines Caritas Nigeria's strategies to scale up community engagement, advocacy, and meaningful partnerships to achieve its thematic areas of focus, namely, Agriculture and Livelihoods, Education, Emergency Relief and Humanitarian Services, Environment, Good Governance, Health, Institutional Capacity Strengthening, and Protection and Migration.

Across the offices, staff gathered for Thanksgiving Masses, offering prayers for our organization's mission and gratitude to God for the achievements recorded so far. In the headquarters of Abuja, Most Rev. Mark Nzukwein, Catholic Bishop of Wukari Diocese, commended Caritas Nigeria's work, highlighting its significant reach of over 10 million beneficiaries since its establishment in 2010. He called for prayers and support for the donors and funders who sustain Caritas Nigeria's humanitarian efforts.

As part of the commemorative activities, our teams visited families and individuals experiencing poverty and food insecurity. In several locations, food items were distributed to bring relief to struggling households. Through funds raised internally by staff members, Caritas Nigeria was able to provide for over 100 families across different regions, delivering food support to those most in need. Also, in several hospitals, our teams provided financial assistance to indigent patients, covering medical bills and offering a lifeline to those in critical need.

The day also featured celebrations within Caritas offices, where staff members reflected on their shared mission and the positive impact they have made over the years. Team-building activities, such as games and competitions strengthened the bond among staff members. Awards were presented to exceptional team members, honouring their dedication and contributions to various humanitarian programs. In a special recognition, ad hoc staff working on our ACCESS project in Abia State were honoured with certificates for their outstanding services.

Photo Gallery



Advocating for True Federalism in Nigeria: Caritas Nigeria Co-Hosts the Annual General Meeting of the JDPC



On September 25th and 26th, Caritas Nigeria, a unit of the Church and Society Department of the CSN, co-hosted the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) in Abuja. With the theme “Remapping the Nigerian Federation: The Imperatives of True Federalism,” the AGM brought together JDPC coordinators from Catholic dioceses across Nigeria to engage in critical discussions on governance and federalism.

In his welcome address, Caritas Nigeria’s Executive Secretary/CEO, Rev. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, PhD, called on participants to craft a ‘charter of demand’ to present to Nigerian politicians, representing the people’s voice in the pursuit of good governance. In their goodwill messages, partners such as the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Misereor, urged the coordinators to continue to drive positive change at the grassroots.

Prof. Sam Amadi, the keynote speaker and Director of the Abuja School of Social and Political Thought, highlighted the need for a more decentralized federal system. He emphasized that remapping Nigerian federalism would empower local governments, improve resource distribution, and promote more inclusive governance. Breakout sessions allowed participants to delve deeper into the theme, engaging in meaningful discussions on how true federalism could be implemented to better serve Nigeria’s diverse regions and ensure equitable governance for all.

Photo Gallery



Join the Movement for Impactful Healthcare: NISA-GIS Science Conference

Caritas Nigeria is set to host the highly anticipated 9th Annual Implementation Science Conference, organized by the Nigeria Implementation Science Alliance (NISA) in collaboration with the Global Implementation Society (GIS). Scheduled to take place from November 14 – 16, 2024, at the Abuja Continental Hotel, this event promises to be an enriching platform for healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and implementation experts.

With the theme, “Driving Change: Everyday Implementation,” the conference aims to foster knowledge-sharing and collaboration in the field of implementation science, an essential approach to improving healthcare outcomes. Implementation science focuses on bridging the gap between research and practice, ensuring that evidence-based interventions are effectively translated into real-world healthcare settings.

This three-day event will feature presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops led by seasoned experts in the field. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the latest strategies for implementing research-based solutions in healthcare systems, with a focus on driving meaningful change in everyday practices.

As an organization deeply committed to advancing healthcare delivery in Nigeria, Caritas Nigeria is honoured to facilitate this exchange of knowledge. The event is an invaluable opportunity for professionals involved in health program implementation to gain fresh perspectives, build partnerships, and stay abreast of cutting-edge developments in implementation science, with the ultimate goal of improving health outcomes in Nigeria.

Nigeria Implementation Science Alliance **GIS** Global Implementation Society

PRESENT:

2024 **Global Implementation Conference**

SCAN TO REGISTER

THEME:

DRIVING CHANGE:
Everyday Implementation

DATE:
Thurs. 14th – Sat. 16th Nov, 2024.

VENUE:
Abuja Continental Hotel

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Increased Practical Engagement:**
Encouraging practitioners, policymakers, and the public to integrate implementation science into daily decisions and actions.
- **Strengthened Commitment to Change:**
Inspiring individuals and organizations to commit to continual learning and improvement in implementing effective practices.

Laudato si'



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

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

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