



IHAVN NEWS

A NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN VIROLOGY, NIGERIA



Gbazango Community Works Together to Protect Vulnerable Children

By Blessing Ukpabi and Tong'ret Lot



Guidance Counselor from Primary School, Rahimat Usman, sensitizing Gbazango Child Protection Committee on child labour.

It takes a village to raise a child and it takes a village to protect a child. The Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) considered this when with support from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), it established 32 community child protection committees through five Community Based Organizations in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). One of such communities with a child protection committee is Gbazango in Kubwa where community members are working together to ensure child safeguarding as well as reduce child hawking, drug abuse and child labour.

The Chief of Gbazango, men's leader, women's leader, a representative from different tribes and religions, a representative from the local vigilante group and the public school in the area are part of the CPC committee. They meet quarterly to discuss ways to promote a safe child friendly environment.

His Royal Highness, Chief Jubril Muhammed, Village Head of Gbazango, said that such

meetings have led to increased awareness about issues of local child protection in the community.

"During the meetings, we talk about child abuse and ways to intervene. Usually, we have an Imam and a Pastor present to take information back to the churches and mosques. When young persons with devious character are reported to us, we summon their parents to counsel and advise them. One of such cases that we dealt with recently is that of a young person who was unstable because of drug abuse. We sponsored his rehabilitation and now he is well," Chief Muhammed said.

The committee also reviews reports from its members. For instance, during their May 2022 meeting, they deliberated on reports from a public primary school about child labour and ways to prevent it.

"We are seeing children come to school with bruises and wounds due to physical abuse from their caregivers. These children are sent

Cont'd on page 2

From the Chief Executive Officer

The African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together, points to the importance of partnership for sustainability. Amongst other reports, this edition shares stories of our collaborative efforts to ensure healthy, safe and stable children and adolescents. We also share stories of our activities to address HIV and tuberculosis in the country.



Enjoy your reading!

Yours truly,
Dr. Duffick Dikun
Chief Executive Officer,
Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria

INSIDE: ➤



Institute Showcases Tuberculosis Best Practices in National Compendium

-Page 3



Adolescent Friendly Program Improves HIV Treatment Outcome

-Page 4

Page 1 continuation

Gbazango Community Works Together to Protect Vulnerable Children

to Abuja by their parents through agents to work in households where they are deprived of basic necessities of life. Some sleep during class because they sleep very late - some say they sleep 12am and wake up 4am. Some are frequently absent from school and some are withdrawn from school in Primary 6 because their guardians here in Abuja are unwilling to sponsor the children's education further," the School's Guidance Counselor, Rahimat Usman explained.

The committee resolved to investigate further and create awareness to prevent child labour as well as vandalism of mechanical and electrical items in the public school.

"When I receive news of such cases, I take them very seriously. I don't take nonsense. When a child vandalized the school, removing electric wires and burning them, we reported the issue to the police. I immediately invited the father of the child, and made sure he paid for the items taken," Chief Muhammed said.

Women's Leader in the community, Hajiya Amina Jubril said that with the committee, the community has committed to protecting their children from hawking due to the sensitization received during Child Protection Committee meetings.

"Every Sunday, I meet with more than 100 women in the Chief's palace, we motivate ourselves to make sure that our children go to school. We have a thrift (Village Savings and Loans Association) contribution to support each other with payment of school

levies and empower ourselves to do business. We ensure that our children don't keep late nights and get into trouble. It is encouraging to see more families responding positively to our efforts," she added.

The Committee representative from the Gbazango Central Mosque, Alhassan Sanni, said that they are happy that more attention is being paid to child protection issues since the IHVN supported Community Based Organization, Catholic Action Committee on AIDS (CACA) began sensitization in the community.

"Whatever problem we have, we look for solution. We collaborate, talk to each other, both pastor and imams, to stop child abuse and labour. We announce in the mosque that such issues should be reported to the Chief for prompt attention," he said.

IHVN Orphans and Vulnerable Children Senior Program Officer, Mrs Laurentia Dashe, emphasized that the child protection committees ensure sustainability of the orphans and vulnerable children program.

"They uphold positive cultural norms in the community and look out for the interests of children by speaking against harmful practices. Children live in the community. With community involvement, we can keep children from abuse, violation and exploitation as well as risky situations that may expose them to HIV. IHVN with support from CDC works with community based organizations to set up the committees, enlighten community members about child protection issues and make sure meetings hold regularly while monitoring progress of the committee's work," she said.

The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program is aimed at ensuring that households attain resilience and children are schooled, healthy, safe and stable. Aside the Catholic Action Committee on AIDS, other community based organizations involved in setting up Child Protection Committees in Abuja include Center for Family Health Initiative (CFHI), New Hope Agency (NHA), Total Child Care Initiative (TCCI) and Jomurota Community Care Initiative (JCCI).



Child Protection Committee members flanked by Village Head of Gbazango, HRH Chief Jubril Muhammed.



Child Protection Committee Member and Gbazango Women's Leader, Hajiya Amina Jubril, said with sensitization from the committee, more women are being motivated to engage in small businesses.

HIV Self Testing Research Project Commences

By Lurel Dakum

To evaluate the utilization of HIV self-test kits in Nigeria, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has commenced a research project in partnership with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) UK, Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI) Uganda and the Center for Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Research (CeSHAAR), Zimbabwe. The project started with a training of IHVN project staff in Abuja by facilitators from CeSHAAR.

IHVN Senior Technical Advisor Clinical Laboratory Services, and Principal

Investigator of the Project, Dr Sam Peters, said that the project is supported by Children Investment Fund Foundation and the Global Fund.



A group picture of training participants and facilitators

"Nigeria happens to be one of the countries that the Global Fund is supporting in the area of self-testing. HIV-Self Test Kits enable people to test themselves for HIV in the privacy of their homes as well as places of convenience and give feedback on results to the health facility. Because of stigma, some people might not want to go for a HIV test. For that reason, self-testing was introduced using simple kits. This training on Respondent Driven Sampling will equip project staff implementing the project in Anambra state where the project is sited," he said.

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Institute Showcases Tuberculosis Best Practices in National Compendium

By Luret Dakum

The Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has disclosed that partnership with the private sector, outreaches to schools and communities as well as stakeholders involvement are among best practices adopted to tackle tuberculosis in Nigeria.

At a launch of a Compendium of Tuberculosis Best Practices by the National Tuberculosis, Buruli Ulcer and Leprosy Control Programme (NTBLCP) in Abuja, IHVN Deputy Chief of Party, USAID TB LON 3 Project, Mrs Ayodele Iroko, stated that, "TB anywhere is TB everywhere. These best practices are not just for today but for the future. We are building systems for those that will still run this race. Some of them are not out of the university but this compendium is going to give them the vision they need."

She urged stakeholders working to end tuberculosis in Nigeria to think outside the box and adopt multi-sectoral approaches to fight tuberculosis in the country.

In two years, the IHVN USAID Tuberculosis Local Organizations Network 3 (TB LON 3)

project identified over 36,000 tuberculosis cases in Ogun, Oyo, Lagos and Osun states. Also, with support from the Global Fund since 2019, IHVN has also engaged the private sector to identify more than 100,000 tuberculosis cases in 21 states.

Earlier on at the launch, the Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire stated that, "the implementation of innovative strategic interventions put in place by tuberculosis managers, including integration of tuberculosis control into the COVID-19 response in Nigeria eventually led to a 15% increase in tuberculosis notification from 120,266 cases in 2019 to 138,591 cases in 2020." This number increased to 207,785 cases in 2022.

Dr. Ehanire added that, "this made Nigeria one of the few countries in the world to record an increase in tuberculosis case notification during the COVID-19 pandemic." According to him, despite this increase, there is still more to be done as Nigeria has the highest burden of tuberculosis in Africa.



IHVN Senior Program Officer, Dr Temitope Adetiba, welcoming the Hon Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire and Hon Minister of State for Health, Sen Dr. Adeleke Olorunnimbe Mamara to the IHVN booth, which showcased tuberculosis best practices.



A cross section of IHVN staff at the dissemination event.

IHVN COO/MD Hosts Cook-Out for Staff

By Ritnen Gomwalk

The Chief Operating Officer/Managing Director of Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN), Dr. Charles Olalekan Mensah has hosted staff to a cook-out celebration to commemorate 4th of July, American Independence Day.

The event was a time for staff from the Head Office and FCT Regional Office to unwind, engage in competitions and interact in an informal environment.

IHVN Senior Executive Assistant to the COO/MD, Mrs. Oluwakemi Yomi-Amusa explained that the event was to celebrate with our funding partners. "IHVN started as an affiliate of the

Institute of Human Virology in the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Also, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a major funding and technical partner. As the organization grows rapidly every year, Dr. Mensah believes the cookout is a good opportunity to meet people you do not see on a normal day due to the diverse departments."

Management staff including the Executive Director of the International Research Center of Excellence, Prof. Alash'le Abimiku, were in attendance.



A Cross section of staff at the cook-out event



IHVN Chief Operating Officer/Managing Director, Dr. Charles Olalekan Mensah Dancing at the cook-out event.

Adolescent Friendly Program Improves HIV Treatment Outcome

By Ritnen Gomwalk and Luret Dakum

More than 120, 0000 adolescents and young people living with HIV reside in Nigeria according to the National AID Indicator Study, 2018. To address HIV treatment challenges of this group within 10-24 years and those of their caregivers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has begun implementing a differentiated model of care approach called Operation Triple Zero (OTZ).

IHVN Senior Program Officer, Prevention Care and Treatment, Ms Franca Akolawole says that the three zeroes in OTZ stands for Zero Missed Appointment, Zero Missed Drugs and Zero Viral Load.

"The OTZ program utilizes peer support; classes for adolescents and youths transitioning into adult care; a forum for caregivers of adolescents, and youth friendly support groups to assist adolescents and young people. In the FCT, we currently have 28 health facilities providing these services. Before the year ends, we plan to scale-up to other health facilities who have more than 50 adolescents living with HIV accessing treatment in them," she explains.

She adds that at caregiver forums, guardians of adolescents and youths living with HIV are supported with right information to disclose HIV positive status to their wards. They are also given guidance on handling post-disclosure crisis and HIV treatment to achieve viral suppression.

One of such caregivers in the FCT, 39 year old Joy, is a mother of two adolescents living with HIV. She says that the program has enabled her to share her experiences with other guardians and receive encouragement.

"When my children started HIV treatment, it was not easy at all. They refused to take their medicines. Sometimes when I'm sweeping the house, I will find the medicines under the bed where they threw them. However, when they started attending the adolescent and young people support group, they saw others who are on treatment like them. My first daughter is now a peer champion and both of them have adhered to their medications such that the virus is suppressed," she says.

Joy adds that the fears she had when she discovered the HIV status of her girls

have been wiped away.

Another caregiver, Mrs Christian resorted to lies to convince her son to take his HIV treatment because letting him know that he was the only one out of his four siblings living with HIV was disturbing to her.

"I told him that the HIV medication is for eye pain but he insisted that he doesn't have eye problem and can even walk well in the night without light. I decided to take him to the support group at the hospital after a doctor assisted me to disclose his HIV status to him. He met children like him living with HIV. He has been encouraged to stay healthy and take his drugs. Since he started attending the support group meetings, he takes the medicines easily. He is even the one who reminds me when the day for support group meetings approaches," she says.

These peer support groups coordinated by IHVN in partnership with the Association of Positive Youths in Nigeria (APYIN) are also beneficial to the caregivers.

"Some caregivers do not adhere to their HIV treatment but through the OTZ program, we have seen a lot of improvement, now they take their medications seriously. We have also achieved viral load suppression for students in boarding school as well as increased the number of those retained in care," APYIN FCT Coordinator, Abbah Victoria says.

APYIN engages adolescents and young people living with HIV who have improved treatment outcomes to serve as peer champions. Peer champions assist their peers through their treatment journey.

17 year old Faith O., has assisted at least 22 young people who had high viral load but are now fully suppressed.

"I call to check up on them and encourage them to take their medications. For those without phones, I call their parents. I also lead by example by taking my medications. Seeing how most of them were before joining the support group and their improvement is my motivation to keep being a peer champion," she adds.

Another peer champion, 20 year old Emmanuel E., says that his duties have enhanced his skills in interacting with people.

"When I started attending the support



(Right) Joy E conversing with one of her daughters.



Operation Triple Zero Peer Champions Emmanuel and Faith pose for a picture.

group, I used to collect my medications and immediately leave but now, I get to interact with many children. I meet new people and learn from their experiences," he says.

Better health outcomes for adolescents, youths and their caregivers means good viral suppression with reduction in HIV related challenges.

Ms Akolawole also notes that due to the OTZ program, there has been an increase in the number of adolescents enrolled and retained in treatment across IHVN supported health facilities from 173 adolescents in one facility in 2020 to 10,984 adolescents in 63 facilities in June 2022. "Percentage of viral suppression has also increased from 78% in 2020 to 87% in 2022," she says.

APRIL - JUNE 2022

PHOTO GALLERY

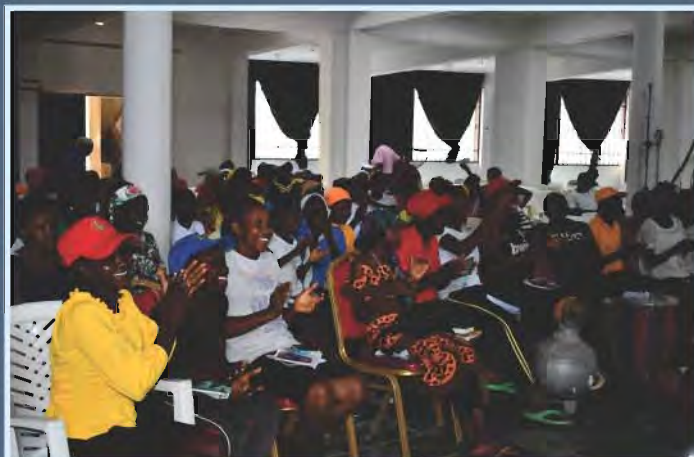
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Global Fund Country Team visit IHVN-supported ERCC TB/Leprosy Referral Center, Alushi, Nasarawa State.



IHVN Chief Operating Officer/Managing Director, Dr Charles Olalekan Mensah addressing the Global Fund Nigeria County Team at a meeting in IHVN campus.



Girls at the FCT Girls Brigade Maiden camp participate in a talk led by IHVN staff on menstrual hygiene, reproductive health and gender-based violence.



The Executive Director of International Research Center of Excellence (IRCE), Prof. Alash'le Abimiku (6th right), flagged by IHVN/IRCE staff at the 19th Human Heredity and Health in Africa Consortium (H3 Africa) meeting in Abuja



IHVN staff participate in a training of trainers organized by US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) focused on awareness creation to prevent Gender-based violence and Violence Against Children in FCT, Katsina, Rivers and Nasarawa States.



Cancer Registrars participate in a training in preparation for IMPACT study, a research project focused on improving population level stage-at-diagnosis and cancer survival estimation in Nigeria.

Examination Fee Waiver Program Boosts Morale of OVCs, Caregivers

By Tong'ret Lot and Rehoboth Makan

17 year old Timothy (*not his real name*) is optimistic that he will ace his Junior Secondary School Examination. This is a step towards his dream of becoming a lawyer. This dream was almost dashed a year ago until the intervention of the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) examination waiver program, which he benefitted from.

Timothy had started falling sick in his second year in secondary school but he kept going to school till he fainted on the assembly ground and was rushed to the hospital where he carried out different tests.

"Initially we all thought it was malaria until the result of the test showed that he has some virus in his body system." His uncle, Seun said.

This sudden sickness soon caused irregularities in his attendance in school. He could not concentrate well in school and could not read well nor listen properly in class. Timothy was always at home with someone to look after him. He was referred to Nyanya General Hospital, an IHVN supported health facility, where he received free HIV care and treatment.

Timothy was identified at the hospital by staff of New Hope Agency, a Community-Based Organization (CBO) supported by IHVN when they were seeking beneficiaries infected and affected by HIV. He was traced down to his community for enrolment into the OVC program and during assessment, the CBO realized that he has not been attending school because of his health and finances.

"I discovered him about a year ago and I can say there is progress between when I saw him and now. While he was being enrolled, his CD4 count was 19 copies but now, it is about 719 Copies," Mr Fidelis Musa, the Case Manager said, while describing the improvement of his immunity.

"His grandfather is the one taking care of him and providing for his needs, though the mother also supports with the little she has after the death of his father. At the moment she's not financially buoyant," Seun explained.

Timothy was happy that he did not drop out of school because of the examination fee payment by the IHVN Orphans and Vulnerable Children's program through New Hope Agency.

"I am fully prepared for my coming up Junior Secondary School examination, I have no more headache and tiredness. I can read well. In fact, I

can guarantee that by the grace of God I will have A's in all my sixteen subjects. After my examination I will continue my studies till I graduate from the senior secondary school because I want to become a lawyer," he said.

New Hope Agency, Psychosocial Support Officer, Ms Ogechi Irechukwu stated that "We are being supported by IHVN to ensure that beneficiaries on the OVC program are retained in school, are virally suppressed and provided with preventive health education. For educational support, we look out for those who are financially challenged and HIV positive. When these children are in JSS3 or SS3 and cannot pay for the exam fee then we come in to help.

We lift the burden of examination fees from the caregivers and then they are more open to allowing their children to continue going to school. The children always look forward to that next step, knowing that the education they have passed through is vital to them."

Hanatu (not her real name), another Junior

embarrassment, she kept the incident to herself. Soon, she was faced with pregnancy.

In the midst of this, she was not alone to face the challenge of dropping out of school to take care of her baby because her father was identified by the CBO as requiring support after assessment. Her father, a welder, with 11 other children, requested for financial assistance.

The CBO provided support. "New Hope Agency



Timothy in school



Hanatu poses for a photograph in school.



Mrs Haske and her daughter

Secondary School Student wants to be a pediatric nurse. Hanatu discovered that she was HIV positive after a test in 2010. Her father had tested HIV positive the same year and brought all his nuclear family members to get tested.

Hanatu was living well while on HIV medication and doing well in school till an unfortunate incident changed her life. While fetching water in her neighborhood, her friend's brother offered her a drink. "After taking the drink, I slept off and when I woke up I felt, so different. I was tired and my cloth was wet, he already undressed me," she said crying.

After the Tape incident, Hanatu confronted the boy who laughed at her. Filled with shame and

paid my bills for the antenatal clinic till I gave birth. They also helped me with my school bills and paid my examination fee. My baby is doing fine and he is over a month old. I am so happy coming back to school. After my examination, I will like to proceed in my academics because I want to become a nurse for children," Hanatu said

Her father is full of appreciation, "I am so happy that they stepped in to relieve me of this burden. This has made my daughter very happy, she can now concentrate in school," he said.

Mrs Haske (*not her real name*), another guardian who benefitted from the examination fee support, said that she had challenges with

Cont'd from page 6

paying the examination fee of her niece who has been living with her since her mother died. "I am not her biological mother. I started taking care of her when she lost her mother at nine years. Her mother was HIV positive before she died. Now she is 16 years old. Taking care of her has not been easy though I and my husband are working. She has been doing well academically. My husband had some challenges at the time she needed to pay for her senior secondary school examination fee but the support from New Hope Agency came and we really appreciate it. I got to know the CBO due to her medical condition and they have been

supportive," she said. IHVN Orphans and Vulnerable Children Senior Program Officer, Mrs Laurentia Dashe, said that the examination fee payment is part of educational support funded by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ACHIEVE project. According to her, "educational support is part of OVC service delivery and a developmental milestone for the children. It empowers vulnerable children to attain resilience and achieve their potential. They are not expected to be on the program for longer periods of time. That is why education is one of the graduation

bench mark for them to exit from the program. Selection is done based on each child's needs identified during assessment. Care plan development is done with the household using national OVC documentation tools. Vulnerable households are supported with interventions to ensure that beneficiaries are safe, schooled, healthy and stable," she said. Mrs Dashe added that 117 junior secondary school students and 80 senior secondary school students have benefitted from the examination fee waiver program between October 2021 and June 2022.

FOCUS ON THE USAID/NIGERIA TUBERCULOSIS LOCAL ORGANIZATION NETWORK (TB-LON 3) PROJECT

The USAID/Nigeria Tuberculosis Local Organization Network (TB-LON 3) is a five-year project to scale up tuberculosis services and find missing TB cases. IHVN started implementing this project in April 2020 and is engaging stakeholders in strengthening a resilient system for sustainable TB control in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Osun states. As at March 2022, 36,482 tuberculosis cases were identified and notified. In collaboration with the State TB program, Local Government TB Leprosy Supervisors, DOT providers, community leaders as well with engagement of the private sector, the project is ensuring the provision of tuberculosis screening, diagnosis and treatment across the four states.

TB LON 3 renders the following services to clients:

- Active screening for TB in identified hotspot in the community, of contacts of index cases and TB outreaches.
- Free TB screening in the facilities for 100% clinic attendees with identification of presumptives that are sent for further investigations.
- Testing of all presumptive TB cases using GeneXpert machine.
- Provision of free Chest X-ray services to diagnosed patients that are unable to

- produce sputum (Adults and Children) and contacts of Index cases
- Enrolment of confirmed TB patients on treatment, and notification of patients into

the National TB reporting system.

- Linkage to free treatment of the patients who end up testing positive for TB



IHVN meets with Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) on Intensified TB Case Finding at the General Out Patient Unit in Lagos State, Nigeria



IHVN Team carrying out TB screening using mobile digital equipment in Agberire community, Iwo LGA in Osun State.

USAID TB LON 3 Achievements from Inception till MARCH 2022

State	Number of TB Case Detected	Number of Health Facilities Providing TB Services (Public and Private)
Lagos	9,153	900 across 20 LGAs
Osun	9,690	110 across 30 LGAs
Ogun	7,462	107 across 20 LGAs
Oyo	10,177	154 across 33 LGAs

IHVN Marks World Blood Donor Day 2022

By Luret Dakum

To mark World Blood Donor Day 2022, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has joined the National Blood Service Commission (NBSC) and other stake holders to sensitize the public on the importance of blood donation.

IHVN participated in a road walk within the Abuja metropolis from Berger roundabout to the NBSC Wuse Zone 3 Office. Other activities the Institute participated in include, a Ministerial Press Briefing, and a blood drive which held at Garki 2, Abuja.

At the press briefing, Hon. Minister of State for Health, Dr Olorunnimbe Mamora said that, "blood donation should be seen as an act of kindness, unity and harmony which we owe not only to ourselves and our loved ones, but also to our various communities. Blood donation reduces the large burden of maternal and infant mortality, deaths due to road traffic injuries, surgeries and other conditions and ensures the safety of blood units in hospitals. It is an indispensable aspect of health care that contributes to saving lives in Nigeria." IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum, who was represented at the press briefing by IHVN Assistant Director, Clinical Laboratory Services, Mrs Petronilla Jean Ozumba, urged Nigerians to make blood donation a hobby. "We are here to celebrate the heroes and heroines who have been providing safe blood willingly and voluntarily without payment. IHVN has also set up a bio-repository.

So, apart from donating blood to people, we also donate blood for research. At our bio-repository, blood is collected, processed and qualified so that research can be done. This will be used to advance science and research. Knowledge can also be impacted," she said.

At the community blood drive, 32 people turned up to donate blood. A 56th time blood donor, Mr Dauda Musa was one of the donors.

"Three of my family members are here to donate blood, donating blood helps you live a consciously careful lifestyle, the discipline just comes naturally, blood cannot finish,

mine would have finished, so donate blood and save lives," Mr Musa said.

This year the slogan for the day is, "Donating blood is an act of solidarity, join the effort to save lives."



IHVN Staff participate in a road walk in Abuja to mark World Blood Donor Day



IHVN Assistant Director, Laboratory Services, Mrs Petronilla Ozumba speaking about the importance of blood donation at a press briefing to mark the event.



IHVN staff, Mr Emmanuel Jonathan, donating blood at a community blood drive in commemoration of the day at Garki 2, Abuja.

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