



IHVN NEWS

A NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN VIROLOGY, NIGERIA



IHVN Partners Patent Medicine Vendors to Find TB in Communities

By Blessing Ukpabi and Nkechi Chinedu-Asogwa

Ashiwaju Misturah, Oyewole Rasheed, and Oladosu Funmilayo, all live in different parts of Lagos. Though they have never met, they have one thing in common. Their first stop for treatment when sick is a patent medicine store run by someone that they trust.

19 year old Misturah, a student, trusts Mrs Iyabode Igwe who runs a 'pharmacy' store close to her house in Ijanikin, Lagos State. When Mrs Igwe counseled her to give her sputum in a cup for a tuberculosis test, she gladly obliged. When the test turned out positive for tuberculosis, Misturah cried thinking that she was going to die, she listened again to Mrs Igwe.

"Mrs Igwe told me that I can survive tuberculosis if I take the free treatment given to me as prescribed. I listened to her advice not to mix herbal medicines with the treatment. Before I started treatment, when I was coughing, I had taken "ekpa", with palm oil, bitter kola and honey. When I started treatment, I ate enough food like she advised and got better in little time. I completed my treatment in May 2022."

Mrs Igwe is one of the 166 Patent Medicine Vendors engaged by Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) under the USAID Tuberculosis Local Organizations Network, Region 3 (TB-LON 3) project in Lagos State. She receives training and mentorship on screening for tuberculosis and guidance in referral of patients to a nearby tuberculosis DOT center for treatment if their results turn out positive.

Mrs Igwe has operated her store for over 20 years, gaining the confidence of her community members, including Misturah. "Some people come to the store to seek my advice when they are coughing. We have outreaches every three months and people come too. On the average, I attend to two tuberculosis cases every month," Mrs Igwe said.



Patent Medicine Vendor, Mrs Iyabode Igwe and TB Survivor, Ashiwaju Misturah.

From the Chief Executive Officer

IHVN has adopted several innovative strategies to find and treat tuberculosis in the country. This includes collaboration with the private sector, community outreaches, and routine tuberculosis screening of special populations including school children, prisoners, people in detention, miners and quarry workers. As a result of this, more people are being identified with tuberculosis and linked to treatment.

As at August 2022, The USAID/Nigeria Tuberculosis Local Organizations Network Region 3 (TB-LON 3) project, which we implement in Lagos, Osun, Oyo and Ogun states have identified and notified more than 45,500 tuberculosis cases since inception in April 2020. The Global Fund supported Public Private Mix project, which began in January 2019 notified more than 127,000 individuals as at June 2022. Our call to the public is to go to the nearest hospital when coughing for two weeks or more to check that cough. This issue of IHVN News has news on our tuberculosis, HIV and nutrition projects in the country.

Happy Reading.



Yours truly,
Dr. Patrick Dakum
Chief Executive Officer,
Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria

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IHVN Partners Patent Medicine Vendors to Find TB in Communities



Patent Medicine Vendor, Mrs Asanbe Agnes counseling her client, Funmilayo.

Another Patent Medicine Vendor, Mrs Asanbe Agnes who has a store in Badagry, narrated that in the community outreach she organized in August 2022, they discovered 24 presumptive tuberculosis cases. "Some patients just like to buy cough syrup only but with the TB-LON 3 project, I have been trained to ask questions. In my store, I don't just give them syrups. I counsel them. Before you convince some clients to be screened, you need to patiently talk to them. We don't force them, but we refuse to just sell drugs to them. That affects our sales but we keep telling them that tuberculosis treatment is free," Mrs Asanbe said.

Oladosu Funmilayo a trader who resides in Badagry, was not one of the difficult clients. When she had persistent cough that affected her sleep, the first place she thought of going to was the Asanbe PMV store. "I came here because she is like a sister to me. I know that she can guide me on what to do. The General Hospital is some kilometers away. Transport fare by bus costs approximately N1000. This PPMV is closer to me," Mrs Oladosu said.

Mrs Oladosu gave her sputum at the PPMV and this was transported to a laboratory for a Gene Xpert test. After the test, she received the medications at the PPMV and has commenced treatment.

"Tuberculosis is not a death sentence. I am happy that I easily got drugs and have started treatment. I thank God for those providing this free treatment.

I've already started advising people around me to go for a test if coughing persistently," she said.

34 year old Oyewole Rasheed is also giving this advice to people around him. When in June 2022, he was coughing out blood, had fever with cold and was losing weight, he went to the patent medicine vendor store close by. "I was scared at first because I did not know what was wrong with me. When the test showed that it was tuberculosis, I was relieved to know that treatment is free," Rasheed said.

One of the strategies adopted by the USAID TB-LON 3 project is partnership with the private sector to find tuberculosis in the communities. This includes community pharmacies, private laboratories, patent medicine vendors and private laboratories.

Community Mobilization Advisor TB-LON 3, Dr Abiola Alege said that the focus of the project is to find tuberculosis cases.

"Due to our poor health seeking behavior in Nigeria, not many people go to the hospital when they are sick. If we intend to find more tuberculosis cases, we need to go to the community and find them."

IHVN Chief of Party for the TB-LON 3 project, Dr Aderonke Agbaje states that Patent Medicine Vendors are very important for the detection and referral of clients with TB symptoms at the community level as they are usually the first point of contact for those

1.6 million Kano Women, Children receive Nutrition Services *By Luret Dakum*

The Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has provided basic nutrition services to more than 480,000 women and 1.2 million children in Kano State from May 2021 to July 2022. These services were provided through the Accelerating Nutrition Results in Nigeria (ANRiN) project being implemented by the Institute in Nasarawa, Kano Municipal, Fagge, Gwale, Tarauni, Kumbotso, Dala, Bunkure and Wudil Local Government Areas.

ANRiN Project Director, Dr Ishaya Madaki, who stated this at a press briefing in Kano State said that, "the project offers three services targeted at pregnant women and lactating mothers, while four services are

targeted at children between 0-59 months. There has been improvement in the knowledge of mothers and caregivers on



IHVN ANRiN Project Director Dr. Ishaya Madaki addressing journalists

different aspects of child care like exclusive and continued breastfeeding.

As one of the three non-state actors providing these nutrition services with

financial support from the World Bank, IHVN has given nutrition services to 488,984 women and 1,231,941 children in Kano State," he stated.

IHVN Senior Program Officer Mrs Suwaiba Sani added that the project educates pregnant and lactating women on exclusive breastfeeding. "We encourage them to go to the hospital for antenatal services. We have even given out folic acid to women...We realized that some people who go out for antenatal do not have access to these drugs," she said. Other services offered by the ANRiN project include distribution of zinc/oral rehydration solution and Vitamin A supplementation among children 6-59 months.

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Biorepositories Advance Science

IHVN Acting HOD Clinical Laboratory Services, **Mrs Ozumba Petronilla-Jane** speaks on the importance of bio-repositories to research and to the country

What is a bio-repository?

A bio-repository is a laboratory for the collection, processing, storage and retrieval/distribution of samples from participants, donors and those willing to give their blood to advance science.

Sometimes, bio-repositories provide clinical diagnosis to patients or participants. However, it does more than that. It collects, processes and stores samples for long term, up to five years, ten years etc for further or future investigation, depending on the agreement with the researchers.

When bio-repositories serve clinical and research purposes, we call it bio bank. It is a bank where biological collections like blood, urine, stool, breast milk and tissues are stored. For example, for people who have cancer, investigators who want to

without HIV.

However, before collecting samples from a patient or donor, bio-repositories seek for consent to use samples for research.



*IHVN Acting HOD Clinical Laboratory Services,
Mrs Ozumba Petronilla Jean*

The H3 Africa bio-repository at IHVN has samples from donors with hypertension, HIV, sickle cell, etc. African scientists who want to do research can now approach and

request access to samples through a committee after meeting the criteria under H3 Africa Consortium.

Amid the COVID-19 lock down, there was no access to laboratories outside the country. Countries had to look within to get facilities to support COVID-19 diagnosis. Luckily, the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), which we support, has a PCR laboratory and a bio-repository. As they collected samples for diagnosis, they also collected samples to track the history of the disease from all over the country. If there was no bio-repository, it would have been difficult to support this.

The Ebola outbreak some years back was a West Africa epidemic. After that outbreak, it was obvious that structures to support surveillance was needed. Surveillance is put in place even before an epidemic or pandemic happens. In conclusion, bio-

carry out tests, may collect their samples and store for diagnosis and research. Bio-repositories are set up because we need to gain more insight into what causes diseases. Before a bio-repository is set up, the purpose is defined. Bio-repositories may serve specific populations or sub-populations or diseases.

A bio-repository can be for HIV meaning that every sample stored into the bio bank will be of HIV-infected patients.

The kind of research also determines the samples; the research may require getting samples from people living with HIV to compare with those of people



*IHVN Laboratory Scientist at work in the Institute of Human Virology
H3 Africa Biorepository*

What is the importance of the bio-repository?

A bio-repository can collect a sample once and keep them for long time to build a large collection of different diseases.

repositories provides resources for storage to enable research into diseases to advance science. Bio-repository collections can be used for vaccine trials and other investigation to get information to better the lives of the populace.

IHVN, NEPWHAN Collaborates for Improved PLHIV COVID-19 Vaccination

By Oluwaseunmi Adefiranye

To increase access of people living with HIV (PLHIV) to COVID-19 vaccination, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has launched integrated testing for tuberculosis, HIV and COVID-19 as well as facilitated COVID-19 mass vaccination in the state. The activity, which is in collaboration with the Network of People Living with HIV in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) and the Rivers State Government, was piloted at a support group of PLHIV in General Hospital Terrabo.

21-year-old Nendom Abigail attends the Safe-life Support Group in Gokona Local Government Area. Initially, she was not willing to have her vaccine shots due to the rumors circulating about the COVID-19 vaccination. "I thought that it was not safe because I heard that the COVID-19 vaccination is part of the plans of the anti-Christ and a way to depopulate the country.

My perception changed during the support group meetings. We had health talks by a doctor about COVID-19. I then realized that I am at risk of getting infected with COVID-19 virus if I do not take the vaccine. With the benefits of the vaccine explained over and over, I decided to give it a trial. I can boldly tell people that the vaccine is safe and all the myths are not true." Apart from debunking myths and misconceptions on COVID-19 vaccines, health talks in the support group cover areas like positive living, health

ownership and adherence. Apart from debunking myths and misconceptions on COVID-19 vaccines, health talks in the support group cover areas like positive living, health ownership and adherence. This is also integrated with other services like nutrition updates through food demonstration, genealogy testing and skill acquisition sessions like soap making. At support groups, PLHIV also get care for orphans and vulnerable children.

"Before joining the support group, I could not relate freely with my peers but through my participation in the support group, I can interact freely with people of all ages. I now understand the misconceptions about COVID-19 and HIV. I even support with the tracking of clients at times; I make efforts to make sure that other PLHIVs know about the benefits of support group meetings, through my personal interactions with my co-PLHIVs. "Also, through my discussions and experience sharing sessions on health issues, a total of 15 members have been vaccinated and are now members of the support group," Abigail added.

19-year-old Emmanuel Bright, said that the monthly NEPWHAN support group meetings "brings me closer to my peers; mostly the



Abigail being interviewed at Safe-Life Support Group in Rivers

adolescent group (Operation Triple Zero (OTZ) of which I am a member. The health talks at the support group helped me to get rid of misconceptions. I used to be afraid of taking COVID-19 vaccine because I heard that it makes people sick and is the mark of 666 but now, I know that it has helped to boost my immune system against COVID-19."

At one of the Safe Life Support Group meetings in September, 43 people living with HIV were vaccinated for COVID-19 for the first dose while 29 people after the second dose shot. From April 2019 to March 2020. The IHVN Rivers State SURGE project has provided more than 4 million people with HIV testing services, and placed 160,933 people on treatment out of the 161, 322 individuals who tested positive to HIV.

Success Stories in Brief - HIV Prevention

By Nanna Gonji Keren

When Andrew Peter (not his real name) a 19-year-old MSM discovered wart infections around his anal region, he went to a primary health care facility for treatment.

After this was unsuccessful, his friend recommended a visit to the one-stop-shot managed by Olive Right to Health initiative with support from Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) "I am still receiving treatment, I can see progress," he said.

31-year-old MSM Chinedu Chucks (not his real name) is full of joy after successful



Chinedu Chucks at one Stop Shop for HIV Care Services

treatment of genital warts at Oliver Right to Health Initiative in February 2022. "It was good experience.

Receiving cryotherapy treatment has really helped me, I am a free person, the growth has gone. I have been referring others for treatment to this one-stop-shop and I'll continue doing it," he said.

Cryotherapy is treatment for genital warts with the use of liquid nitrogen. The initial course of treatment is cryotherapy. 94% of cases heal, while 10% of them reoccur. Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) supports cryotherapy as part of its prevention, care and treatment services for key population.

PHOTO GALLERY

Compiled by: Tong'ret Lot and Damilola Olufowote



Triage Test for All-Oral DR-TB Regimen (TRIAD) Study: Researchers participate in a practical session during a training for the TRIAD study. The research study is aimed at providing evidence to aid policies and guidelines for better drug-resistant tuberculosis treatment outcomes.



Ensuring Quality Access and Learning for Mothers and their Newborns in Crisis Affected Contexts (EQUAL) Study: EQUAL Researchers visit hospitals in Abuja with visiting Senior Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Advisor at John Hopkins, Dr. Hannah Tappis, for an assessment of routine services given to mothers and their babies.



IHVN staff and security personnel participate in a fire prevention, suppression and safety management training facilitated by the Africa Fire Mission. The FCT Fire Service also participated in the training.



NISA Conference: IHVN staff/researchers participate in the 6th Nigeria Implementation Science Alliance (NISA) conference. The conference theme was "Sustainability of Implementation Programs and Research". 8th Left is Chair NISA Trustee Board, Prof Eche Ezeanolue.



Global Fund Country Team Visit to Nigeria: Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) staff take part in series of meetings with the Global Fund Country Team, including Finance Specialist Mr Vittorio Agueci (5th left) during their visit to Nigeria to review Global Fund HIV, tuberculosis and malaria programs implemented in the country.



Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS Free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS Clubs) More than 150 adolescent and teenage girls graduate from the DREAMS girls clubs in Nasarawa State. In partnership with Community-Based Organizations, IHVN established clubs to serve as safe spaces to prepare and guide girls on a path towards achieving their goals. The graduating girls had a ceremony in their honor after the one year program.

Community Outreach Activities Screen over 36,000 Individuals for Tuberculosis

By Blessing Ukpabi

The Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) in Nigeria reports that every year, there are at least 300,000 people with tuberculosis left unidentified. This number constitutes the missing tuberculosis cases in the country that need to be found for the disease burden to be addressed.

As part of efforts to find tuberculosis cases in the community, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) participated in the first National Tuberculosis Testing Week, which held from 1st to 7th August, 2022. Activities organized to mark the week included community tuberculosis screening, outreach and sensitization activities in 152 local government areas in 20 states under the Institute's Global Fund Public Private Mix (PPM) Project.

Over 36,000 adults and children were screened for tuberculosis out of which 821 were diagnosed with tuberculosis and linked up for treatment.

IHVN Program Officer, Ms Kelechi Nzeadibe said that the activities were done in partnership with PPM project sub-recipients namely; KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation Nigeria, Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN), The Leprosy Mission of Nigeria (TLMN) and Damien Foundation, Belgium (DFB).

"We carried out sensitization in churches, mosques, slums, fishing ports, market places, community town halls, house-to-house visits, through road shows, open rallies, community announcements amongst other strategies. As a result, adults and children turned out to be screened and gave their sputum for a tuberculosis test. Engaging with the private sector such as Patent Medicine Vendors

, (PMVs) is another strategy we adopted to take these services to more people" she said. The numbers diagnosed represents individuals and families with tuberculosis, who may not have gone to the nearest Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) centers to be diagnosed for treatment.

"We identified some individuals who assumed that their illness was malaria, asthma or even witch-craft related but after samples were collected and tested, the results came out tuberculosis positive and they have started treatment.

For instance, in Imo state, during a community outreach in partnership with Caritas Nigeria, we discovered a family of seven at Nkwere LGA with tuberculosis. They had a seven year old child who attended our outreach/sensitization. After a test, tuberculosis was detected. Through contact tracing, the samples of all the family members were collected and all their results came out positive for tuberculosis," Ms Nzeadibe said.

Deputy Program Manager Damien Foundation Belgium, Dr Bolaji Ahmed said that despite challenges of low turn-out of community members due to the planting season, rains and poor terrain of some communities, the national testing week activities show that "community sensitization, awareness and stakeholder engagement is important for effective program implementation."

The Public Private Mix (PPM) project being implemented by IHVN is aimed at engaging private and public health care providers in



Moniya market traders in Akinyele Local Government Area in Oyo State receive sensitization talks on tuberculosis.



A community outreach team in Portharcourt, Rivers State giving out sputum cups for stool sample collection

the fight against tuberculosis using international health care standards.

The project is scaling up private-provider engagement for tuberculosis in Edo, Delta, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Kogi, Niger, Sokoto, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Anambra, Enugu, Rivers, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi states.

Success Stories in Brief - ANRIN Project

By Daharatu Yahaya

Halima Kabiru, a 23-month old girl, from Kaura-Goje ward of Nassarawa Local Government Area of Kano State had a poor feeding habit and was not faring well. She was taken to a health facility in Gama and also in Gwagwarwa wards in December, 2021, for treatment but her parents could not afford the prescribed drugs.

Thereafter her parents sought treatment with a traditional practitioner.



Left to Right - Community Volunteer, Hafsat Ahmad Salisu; Field Guide, Gambo Hashim; Child's Mother, Gambo Dahiru with child, Halima Kabiru

They received concoctions from the traditional healer but Halima's health

deteriorated; with abdominal pain and swelling. The arrival of ANRiN Hafsat Ahmad Salisu, who gave her nutritional services, including Albendazole and Micronutrient Powder (MNP) saved Halima from her health troubles. In less than two weeks of service provision, Halima began to eat well and has now gained weight. The mother is full of thanks to the field guide and the Community Volunteers. "I pray that IHVN should extend their services to all women irrespective of being pregnant or not," she said.

IHVN Establishes Biorepository in Lagos

By Uzoma Nwofor

To expand and strengthen specimen bio-banking in Nigeria, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has established a functional biorepository at Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), Yaba, Lagos. The bio-repository will serve as a campus of the National Reference Laboratory in Abuja and provide back-up storage for biological specimen in the country.

During the official commissioning and handing over of the laboratory, IHVN Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director, Dr. Charles Olalekan Mensah, said that biorepositories are essential in supporting integrated disease response, surveillance and research. 'IHVN built the capacity of CPHL staff on bio-repository Science, the set-up, as well as management of biorepositories. We also renovated the CPHL facility and transformed the space into a standard, safe and functional biorepository.'

He said that 'the facility upgrade included installation of epoxy flooring, replacement of defective doors, electrical and mechanical installations, ceiling repairs, sealing, and tinting of windows, wall screeding, water reticulations, biometric access doors, installation of safety gadgets, painting as well as provision of laboratory work benches. He also added that IHVN has executed procurement of equipment and supplies to ensure that the laboratory is adequately equipped and business ready.

Dr. Mensah thanked funders and all parties involved in bringing the project to completion.

"I'll like to use this medium to thank our funders, US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and appreciate everyone involved, the Government of Nigeria, Nigeria Centers for Disease Control (NCDC) and the CPHL team," he added.

The bio-repository at CPHL is to complement the activities of the National Reference Laboratory in Abuja with

the provision of high-quality laboratory services. It will also coordinate and direct laboratory-based surveillance while providing oversight to state public health laboratories in Nigeria.

In his remarks, the United States (US)

implement nine projects across the country; establishment of the biorepository is one of the activities under the grant. CPHL Head of Unit, Dr. Aniefiok Ekoh, said that opening of the biorepository is a milestone in the development of bio-repositories in Nigeria



(Right to Left) United States Consul General, Will Stevens and Director General, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Ifedayo Adetifa commissioning the bio-repository at Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), Yaba, Lagos.

Consul General, Will Stevens, noted that the new facility will support Nigeria's disease control efforts through the cataloguing and storing of blood samples for future use, as well as testing to improve the detection and surveillance of new, emerging, and re-emerging diseases. He expressed optimism that the upgraded bio-repository will support Nigeria's readiness for future epidemic and pandemic responses. 'Today's commissioning is a major accomplishment in the strategic partnership between the United States and Nigeria to support health security and respond to disease threats,' Consul General Stevens said. IHVN through the Strengthening Global Health Security Agenda in Nigeria grant (SECURE-Nigeria) receives funding from US-CDC under the CARES Act to

as it is the only national public health reference bio-repository in South-West geo-political zone and the fifth bio-



IHVN Chief Operating Officer/ Managing Director, Dr Charles Olalekan Mensah speaking at the event.

repository in the country. 'It will serve as a national centralized resource for valuable, high quality and well annotated samples, supporting research, and optimizing integrated disease testing, public health emergency response and surveillance.'

Innovative Program takes HIV Services to Pregnant Women in Communities

By Blessing Ukpabi and Damilola Olufowote



Maternity Home Owner, Mrs Yaro interacting with client, Sarah in front of the home

To increase access to prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV services by women in communities, Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has engaged Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) and maternity homes to screen for HIV and provide referral services. More than 100 TBAs have begun providing these services in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Rivers, Nasarawa and Katsina States.

“Some women prefer to go to maternity homes in their neighborhoods to seek care during pregnancy and delivery than go to the hospital. Taking HIV services to them at these places ensures that we leave no one behind,” says IHVN Program Manager Maternal Neonatal Child Health, Mrs Grace Adamu. Mrs. Sarah Peter, who is a hair dresser and lives in Tasha community in Gwagwa, Abuja, delivered her fourth child in the maternity home a stone throw from her house. She explains that it is more convenient to access antenatal services with the community health extension worker (TBA) running the home. For fear of stigma, 30-year-old Sarah living with HIV, takes a 41-kilometer journey to the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital (UATH), Gwagwalada for HIV care and treatment.

The fear of being identified as HIV positive by her community members was allayed when

her confidentiality was kept at the maternity home. “She (the community health extension worker) attended to me very well. At first, I did not tell her my status till the last test was conducted. Then, I assured her that I am already on treatment. I prefer to come here because even when I don't have money, she is considerate. My baby is two weeks old and I am yet to complete payment for

the delivery here,” Sarah says. Owner of Maternity Home, Mrs Linda Yaro, though trained as a Community Health Extension Worker, also received training when engaged by IHVN to provide HIV screening and referral services. “I was given a register to keep records of the HIV positive women who come here. I have also been guided to refer them to the nearest health center when they need advanced care. The Institute provides HIV screening kits for free so I do not bill the women for the test. I make sure I do a HIV test even if women come for emergency services at night. Since IHVN started working with me in December 2021, I have tested two HIV positive pregnant women. I call the IHVN contact person when I need further information on how to guide them or provide referral services. I really appreciate working with the Institute. It gives me some boldness and assurance that I can receive guidance when needed,” she says.

IHVN FCT Senior Program Officer MNCH, Mrs. Esther Dunia explains that all IHVN maternity homes or traditional birth attendants are linked to nearby supported health facilities which provide comprehensive HIV services. “These traditional birth attendants are within the community and know the women around

them who are pregnant. It is easier for them to reach out to these women and link them with health facilities for care. The TBAs share weekly reports with these facilities and receive HIV test kits from them. When a pregnant woman living with HIV is linked to a hospital, we reach out to her family members who might need a HIV test also.”

Mrs Yaro not only screens and refers clients to hospitals, she gives drug refills to mothers and their babies. She monitors the health of both Sarah and her child. Sarah's baby is due for an early infant diagnosis test at six weeks and has been referred to the hospital for this. For women who are not living with HIV, Mrs Yaro provides counseling on HIV prevention not just before and after the test, but also during routine health talks on antenatal days. Mrs Blessing Cornelius, another client at the maternity home is pregnant and goes every three weeks for antenatal talks at the home. “I delivered my second child here. This is my third baby. I like the way she cares for me and laughs with me. When I arrived, she conducted a pregnancy test, HIV test and other tests like for typhoid and malaria,” she says.

As at July, 2022, this community program, has reached more than 200 women living with HIV in the four states where we are implementing it. Mrs Grace Adamu adds that, “some of the TBAs are trained health workers while some have learned this as a skill passed from their mothers to them.

IHVN is building their capacity in universal precautions for the safety of health care provider, mother and child. There are also plans to provide continuous training,” Mrs Adamu says. In the FCT, plans are under way to have an organized network of the TBAs to coordinate their activities and improve access to HIV services. IHVN is collaborating with the FCT HIV AIDS Control Program (FASCP) to achieve this.

