



IHVN NEWS

A NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN VIROLOGY, NIGERIA



IHVN Unveils Campus in Abuja

by Blessing Ukpabi

Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has unveiled the IHVN Campus, its corporate headquarters located at the Cadastral Zone, along airport road in Abuja. The grand opening of the building, which held on June 5th and 6th, 2023 featured a scientific seminar, gala night and commissioning ceremony witnessed by dignitaries from within and outside the country.

At the first scientific seminar organized by the IHVN International Research Center of Excellence (IRCE), President of the University of Maryland Baltimore, Dr Bruce Jarell, stated that the campus is a testament to the tireless efforts by IHVN in virology research and combating infectious diseases in Nigeria.

"We recognize the critical role of IHVN in

advancing scientific knowledge, developing innovative treatment and improving health care outcomes for their communities. IHVN will continue to make significant contributions in the field of virology and infectious diseases and UMB is committed to our working together now and in the future," he said.

In line with the seminar's theme, titled, "Addressing Local Health Challenges through Quality Research and Partnerships," IRCE Executive Director, Prof. Alash'le Abimiku, said that the center is committed to quality research and partnerships.

"As we continue on this journey, we remain committed to fostering a culture of collaboration, mentorship, knowledge sharing and bringing together experts from various

fields to tackle health challenges from multiple angles," she said. The seminar featured presentations from policy makers, seasoned and upcoming researchers as well as abstract poster presentations.

In his presentation, Co-discoverer of HIV, Prof Robert Gallo called for innovative research to deliver a HIV/AIDS free future. "In HIV, preventive vaccine is not in the immediate horizon, but I can honestly tell you that I see hope coming from certain directions ... we need freeing up independent ideas of independent investigators to reach a point where we can become super collaborative with clinical trials in a more productive manner," he said.

Cont'd on page 2



Front view of IHVN twin towers, a seven story building in Abuja.

Page 1 continuation

IHVN Unveils Campus in Abuja

After the scientific seminar, guests were thrilled to an evening of celebration and awards at a commissioning gala night held at the Congress Hall of Transcorp Hilton. IHVN presented awards to health care providers and clients for their support and contributions to the Institute's achievements in providing HIV prevention, care and treatment services to Nigerians.

According to the IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum, the gala night celebrates the hundreds of thousands of lives that have been saved from death and hopelessness.

"We gather to celebrate our collective efforts not just in implementing a successful public health program for years but the countless lives of people who have moved from a place of hopelessness to being full of life. Today, we can see that a HIV positive test result is not a death sentence. We are glad to be part of the stories of life and hope of more than 600,000 individuals who have accessed HIV treatment through our support," he said. The commissioning grand finale and ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the IHVN Campus. IHVN Chairman Board of Directors, Prof. Emeritus Umaru Shehu, who unveiled the building predicted that the facilities will soon become the destination for medical tourism, clinical diagnostics, treatment, and care for people with infectious and non-infectious diseases.

"I see more young scientists inspired and emboldened by the facilities on this Campus to develop and execute research projects under the mentorship of more experienced investigators at the Institute's International Research Center of Excellence," he said.

Prof Emeritus Umaru Shehu, who was represented by IHVN Board Director, Sir Steve Omojafor, appreciated donors, banks, organizations, individuals, and staff of the Institute for their generous donations to

make the edifice a reality.

"Our special gratitude goes to the management of the Institute for the judicious management of donor funds, and most importantly for leading the Institute since 2004 to save the lives of millions of Nigerians from the scourge of communicable and non-communicable diseases," he added.

Guests at the ceremony were also led on a tour of the building which hosts world-class

microbiology laboratories.

The building also has a Clinical Trials Unit, which will be a home for conducting clinical trials which specifically state how vaccines or drugs work in our population and the adverse effects observed.

With completion of the first phase of the campus, the Institute is to focus on completing the second and third phases of the structure, which includes a multi-level car park, as well as a 700-capacity



Side view of the IHVN Campus.



Division Head, Global Health Sciences, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Prof Alan Charurat, and Director Center for International Health, Education and Bio-Security, Dr Kristen Stafford at a ceremony to mark the grand opening of the IHVN Campus in Abuja.



IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum; Executive Director, International Research Center of Excellence, Prof Alash'le Abimiku and IHVN Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director, Dr Charles Ololekan Mensah at the Gala Night to celebrate the commissioning of the IHVN Campus.



Dancers entertain guests at a gala night in Abuja to mark the commissioning of the IHVN Campus.

Cont'd on page 3

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Dr. Patrick Dakum

MEMBERS:
Dr. Mrs. Emilia Iwu
Dr. Sam Peters

Rifkatu Aimu
Dr. Ahmad Aliyu
Fati Murtala Ibrahim

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Professor William Blattner
Dr. Alash'le Abimiku
Dr. Man Charurat

Dr. Nadia A. Sam Agudu
Oche Yusuf
Dr. Helen Omuh

EDITORS:
Uzoma Nwofor
Blessing Ukpabi

Page 2 continuation

IHVN Unveils Campus in Abuja

conference center and 50-room hotel.

... Receives US Commendation

The United States Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Rolf Olson, has commended the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) for its years of commitment in improving the health of Nigerians. Mr Olson said this during the official commissioning of the IHVN Campus consisting of a seven-story

twon tower in Abuja. "The work you do here not only protects the health of the people of Nigeria but people around the region," he said. He re-iterated the US government's commitment towards impacting the health of Nigerians in a positive way, strengthening health security here and establishing Nigeria as a leader in public health science.

"The US government's current sub-Saharan Africa strategy reiterates our

commitment to health security in the region, and through our agencies like CDC, we are able to work toward the vision of a world where people live healthier, safer, and longer lives.

CDC's mission is to protect and improve health globally through science, policy, partnership, and evidence-based public health action. These actions, driven by science and data, are a core component of the US government's global health diplomacy efforts in Nigeria," he added.

Children in Schools, Orphanages & Destitute Homes Receive Free Tuberculosis Screening

By Nkechi Chinedu-Asogwa

To mark the 2023 Childhood Tuberculosis National Testing Week, the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has provided free integrated health screening in schools, orphanages, destitute homes and correctional centers in Ogun, Osun, Oyo and Lagos States.

The awareness and screening activity was held in communities as well as immunization and nutrition clinics in both public and private health facilities. More than 40,000 children received screening, out of which 105 children with tuberculosis were identified and linked to care.

IHVN Chief of Party, USAID TB-LON 3 project, Dr Aderonke Agbaje, said that the focus on children during the testing week is because, "Children are change agents and should be engaged in the fight against tuberculosis."

In preparation for the week, the Institute had partnered with Breakthrough ACTION Nigeria to educate health reporters about tuberculosis and the need for improved awareness about the disease.

Low index of suspicion amongst mothers

and child caregivers remains a major risk factor to the diagnosis and treatment of childhood TB.

The TB-LON 3 School Health Club launch is one of the Institute's responses to increase TB awareness amongst children. Students, teachers and parents were decorated as TB ambassadors and charged with a duty to further drive the message of TB to their families and in the community at large.

The USAID TB-LON 3 project is a five year project being implemented by IHVN with funding from the United States Agency for International Development. The goal of the Project is to innovatively engage all stakeholders in finding missing Tuberculosis (TB) cases by rapidly scaling up tuberculosis services, whilst strengthening resilient and sustainable systems for tuberculosis control.



Tuberculosis screening ongoing at children correctional center, Idi-Araba, Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State.



IHVN team sensitizing and conducting tuberculosis screening in Ajeromi Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria.

PHOTO GALLERY

Scientific Seminar



Executive Director International Research Center of Excellence (IRCE), Prof Alash'le Abimiku addressing participants at the IRCE first scientific seminar to mark the commissioning of IHVN campus.



IHVN Board Director, Prof Aba Omatunde Sagoe, giving a goodwill message at the scientific seminar.



Seminar participants engage in discussions during the event.



Director General of the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr Ifedayo Adetifa, speaking on "Emergency Epidemic Response: Lessons from COVID-19" at the seminar.

Gala Night



IHVN Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director, Dr Charles Olanekan Mensah welcoming guests to the Gala Night held at the Congress Hall of Transcorp Hilton in Abuja.



IHVN Board Director, Sir Steve Omojofar presenting a special award for Foundation Technical Mentorship to Dr James Shepherd from Yale University.



IHVN Chief Executive Officer addressing guests at the gala night in celebration of the commissioning of the IHVN Campus.



Gala Night guests at the buffet table.

Commissioning



L-R IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum; Country Director US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, Dr Mary Boyd, US Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr Rolf Olson; Executive Director International Research Center of Excellence, Prof. Alash'le Abimiku, and IHVN Chief Operating Officer/Managing Director, Dr Charles Olanekan Mensah at the commissioning of IHVN Campus.



Director General, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, Dr Gombo Aliyu, giving a remark at the commissioning ceremony.



IHVN Board Director, Ms Josephine Toppun; IRCE Executive Director, Prof Alash'le Abimiku; CDC Country Director, Dr Mary Boyd; IHVN Board Director, Sir Steve Omojofar; Board Director, Dr Umaru Mutallab; IHVN Founder, Prof William Blattner; IHVN Board Director, Mr Foluso Phillips and IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum.



IHVN Board Director, Ms Josephine Toppun; IRCE Executive Director, Prof Alash'le Abimiku; CDC Country Director, Dr Mary Boyd; IHVN Board Director, Sir Steve Omojofar; Board Director, Dr Umaru Mutallab; IHVN Founder and Board Director, Prof William Blattner and his wife, Mrs Diane Blattner; IHVN Board Director, Mr Foluso Phillips and IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum.

NaLECC Gains International Accreditation

By Luret Dakum

The National Laboratory Equipment Calibration Centre (NaLECC) has received international accreditation to calibrate laboratory equipment for quality assurance and optimum performance. The center's ISO 17025:2017 accreditation by Kenya Accreditation Service (KENAS), makes it the first in West Africa certified to provide this service.

Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) provided technical support to the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria (MLSCN) in the establishment and accreditation of the center.

At a ceremony to unveil the accredited center, IHVN Technical Adviser Laboratory Services, Mr Abubakar Abdullahi noted that IHVN and MLSCN have had a long-standing relationship since 2004. Getting this accreditation is a big achievement for Nigeria and West Africa.

"The fact that we can now have laboratory tests here in Nigeria makes it cheaper and more accessible within a very short time. We supported NaLECC as an implementing partner of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC was



Hon. Minister of State for Health, Barr. Joseph Ekumankam, CDC Country Director Dr. Mary Adetunke Boyd and Registrar/Chief Executive Officer of the Medical Laboratory Council of Nigeria, Dr. Tosan Erhabor unveiling the National Laboratory Equipment Calibration Centre accreditation certificate at a ceremony in Abuja.

magnanimous in project. I think it is also based on our strength in the laboratory and because IHVN has a good reputation for developing capacity in terms of laboratory personnel, structure and quality of our services. We are hoping that all facilities in the country will utilize the center and begin to get basic equipment calibrated."

The unveiling ceremony witnessed the presentation of accreditation certificate to the center by the Hon. Minister of State for Health, Barr. Joseph Ekumankama and goodwill messages by partners.



IHVN Technical Adviser Laboratory Services, Mr Abubakar Abdullahi and IHVN Senior Manager Laboratory Services, Mrs Balogun Oyeimpe receiving guests on a tour of the National Laboratory Equipment Calibration Centre.

MLSCN Registrar and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Tosan Erhabor, thanked CDC for the establishment, equipping and training of personnel for the center.

"The funding from CDC and technical support from IHVN led to the attainment of the accreditation status. We are indeed grateful to them," he said.

Dr Erhabor also appealed to the Federal Government of Nigeria to mandate Federal health facilities to avail themselves of the services at the center and other accredited laboratories in the country.

IHVN Joins VERDI Consortium MPox Research Project

By Chibueze Adineje

The 2022 mpox (monkeypox) pandemic has brought a Nigerian and West/Central African endemic disease to global attention. As a result, new international collaborations were created and scientists across the world began to work towards a better understanding of mpox and its impact on all populations. While the global outbreak outside Africa largely affected men who have sex with men, in African countries, children and pregnant

women are at particular risk. The European Union-funded VERDI Consortium comprises nearly 30 teams of researchers from 16 countries in Europe, Africa, North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia

Given its track record of impactful infectious disease research, the International Research Centre of Excellence (IRCE) at the Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria (IHVN) was invited to join the VERDI consortium in 2022.

IRCE-IHVN has a VERDI sub-award to contribute Nigerian data to a global pediatric mpox registry, conduct qualitative studies on mpox in the Nigerian context, and to develop research tools as well as a master protocol for an observational study of mpox among pregnant women in Nigeria. This study seeks to preempt future infectious disease outbreaks by consolidating pandemic preparedness measures.

IHVN Distributes HIV Self-Test Kits to Corp Members

The Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria (IHVN) has distributed more than 200 HIV self-test kits to corp members volunteering in the Anti-HIV Community Development Service group in Abuja. Prior to the distribution, the corp members who gathered at the Old Parade Ground in Abuja, received sensitization on the use of the kits. IHVN Senior Program Officer Prevention, Mr. Yaro Daniel said that “HIV self-test kits provide a user-friendly and easily accessible testing option as they can be completed at home or in private settings, eliminating the need for clinical visits and potential stigmatization. Many youths these days do not want to get tested for the fear of stigmatization,” he said. He added that self-test kits offer an alternative testing method, reach individuals who may be reluctant or unable to visit healthcare facilities and those who might face barriers to accessing healthcare services



A practical session on the use of the self test kit in progress at the event.



A cross section of corp members displaying the self test kits they received.

such as key population. “This can lead to higher testing rates, and subsequently reduce the transmission of the virus. HIV self-test kits can provide a discreet and convenient testing option tailored to the specific needs of key population,” he said. Anti-HIV Community Development Service Group Vice President, Mr. Basorun Abdul

expressed his gratitude to IHVN for the practical sessions on the use of self-test kits. “We look forward to partnering with IHVN to ensure that people get tested and know their status,” he said.

Free HIV testing services were also provided to Corp Members at the event.

Project Integrates SRH to HIV Services in Four States

To improve sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among people living with HIV in FCT, Nasarawa, Rivers and Katsina states, Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN) has commenced implementation of a project to integrate SRH into HIV care services.

The project, funded by BMZ German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development through Gesundes Africa, has provided screening and referrals for treatment for sexually transmitted infections, family planning as well as cervical cancer screening.

IHVN SRH Project Coordinator, Dr Victoria Igbinomwanhia, said that the

services are also being integrated in the community level and provided in key population One Stop Shops.

“When volunteers go to the community to drop off HIV medications, they assess the clients for SRH services, those who are eligible are appropriately referred to health facilities where they can receive these free services,” she said. Dr Igbinomwanhia noted that the project, has been implemented for a year and has provided SRH services to 49,126 individuals as at June 2023.

“We have also been creating



IHVN Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Unit Head, Mrs Rifkatu Aimu; Gesundes Africa Project Officer, Sabrina Mwangi; IHVN SRH Project Coordinator, Dr Victoria Igbinomwanhia; Gesundes Africa Project Officer, Finja Horwig; IHVN Director, Prevention Care and Treatment, Dr Helen Ormah; and IHVN Senior Finance Officer, Mrs. Akinyedede Oluwakemi SRH pose for a picture at the IHVN campus in Abuja.

awareness about these services through radio jingles in Hausa, English and Pidgin English in these states,” she added.

USAID TB-LON 3 Inaugurates School Health Club

by Nkechi Chinedu-Asogwa

To commemorate World
Tuberculosis Day 2023, the USAID

Lagos State Ministry of Education, Mr
Adeyemi Adebayo, expressed his delight at

Prior to the launch, Institute of Human
Virology Nigeria (IHVN) which implements