

PEPFAR News

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TAKING ACTION!

by Olayinka Balogun

31 years on, from the discovery of the first two cases of HIV and AIDS in Nigeria, HIV-related stigma and discrimination continue to hinder HIV prevention and care efforts in the country. Of particular concern is stigma and discrimination in health care settings. This changed for Kebbi State in 2014, thanks to the U.S. Ambassador's Small Grants Program (ASGP).

An \$8000 grant to Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (NEPHWAN) - Kebbi State Chapter - supported activities directed largely toward training for legal and judicial officials about stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, as well as for community health care workers. The lawyers trained have subsequently helped pro bono to prosecute 29 cases on varying degrees of stigmatization and discrimination.

Barrister Mohammed Yusuf Isgogo – a participant of the training for legal

and judicial officials - said: "After the training on HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in the State, we established a strong link between NEPHWAN and the state chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association. NEPHWAN were mandated to report to the NBA any form of stigma and discrimination that may be meted against them either covertly or overtly, intentionally or accidentally. They did that and so many were convicted especially medical personnel and military and para-military recruitment. In fact about 5 nurses lost their jobs because they failed to comply with ethics of patients' confidentiality".

The grant also helped train community health care workers, as health institutions in the State have a bad reputation for bias against HIV-positive patients. The community health care workers received training in psycho-social support skills, ethics, adherence to anti-retro-viral treatment, and palliative care and support for bed-ridden HIV/AIDS patients.

"Before the training, a good number of my colleagues and I knew that HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination is very rampant in our place of work, hospital and social settings and we also knew as lawyers that it's an offence to either overtly or covertly stigmatize or discrimination against anyone. But we never had a formal understanding with NEPHWAN to facilitate the proceedings of such case and nobody reported such offences to us so we could take legal action against the perpetrators of such offences" concluded Barrister Isgogo.

NEPHWAN Kebbi State Chapter notes that the fear of a lawsuit has greatly reduced the incidence of discrimination in health institutions, the workplace, and social settings in the State.

The U.S. Ambassador's Small Grants Program is designed to help communities help themselves. Please address enquiries regarding the Ambassador's Small Grants Program to PEPFARSG@state.gov

LeaderSpeak

“ Millions of Persons Living with HIV all over the world, including Nigeria are alive today and living a better life because of PEPFAR...”

...ARFH expresses appreciation to the American People who through PEPFAR, an expression of human kindness, are creating hope and opportunities for OVC and their caregivers, who otherwise would have been sentenced to death or perpetual deprivation resulting from the consequence of HIV/AIDS.

- Dr. Iyabode M. Olusanmi

Chief of Party, LOPIN 1 Project and formerly the Country Representative of UNICEF in Ghana

You Need To Know

APPROACHES TO ENDING AN ENDURING EPIDEMIC

by Angela Agweye

All over the world, experts now recognize that putting an end to the HIV epidemic requires that at least 90% of the people living with HIV in every country are diagnosed, at least 90% of those diagnosed be placed on treatment and at least 90% of those on treatment have clinically suppressed levels of the virus in their blood.

Given the huge burden of the epidemic and the scarce resources available to achieve this in Nigeria, it makes sense to utilize the best/most efficient approaches possible to identify people within a community that are most vulnerable to HIV because of economic, social and behavioral characteristics, rather than just aiming to offer HIV tests



to everybody in a community. This targeted testing approach offers the best opportunity to identify those who are HIV positive and are not aware of this fact, in order to link them to widely available care and treatment services.

As with all HIV testing procedures, people still have to consent to a needle prick test to know their HIV status, even though the targeted testing approach aims to increase the likelihood that people with high risk factors and potentially exposed to HIV can be reached with the tests. Usually in facility based testing, patients can opt-in or opt-out of a HIV test. Opt-in- refers to a situation where providers notify patients that HIV testing is available but they are required to request it while in opt-out situations the patients are notified that they will be tested unless they decline

An HIV Timeline

January 2016

Researchers declare that an international study involving more than 1,900 patients with HIV who failed to respond to the antiretroviral drug - tenofovir - a key HIV treatment medication - indicates that HIV resistance to the medication is becoming increasingly commonplace.

February 2016

At the 23rd annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), researchers report that a man taking the HIV-prevention pill, Truvada has contracted HIV - this marks the first reported infection of someone regularly taking the drug

News & Tidbits

Dr. Hank Tomlinson has been appointed Principal Deputy Director for U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Global HIV and TB. Based in Atlanta Georgia, Dr. Tomlinson will assume his new position in February 2017.

According to David J. Young, Deputy Chief of Mission U.S. Embassy Nigeria,

Dr. Tomlinson's appointment demonstrates clear recognition of all his outstanding work as Country Director of CDC here in Nigeria.

PEPFAR News congratulates Hank on this new accomplishment in his public health career