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PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Activity Assisted a Quarter of a Million Vulnerable Nigerians Affected by the HIV Epidemic Over Five Years

Abuja – Over the past five years, a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) activity operating in five states has reached nearly 250,000 of the most vulnerable Nigerians – children affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic – and their caregivers.

Since 2014, the Local Partners for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Project in Nigeria Region 3 (LOPIN 3) provided these families with discrete linkages to treatment, health care services including psychosocial support, protection services, household economic strengthening, job skills and seed funding for small business startups, education, and nutrition counseling.

“This activity helped these populations obtain equitable access to quality health services and helped community health systems become more responsive to their needs,” USAID Mission Director Stephen M. Haykin said at the closing ceremony. “Providing referrals to access health care and protection services along with education and job training strengthened resilience within vulnerable households.”

Working at the community level, the \$10 million LOPIN 3 mobilized 26 indigenous civil society organizations to improve their systems, program management, and administrative capacity. It also strengthened state ministries of Women Affairs, AIDS control agencies, and other organizations to provide a better response to the epidemic and its affected populations.

The project operated in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ebonyi, Adamawa, and Kano states. In concert with two other sister activities with the same project goals, the LOPIN activities covered a total of nine states. Through the three LOPIN activities, USAID has supported more than half a million children orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV and AIDS.

Implemented by Health Initiatives for Safety and Stability in Africa (HIFASS), LOPIN 3 reached more than 184,000 vulnerable children and their households with its bouquet of services. It also provided critical support to 48,000 of these children’s caregivers.

Under the activity, block grants helped vulnerable children access schools – assisting academic progress for thousands of youth, with equal opportunity for girls and boys. Its approach not only protected young people from the stigma of association with HIV, but also helped eliminate the perception of people living with HIV as anything less than vibrant, productive community members.

Beneficiary Racheal Bassey, 21, from Cross River State, said she lost her mother as a teenager due to complications from HIV, and had to drop out of school when her father later met with an accident and could no longer pay the fees. Struggling to find paid work, she came across the project, which provided her training in fashion design and importantly, boosted her self-confidence and determination despite some initial doubts. “They gave me an opportunity to really focus on something,” Racheal said. “Now I am running my own shop, which has been successful.”

As with all USAID activities, the practices and procedures it introduced have the potential to serve as models to be replicated and scaled-up by the state and local governments in the five focus states and beyond.

Through USAID and sister agencies, the U.S. government is committed to continuing the fight against HIV and AIDS in Nigeria. Since 2018 alone, USAID has supported testing of over two million people for HIV and successfully linked 80 percent of those identified as positive into treatment.

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ABOUT USAID: *USAID leads international development and humanitarian efforts to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance and help nations progress beyond assistance. In Nigeria, USAID supports health systems strengthening, transparent and accountable governance, basic education, and a more market-led, trade-friendly economy. For more information about USAID and its programs, please visit <https://www.usaid.gov/nigeria>. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter: @USAIDNigeria](#).*

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