



ECEWS RISING

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From the CEO's Desk



As we flip through the pages of another enlightening edition of our newsletter, I am filled with pride and thankfulness to observe our community's unwavering spirit in action. Each story, article, and activity highlighted on these pages exemplifies the unwavering commitment and passion that propel us ahead in our purpose.

This edition features inspiring stories of change-makers who are making a difference in the lives of many people, overcoming obstacles with fortitude, and paving the path for a brighter, more inclusive future. Their tales highlight the transforming power of compassion, collaboration, and determination.

We are also excited to share updates on our ongoing projects, upcoming events, and opportunities for you to get involved. Your support, whether through volunteering, donations, or advocacy, plays a crucial role in amplifying our impact and bringing about meaningful change.

As we navigate through these challenging times, let us remember that our strength lies in unity and solidarity. Together, we can create a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey. Your unwavering support in our cause fuel our efforts and inspire us to reach greater heights.

Let's continue to stand together, uplift each other, and build a brighter future for all.

With gratitude,

Andy Eyo

Chief Executive Officer, ECEWS



Against all Odds

How a Seed Grant Revitalized Elizabeth Etim Udo's Palm Oil Business and Restored Hope

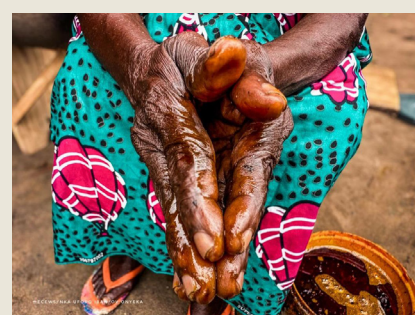
Elizabeth Etim Udo, a 75-year-old widow from Uruk Uso village in Abak LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, is a testament to resilience. Despite enduring the loss of all her children and a permanent eye injury sustained during her youth, she has remained steadfast in her pursuit of a livelihood. Her primary source of income has been her palm oil business.

Years ago, a tragic accident in a palm fruit mill left her with impaired vision in one eye. Undeterred, she continued to operate her small-scale palm oil business, buying and selling the commodity in small quantities to make ends meet.

Elizabeth's unwavering spirit caught the attention of Nkan Uforo Iban USA, working with ECEWS. They awarded her a seed grant designed to

empower small-scale traders. This lifeline has provided her with the opportunity to purchase palm oil in bulk, potentially increasing her profits and expanding her business.

Elizabeth's story is a beacon of hope, demonstrating that even in the face of adversity, strength and determination can pave the way for a brighter future.



ECEWS Hosts Abbott's Molecular Team, Explores Diagnostic

We recently had the pleasure of hosting Abbott's Molecular Team at our headquarters. Led by Mr. Sanjay Rudnath, Africa Director, they were warmly received by our CEO Dr. Andy Eyo. The team's visit aimed to foster collaboration and explore growth opportunities.

The Abbott Director expressed his appreciation for the organisation's significant world-class investments in laboratory services in Akwa Ibom State made possible through the PEPFAR/USAID-funded Accelerating Control of the HIV Epidemic (ACE-5) Project. The discussion also centered on expanding diagnostic capabilities at molecular laboratories supported by the project, leveraging Abbott's cutting-edge Alinity M analyzers.

Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) looks forward to continued partnership with Abbott, empowering communities and enhancing health outcomes.



Abbott Africa Director, Mr. Sanjay Rudnath with ECEWS CEO, Dr. Eyo



Group photograph of the Abbott and ECEWS team.



DST production by lab team at IDH-DLHMH

Strengthening HIV Testing Accuracy: ECEWS Partners with Ministries of Health in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States

In collaboration with the Ministries of Health in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, ECEWS, through the USAID-funded ACE-5 Project successfully facilitated the production of Dried Tube Specimen (DTS), Proficiency Testing (PT), and Quality Control (QC) Panels at the Dr. Lawrence Henshaw Memorial Hospital, Calabar. They developed HIV Quality Control and Proficiency Testing Panels using Dried Tube Specimen technology by the National HIV Rapid Test Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative (RTCQI).

With over 630 HIV testing points supported across both states, ECEWS ensures accurate testing through routine quality control, competency assessments, and proficiency testing. This initiative is a crucial step in enhancing the accuracy and reliability of HIV testing across the region.

Strengthening Ad-Hoc Capacity for Effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Practices: Strategic Information Integrated Training for Ad-Hoc Staff in Osun State



Group photograph of Director of SI, Osun State Agency for the Control of AIDS (OSACA) and Participants

In a bid to enhance data collection, and reporting, and ensure data accuracy, ECEWS recently organised a comprehensive 5-day integrated training for SI ad-hoc staff in Osun State. The training brought together Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) assistants from facilities and communities, data entry assistants, Strategic Information (SI) interns, and M&E personnel from partner CBOs (Community-based Organisations). The primary aim was to strengthen the skills of M&E personnel across three states by implementing the Center for Disease Control- Sustainable Program for HIV Epidemic Control and Equitable Service Delivery (CDC-SPEED) Project, focusing on improving data management and program effectiveness.

The training was led by Dr. Ochedomi David, Director of Strategic Information, SPEED Project, along with key stakeholders from the Osun State Agency for the Control of AIDS (OSACA), ECEWS Osun State Technical Lead, SI Lead, and M&E team. Participants covered an array of topics, including data quality measures, an overview of Patient monitoring and management

(PMM) and Program Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) tools, and reporting platforms like Nigeria medical record system (NMRS)/ District Health Information System (DHIS)/ National Data Repository lite (NDRLite). They also explored the PEPFAR MER Indicator Reporting Guide and gained insights into balancing optimism and pessimism for workplace well-being. The training emphasized maintaining data quality dimensions such as accuracy, completeness, consistency, timeliness, and confidentiality to ensure high-quality, data-driven decision-making.

Key components of the Integrated training included structured PowerPoint presentations, brainstorming sessions, group work, best practices sharing, and hands-on DHIS navigation practical sessions to ensure data concurrency across NDRLite and DHIS reporting platforms. The event concluded with a panel discussion comprising the SI Director of the SPEED project, the State Incident Commander, and the SI lead for Osun state, toward improving healthcare data quality and reporting practices, reinforcing participants' critical roles in driving healthcare data improvement.

ECEWS Strengthens Capacity of Community Birth Centres in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States for Enhanced Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV

A competency-based assessment was conducted to pinpoint areas requiring improvement, marking the start of a quality improvement journey aimed at ensuring consistency and high quality in communities located across Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. This training is part of ECEWS' initiative to strengthen the capacity of birth centers to deliver quality services to pregnant women and reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV.



Community PMTCT Intervention in Ikrom LGA



Scaling Up PMTCT Services: Activation Of Five Community Birth Centers In Akwa Ibom State

The National AIDS and STI Control Program (NASCP) has identified the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV as a key priority in Nigeria's fight against new HIV infections. With Nigeria accounting for the highest number of new HIV infections among children globally, 90% of these cases are linked to mother-to-child transmission (MTCT). Despite ongoing efforts, an estimated 7.7 million pregnant women, with 33% of pregnant women in Nigeria have received antiretroviral therapy (ARV) to prevent MTCT by the end of 2022. This challenge is particularly severe in rural areas with limited access to healthcare.

To address this, NASCP, in collaboration with partners like USAID, has developed state-specific strategic frameworks aimed at eliminating mother-to-child transmission (eMTCT) of HIV. These frameworks are designed to improve service delivery in healthcare

facilities and communities. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in linking pregnant women in rural areas, including Community Birth Centers (CBCs), to PMTCT services.

In Akwa Ibom State, the government with support from USAID-funded initiatives like the ECEWS-implemented ACE-5 project, has mapped out over 2,000 CBCs from which the project currently supports 522. The project has been instrumental in addressing this gap, particularly in vulnerable areas. On September 12th and 13th, the ACE-5 project team activated five CBCs in Abak, Etim Ekpo, and Itu Local Government Areas, providing comprehensive HIV testing services to pregnant women and focusing on PMTCT. This activation marks significant progress in expanding PMTCT services to hard-to-reach communities, ensuring that pregnant women receive timely, high-quality HIV testing and care. A crucial aspect of this initiative was empowering local healthcare workers. Through competency assessments and training on the "5 Cs" of HIV testing (Consent, Confidentiality, Counselling, Correct Results, and Connection to Care), healthcare workers were equipped to deliver compassionate and effective care. Additionally, the team evaluated the physical infrastructure of the CBCs and assessed Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) using the Site Improvement through Monitoring System (SIMS) and Stepwise Process for Improving the Quality of HIV Rapid and Recency Test (SPI-RRT SPI-RRT) checklist.

These assessments identified key areas for improvement, ensuring that services at the CBCs remain safe and reliable. In addition to training, HIV testing commodities were also provided to ensure continuous service delivery. For women like Imaobong Ezekiel from the Imaobong Ekaiko Delivery Home, these CBCs are more than medical centers, they are lifelines offering hope and essential care. However, the activation process faced challenges, such as flooding, poor road conditions, and long distances between centers. Yet, the dedication of the ACE-5 healthcare teams ensured success, contributing to breaking the cycle of HIV transmission in these communities.

With continued support from USAID through PEPFAR, the ACE-5 project implemented by ECEWS is committed to working with the Akwa Ibom State Government to expand these services. By empowering healthcare workers like Mary Essien at Ammesdy Homes, and Etimbuk Ime at 'We Care' Medical Centre, ECEWS is helping to achieve the national goal of eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Reaching the Unreachable

ECEWS Brings Hope to Vulnerable Communities



Photo Credit: Valentine Ogunaka

Communities in Bayelsa and Cross River states have benefitted from the ECEWS ACE-5 Project. These riverine communities hitherto have remained unreachable with access to basic healthcare service delivery, including HIV/AIDS services, as it is often impossible to access due to lack of infrastructure and the topography of the areas.

The ECEWS ACE-5 team in partnership with local community health workers who understand the terrain, languages, and cultures of the region accessed these areas by using boats to navigate through the riverine communities in order to deliver life-saving HIV medications to those in need and re-captured biometrics of clients thereby building a resilient healthcare service

delivery.

The team implemented door-to-door HIV testing, counseling, and biometric recapturing. They also provided antiretroviral drugs to those who tested positive. Meanwhile, there was a simultaneous immunization activities by the staff of the local government who were on ground to support the program.

The team innovatively used cool boxes to store and transport medication in order to ensure continuous treatment because the areas do not have access to electricity supplies or refrigerating facilities.

The beneficiaries of these initiatives were from the creek communities of Ibeno local government area in Akwa Ibom state and a remote village of Esuk Aye in Bakassi LGA of Cross River State.

These efforts have resulted in HIV testing for about 30 individuals, with 7 new HIV-positive cases placed on antiretroviral therapy.

Through collaboration and innovative strategies, the team has successfully delivered critical health services to some of the most isolated communities.



ECEWS Distributes Start-up Kit for Vulnerable Children and Caregivers in Ekiti State



Startup kits distributed to 12VC who were enrolled in FY23 into Skill acquisition

ECEWS, in collaboration with her partner Living Word Mission (LIWOM), distributed start-up kits to 12 vulnerable children enrolled in its Vocational Skill Acquisition Centers across the 16 LGAs in Ekiti state. These beneficiaries were selected based on an assessment highlighting their outstanding performance in regular attendance, positive attitude, and accelerated learning. The start-up kits included 10 sewing machines with pressing irons, a complete make-up kit box, phone-repairing tools, and a hair dryer with hairdressing equipment. In addition, income-generating materials were distributed to 14 caregivers engaged in small-scale businesses, aiming to bolster their entrepreneurial efforts and provide a pathway to financial independence.

The event was graced by the Wife of the Honorable Chairman of Ado-Ekiti LGA, Chief Mrs. Yetunde Osaloni, the Child Development Officers, and representatives from the State Ministry of Women Affairs, among others. Trainers from the skill centers, who were instrumental in shaping the beneficiaries' vocational journey, have committed to continuing their mentorship. The caregivers expressed their heartfelt gratitude and vowed to ensure the materials provided are put to good use.

ECEWS' Osun State team hosts a three-Day Performance Review and Sets Strategic Vision and Goals for FY25

The three-day performance review meeting focused on assessing past performance, addressing challenges, and setting goals for FY25 across thematic areas. The event opened with an engaging session where participants introduced themselves and explored career alternatives outside the nonprofit health sector. Key sessions included a review of FY24 performance, led by Dr. Oketokun, which highlighted areas of success and suboptimal indicators needing improvement.

A standout session was led by Dr. Ida-Michael John, who focused on the organization's core values, vision, and mission. He emphasized the importance of upholding the values of excellence, teamwork, integrity, and innovation within ECEWS. This interactive session allowed participants to reflect on their contributions and experiences, helping them align better with the organization's strategic goals.

The "Pause and Reflect" session played a crucial role in reassessing processes, identifying bottlenecks, and fostering team collaboration for continuous improvement. On the third day, the key stakeholders in the state were duly represented persons of SAPC, DPH, NCM, and the NEPWHAN representative. The meeting concluded with presentations on thematic work plans, team-building activities, and strategic discussions on the FY25 targets, ensuring the team was aligned for the upcoming year's goals and objectives.



The NCM (Dr Esan Bayode, OSUN State SPM, Adefiranye Oluwaseunfunmi)



Group photo of participants



The Director of Public Health, Osun State, Dr. Akeem Bello



A cross section of participants

Enhancing the Quality of GBV Services in Supported Facilities

Strengthening systems is a key driver of ECEWS's core value of continuous learning. In September, GBV service providers in the CDC-funded SPEED project implemented by Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) across supported facilities in Osun State, alongside key government stakeholders, participated in a four-day training on GBV Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). This training aligns with PEPFAR's goal of integrating evidence-based quality improvement approaches into GBV service delivery. Participants trained were equipped to apply global GBV service standards and utilize the standard GBV QA Tool for measurement and assessment.

Auxiliary Social Work and Community-Based Surveillance Training in Ekiti and Osun States

Simultaneously, ECEWS-SPEED Osun State held a comprehensive training for 25 case managers and Disease Surveillance Notification Officers, focusing on HIV/AIDS management and stigma reduction. From September 16th to 20th, 2024, the Ekiti State OVC/ Gender Unit hosted a vital capacity-building session for OVC Case Managers and Local Government Child Development Officers from the Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (EKSMoWASD). The training, opened by Mrs. Omotayo Olatilu, focused on enhancing skills in auxiliary social work, community-based surveillance, public health issues, and HIV/AIDS management.

Participants engaged in practical exercises covering social work ethics, case management, and gender-based violence interventions. The session concluded with Chief Mrs. Yetunde Osaloni awarding certificates and donating ₦20,000 for data-sharing initiatives. Pastor Marcus Williams provided critical resources to aid case managers



Group photo of participants at the training

in supporting children with learning difficulties.

This dual initiative strengthened the capacity of social workers and health professionals, empowering them to better address public health challenges and improve outcomes for vulnerable populations in Ekiti and Osun States.



A cross section of participants at the training

ECEWS Collaborates with NPHCDA to Conduct a 10-day Training for Frontline Health Care Workers in Ekiti State

ECEWS, with funding from US-CDC, collaborated with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) to train Frontline Healthcare Workers in Ekiti State. This training is part of a nationwide effort to equip frontline healthcare workers with the necessary skills to provide high-quality, integrated healthcare services, and respond effectively to emergencies. It aligns with the Renewed Health Sector Vision 2023-2026 and the National Health Sector Review and Investment Initiative (NHSRII), which both emphasize equitable access to quality PHC services and the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

ART Coordinators in Cross River State Receive Capacity Building on National Treatment Guidelines and Best Practices



Cross-section of participants during the training

The USAID-funded ACE-5 project implemented by ECEWS, in collaboration with the Cross River State Ministry of Health, organized a 3-day training for ART (Antiretroviral Therapy) Coordinators across 38 healthcare facilities in Cross River State. Held from August 26th to 28th, 2024, the training focused on national treatment guidelines, best practices, approaches, and the National Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Guide. The training is part of ECEWS' initiative to strengthen the ownership of the HIV response by government counterparts, improving the capabilities of program heads and staff at supported facilities, and boosting health outcomes through capacity building and system strengthening.

ECEWS in Collaboration with Ebonyi State Government on PMTCT

In a significant stride toward eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV, ECEWS, under the Global Fund Project, has partnered with the Ebonyi State Government to launch a Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) Technical Working Group (TWG). The inauguration ceremony, held at the State Ministry of Health's situation room, gathered key stakeholders, including the Ebonyi State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Moses Ekuma; Director of Public Health, Dr. Hycinth Ebenyi; and ECEWS' NTHRIP Deputy Project Director, Dr. Onyeka Osabiku.

This initiative aims to foster a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to reduce new HIV infections among infants in Ebonyi State. Dr. Hycinth Ebenyi highlighted the importance of the TWG, calling it a game-changer in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He expressed optimism that by harnessing the expertise of various stakeholders, transmission rates could be significantly reduced, leading to improved health outcomes for both mothers and their babies.

The PMTCT TWG will focus on key objectives such as program coordination, technical guidance, data monitoring, policy development, capacity building, and community engagement. Following its inauguration, the group will develop



a comprehensive work plan that outlines priority interventions and assigns roles to each stakeholder.

The launch has sparked hope among healthcare workers and community members, who believe that these coordinated efforts will drastically reduce the number of children born with HIV in Ebonyi State. This collaboration between ECEWS and the Ebonyi State Government marks a crucial step in addressing a critical public health issue, positioning the TWG to enhance PMTCT services and improve the quality of life for mothers and their children.



A cross Section of Participants at the training

ECEWS Conducts Financial Management and Sustainability Training for Implementing Agencies

As part of its commitment under the ACE-5 project, ECEWS organized a financial management and sustainability training for nine faith-based implementing agencies (IAs) involved in project implementation across Akwa Ibom (6) and Cross River States (3). The training was designed to strengthen the capacity of these organizations by equipping them with strategies for sustainable resource mobilization, enabling them to effectively manage and diversify their

funding sources, enhance service delivery, and ensure long-term financial stability.

A total of 35 participants attended the training, including 18 representatives from the implementing agencies, two government officials from each state, and ECEWS staff. The sessions covered a wide array of impactful topics, such as internal controls, resource mobilization for NGOs, strategic communication and advocacy, USAID rules and regulations, financial sustainability, grant management, innovative community engagement strategies, monitoring and evaluation, navigating implementing agencies, sustainable healthcare visioning, organizational capacity building, and advanced grant writing and proposal development.

Participants expressed deep appreciation for ECEWS and the ACE-5 project, praising the invaluable knowledge and insights gained during the training. Many highlighted the practical, hands-on approach of the sessions, which inspired fresh ideas to improve their organizations' processes and systems, ensuring long-term success and sustainability.

ECEWS Collaborates with Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health and NAFDAC for Logistic Refresher Training

In August 2024, the USAID-funded ECEWS ACE-5 project, in partnership with the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health's Logistics Management Coordination Unit and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), held a two-day refresher training on logistics management for Medical Laboratory Scientists and Pharmacists in Akwa Ibom State. The initiative aimed to strengthen the capacity of Nigerian healthcare professionals in managing essential health commodities, such as antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, rapid test kits (RTKs), condoms, lubricants, and other medical supplies.

The training focused on several key objectives: enhancing participants' understanding of logistics management principles, equipping them with practical skills for managing health commodities, and fostering the exchange of best practices across primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare facilities.

By improving the efficiency of supply chain management, this training is expected to significantly



Cross Section of participants at the logistics management training

boost healthcare delivery in Akwa Ibom State. Participants from all 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs) attended, representing a diverse group of Medical Laboratory Scientists, Pharmacists, Supply Chain Managers, and Health Administrators. The sessions incorporated a variety of learning methods, including presentations, group discussions, case studies, and hands-on practical exercises, ensuring an interactive and comprehensive learning experience.



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