

ECEWS CELEBRATES 24 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES

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ECEWS CEO Joins Maternal, Newborn, and Child Nutrition Health (AIM-MNCNH) as Advocacy Champion

From the CEO's Desk



As we move through the second quarter of 2025, we're immensely proud of the strides ECEWS continues to make in communities. June 19th marked our 24th anniversary, a milestone reflecting countless lives transformed and barriers broken. This year also celebrates a year of fruitful partnership with Aviclaire Farms, a collaboration built on sustainable agriculture and community empowerment.

This edition spotlights real progress through real people. You'll read about Mrs. Ima Udoka, whose sight-restoring cataract surgery renewed her independence and HIV treatment. In Ekiti, Mama Bintu, with just ₦5,500 and ECEWS's support, transformed her akara stall into a stable livelihood for her HIV-positive granddaughter. From ambulance boats becoming lifelines in the Delta creeks to the economic empowerment of women traders in Okobo LGA, each story underscores a powerful truth: when systems work for people, lives change.

ECEWS continues to lead in health innovation, from training health workers in Rivers State on health insurance to receiving USAID training for portable digital X-ray machines and enabling internet access in 100 Akwa

Ibom health facilities for smarter care. Our partnership with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) also reaffirms our dedication to protecting the vulnerable, preventing exploitation alongside treating illness.

These stories are more than reports; they embody our core mission: compassionate, client-centered, and community-rooted care. They remind us that progress is measured in restored vision, reopened stalls, renewed confidence, and stronger communities. As we celebrate 24 years of Changing Lives, I thank you for walking with us, believing in change, and being part of every story of hope.

With deep appreciation,

Dr. Andy Eyo
Chief Executive Officer, ECEWS

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Andy Eyo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Andy" and "Eyo" being larger and more prominent.

Chief Executive Officer, ECEWS

ECEWS Leads Healthcare Innovation with Internet Access to 100 Health Facilities in Akwa Ibom State

The Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health and Connect, Surf and Smile Ltd (CSSL) to enhance internet access across the state's healthcare facilities.

This partnership is to provide unlimited internet access to 100 Health Facilities supported by ECEWS, marking a significant milestone in the digitization of the healthcare sector.

Dr. Andy Eyo, CEO of ECEWS, commended CSSL for its strong collaboration and commitment to delivering the critical internet infrastructure needed to strengthen healthcare systems.

Also speaking at the signing, the Honourable Commissioner for Health, Dr. Ekem Emmanuel John, praised ECEWS for its continued support in advancing the state's health sector. He highlighted ECEWS' pivotal role in promoting renewable energy solutions, deploying solar power systems, and driving digital health innovations through its partnership with the U.S. Government.



ECEWS Hands Over AI-Powered Digital X-ray Machines to Boost TB Diagnosis in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States



ECEWS presented two (2) AI-driven Portable Digital X-ray (PDX) machines to the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health (AKSMoH) and Cross River State Ministry of Health (CRSMoH), to enhance Tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis of People Living with HIV (PLHIV), funded with support from the United States Government through the Accelerating Control of the HIV Epidemic in Nigeria (ACE-5 Project).

Speaking at the event, both state Commissioners for Health, Dr. Ekem Emmanuel John and Dr. Henry Ayuk, Cross River and Akwa Ibom State respectively commended ECEWS for its remarkable contributions to healthcare growth and digital health innovation, stating that the future of medicine is digital.

By improving access to cutting-edge diagnostic tools, this AI-powered technology is set to revolutionize healthcare delivery in both states. The Portable Digital X-ray machines will help facilitate faster, more accurate TB detection, ultimately advancing patient care and promoting better health outcomes through a more digital, efficient, and accessible model.





A Grandmother's Triumph: How a Small Seed of Hope Bloomed in Ado-Ekiti



This is the story of Mrs. Bintu Bello, a woman whose resilience shines brightly in Ado-Ekiti's Omisanjana Area. A widow and grandmother, she bravely took on the role of caregiver for her grandchild living with HIV. Through the vital support of the ECEWS-SPEED project, Mama Bintu's life, and that of her family, has been wonderfully transformed.

Mama Bintu's journey to Ado-Ekiti was born of tragedy. She relocated from Kano state, returning to her hometown with Yemi after the devastating loss of both Yemi's parents to the HIV pandemic. The move brought new challenges; providing for herself and her grandchild, and meeting the household's basic needs, became a daily struggle. Accessing healthcare for Yemi's vital drug refills and viral load collections often required escort services, highlighting the family's vulnerability.

Recognizing the urgent need to stabilize Mama Bintu's household, her case worker crafted a comprehensive care plan. A Household Economic and Vulnerability Assessment confirmed what was evident: Mama Bintu was struggling to make ends meet. The solution began with a modest investment: just five thousand five hundred Naira (N5,500). With this small capital, Mama Bintu, a woman of incredible determination, started a daily contribution scheme, a disciplined approach to saving that was confirmed during follow-up visits to her bustling roadside stall.

The ECEWS-SPEED project's commitment to her well-being didn't stop there. After attending invaluable financial literacy training, Mama Bintu received further empowerment. She was provided with essential supplies: half a bag of beans, 12 rubbers of baking flour, 5 liters of vegetable oil, a small basket of onions, and a small basket of fresh pepper. These weren't just provisions; they were the building blocks of her expanded dreams.

Today, Mama Bintu's business has blossomed. Her stall, once primarily focused on akara, now proudly offers an

array of treats, including puff-puff and sweet potatoes. But the true measure of her success lies beyond the delicious offerings. Mama Bintu can now proudly pay for her granddaughter Yemi's tuition in a higher institution, a dream that once seemed impossibly distant.

With a heart full of gratitude, Mama Bintu beams, "I am so thankful to CDC, ECEWS, and LIWOM for the support they gave my household. Because of them, I can sponsor my granddaughter's education, ensure she has access to her treatment, and meet all our household needs."

Mama Bintu's story is more than just a success; it's an inspiration, showcasing how targeted economic empowerment, coupled with unwavering support, can transform lives, ensuring health, stability, and a brighter future for vulnerable families in Nigeria.



ECEWS Receives the CCCRN Team at the Akwa Ibom State Office.

On May 5, 2025, the Akwa Ibom State team of the Center for Clinical Care and Clinical Research in Nigeria (CCCRN), implementing the Transforming Health and Resilience for Individuals Through Vibrant Empowerment (THRIVE) Project, paid a courtesy visit to ECEWS ACE-5 Akwa Ibom State Office. The visit was aimed at formally introducing the THRIVE Project's scope of work in the state, fostering deeper collaboration between both organizations, sharing strategic insights, and aligning programming efforts to ensure the continued delivery of critical, life-saving services to children and adolescents living with HIV (CALHIV).

During the meeting, the THRIVE team announced the commencement of direct service implementation in Akwa Ibom, with key focus areas including tracking clients for antiretroviral therapy (ART) refills, facilitating timely viral load testing, and expanding access to emergency health and nutritional support for CALHIV. The team also introduced a new feedback mechanism designed to respond to programmatic issues within seven days, particularly to enhance accountability in the care and support of orphans and vulnerable children.

A notable innovation unveiled during the visit was the upcoming rollout of chest X-ray screenings for CALHIV using a newly acquired portable digital X-ray machine. This intervention is expected to significantly improve early diagnosis and treatment outcomes for children and adolescents at risk of tuberculosis and other related conditions.

Both teams emphasized the importance of regular joint meetings to harmonize data reporting, strengthen program coordination, and drive measurable outcomes. Dr. Bala Gana, ECEWS ACE-5 State Director, appreciated the visit and reaffirmed ECEWS' commitment to sustained collaboration. He noted that strategic partnerships like this are essential for achieving meaningful, long-term impact as the THRIVE Project enters its next phase of implementation.



ECEWS Trains Rivers State Healthcare Workers on Health Insurance

ECEWS recently organized a two-day training for healthcare workers at the Model Primary Health Centre (MPHC), Abonnema, in preparation for the Akuku-Toru Community Health Insurance Project launch. Held on May 2 and 5, 2025, the training aimed to enhance health workers' knowledge on health insurance and define their roles in the project's success.

The sessions featured a combination of pre- and post-tests, expert presentations, breakout discussions, practical scenarios, and interactive Q&A sessions. Participants received presentations on key topics such as quality service delivery, patient-centered care, the importance of attitudinal change for improved medical services, proper documentation processes, and the role of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in effective health insurance systems. Special focus was given to the benefit package of the Renaissance Insurance Project to deepen participants' understanding of what enrollees stand to gain.

In a bid to provide real-world insights, the management of Obio Cottage Hospital, Port Harcourt, shared their decade-long experience managing health insurance in their facility. This exchange provided valuable lessons on best practices and common challenges in implementing health insurance schemes at the facility level. The training also featured a mock client enrollment exercise and breakout sessions into various service units, allowing participants to discuss unit-specific challenges and practical steps for overcoming them.

A total of 32 staff members from MPHC Abonnema, 4

LGA health officials, and the Medical Officer of Health participated in the training. Key stakeholders including representatives from the Rivers State Contributory Health Protection Programme (RIVCHPP), the health committee of the Abonnema Council of Chiefs, the management of Obio Cottage Hospital, and HMOs were also present to lend their expertise and support.

With this training, ECEWS reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening health systems, empowering healthcare providers with the knowledge and tools required to deliver quality, inclusive, and sustainable healthcare through the community health insurance model in Rivers State.



Empowering Children Living with HIV (CLHIV) to Achieve Viral Suppression



ECEWS recently organized a case conference for 106 children and adolescents living with HIV, along with their caregivers, from 11 US CDC funded SPEED project supported facilities. The conference brought together a multidisciplinary team, including pediatric care and support specialists, to provide comprehensive support. Key highlights of the conference included health education on the importance of viral suppression and self-health management, peer learning opportunities for participants to share experiences, and individual counseling for clients with specific needs. Some participants were referred to psychologists for further support. The ultimate goal is to achieve viral suppression, ensuring an undetectable status for the clients. This milestone will not only improve their health but also reduce the risk of transmission.

ECEWS is committed to collaborating with CALHIV, caregivers, and multidisciplinary teams to provide necessary support and achieve the 95-95-95 goal.

Utilizing Data-Driven Approaches to Strengthen Program Outcomes in Osun State

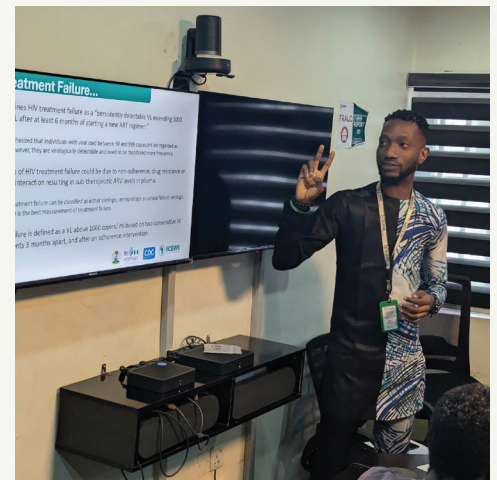
As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of HIV care and treatment services across supported facilities, the Osun State Adult ART TB/HIV team conducted a targeted data-driven engagement and capacity-building session for facility healthcare workers with suboptimal viral load suppression rates.

This strategic intervention brought together the State AIDS, STI and Viral Hepatitis Control Program Coordinator (SAPC), and a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, and adherence counsellors for a comprehensive learning and feedback session. The forum served as a platform to analyze facility-level viral load performance data, identify barriers to viral suppression, and co-develop practical strategies for improvement.

A key highlight of the session was the interactive role-play exercises and group discussions, which focused on improving adherence counselling techniques, strengthening client-service provider communication, and

optimizing clinical management of unsuppressed clients. Participants were also updated on the current approaches in treatment monitoring, early identification of treatment failure, and evidence-based interventions to support viral re-suppression.

This initiative reaffirms ECEWS dedication to achieving epidemic control by prioritizing quality care, promoting client-centred approaches, and sustaining viral load suppression across all supported sites.





ECEWS Celebrates 24 Years of Changing Lives

On June 19th, 2025, we celebrated a truly special day – our 24th Anniversary! It was a time of immense pride and gratitude as we reflected on over two decades of dedicated service across Nigeria, driven by a powerful passion to tackle critical health and social challenges. Our anniversary was marked by celebrations and heartfelt thanksgiving across various locations where we work. Our CEO, Andy Eyo, held an engaging media parley, where we connected with media organizations to discuss ECEWS's impactful interventions and outline our ambitious future plans.

In his words, "ECEWS has blossomed into a leading force in public health and community development". This 24-year journey has been powered by our amazing team's unwavering commitment, the deep trust of the communities we serve, and the invaluable support of all our partners and stakeholders."

Over these 24 years, ECEWS has pioneered innovative health interventions (from HIV/AIDS to maternal health), empowered countless individuals through education and support, strengthened health systems in collaboration with government and local organizations, and built resilient communities through our unique approaches. Crucially, we've always strived to reach the unreached, ensuring vulnerable populations are not left behind.



ECEWS Engages Key Health Stakeholders at NARD's May 2025 Ordinary General Meeting in Akwa Ibom State

Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) actively participated in the May 2025 Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) of the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The high-level event brought together key stakeholders from across Nigeria's health sector to deliberate on critical intersections between ethics, law, policy, and professional practice in healthcare delivery. The gathering attracted notable dignitaries, including Hon. Dr. Saviour Enyiekere, Executive Chairman of the National Assembly Service Commission; representatives of the Coordinating Minister of Health; and the Chief Medical Director of the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital (UUTH), among others.

ECEWS leveraged this platform to deepen stakeholder engagement and elevate its profile as a key partner in strengthening health systems in Akwa Ibom State. Delivering a goodwill message on behalf of ECEWS CEO, Dr. Andy Eyo, the State Director, Dr. Bala Gana, commended the contributions of resident doctors, particularly in the areas of HIV/TB care, maternal health, and emergency response. He reaffirmed ECEWS' commitment to sustained partnerships aimed at reducing stigma, improving access to quality healthcare, and strengthening service delivery in alignment with the objectives of the ACE-5 project.

The event featured keynote addresses, expert reflections, and critical policy discussions on the ethical and operational frameworks shaping medical practice in Nigeria. For ECEWS, participation in the OGM provided a valuable opportunity to engage with policymakers, medical professionals, and institutional leaders on collaborative strategies for health system strengthening and reform.

ECEWS participation in the OGM not only amplified the mission and impact of the ACE-5 project but also reinforced ECEWS' position as a trusted partner in delivering inclusive, stakeholder-driven health interventions across Akwa Ibom State.





Improving the Quality of GeneXpert Diagnostic Services for Tuberculosis Control in Osun State

ECEWS SPEED Project Osun state team, in collaboration with APIN and the Osun State TB program officer, recently supported a joint Quality Management System (QMS) assessment of GeneXpert laboratories in the state. This initiative underscores the importance of stakeholder engagement and inter-partner collaboration in strengthening TB laboratory services. By pooling the unique strengths of each implementing partner, the assessment aimed to foster accountability, promote best practices, and drive continuous quality improvement.

A key component of this oversight involved the active participation of GeneXpert lab focal persons and the TB program Officer in the recent Osun State Laboratory External Quality Assurance (EQA) meeting. Their involvement ensured the laboratory team remained aligned with EQA protocols, promoted shared learning, and encouraged ownership of quality goals. This collaborative effort is expected to yield several outcomes, including enhanced compliance with QMS standards, improved diagnostic accuracy and turnaround time, strengthened capacity of lab personnel through mentoring and peer learning, and greater synergy between partners. By reducing programmatic fragmentation, this partnership-driven approach will contribute to building resilient laboratory systems capable of delivering high-quality TB diagnostic services, ultimately advancing public health outcomes in Osun State.



ECEWS Launches Tekowa Support Group in Yakurr for Peer-Led PMTCT Support

To further ensure the elimination of new HIV infections among children, ECEWS ACE-5 team in Yakurr LGA, Cross River State, facilitated the formation of a new Mentor Mother-led PMTCT support group in May 2025. This initiative aligns with the strategic objectives of the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program, which emphasizes community-driven support as a key intervention for improving maternal and child health outcomes. The newly formed group, named the Tekowa Support Group, brings together HIV-positive pregnant and breastfeeding women under the guidance of trained Mentor Mothers. The group provides a safe and supportive space where members can access accurate health information, share their experiences, and receive continuous encouragement to adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and attend scheduled clinic visits. By fostering peer support and addressing stigma-related barriers, the Tekowa Support Group is expected to strengthen PMTCT outcomes in the community.

In addition to forming the group, the central cluster team



achieved a significant milestone by tracking and collecting Dried Blood Spot (DBS) samples from 12 HIV-exposed infants (HEIs) within the community. This success is particularly noteworthy given the challenges encountered, including difficulties in locating some mothers due to relocation or reluctance to present their infants for testing, often driven by fear of stigma or disclosure. The establishment of the Tekowa Support Group represents a vital step in community engagement for PMTCT in Yakurr LGA. Through continued mentorship, peer support, and diligent follow-up, the program remains committed to ensuring that every child has a chance to grow free of HIV.



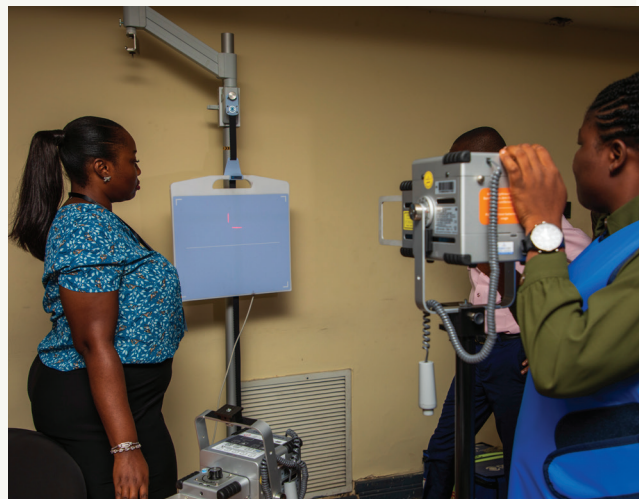
ECEWS Participates in USAID Training on CAD-enabled Portable Digital X-ray Technology

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance tuberculosis (TB) case finding among people living with HIV (PLHIV), the USAID HIV/AIDS & TB (HAT) Office recently organized a five-day intensive training on the use of Computer-Aided Detection (CAD)-enabled Portable Digital X-ray (PDX) machines. The training, held at the Sojourner by Genesis Hotel in Lagos, brought together 51 participants, including radiographers, clinicians, program managers, and data clerks, from implementing partners (IPs) across Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Lagos, Bayelsa, and Niger States.

ECEWS joined other USAID-supported implementing partners such as ACE 5, ACE 4, CARE 1, Thrive South, and Datafile for this high-impact training, which forms part of USAID's broader TB/HIV acceleration strategy. The initiative is designed to expand access to early TB diagnosis, particularly in resource-limited and hard-to-reach communities where timely detection is often challenging.

The training aimed to build the technical capacity of program teams through a combination of rigorous classroom-based instruction, practical demonstrations, and field deployment simulations. Participants were equipped with the knowledge and skills required to deploy, operate, and integrate PDX machines into their routine program workflows. The field simulation offered participants firsthand exposure to potential operational challenges, including logistics management, facility readiness, and multi-stakeholder coordination. At the close of the training, all participating IPs, including ECEWS, reaffirmed their commitment to fully deploy the PDX machines within two weeks. To facilitate successful implementation, participants were provided with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), operational guidelines, and access to a dedicated support platform for ongoing troubleshooting and technical assistance.

This milestone represents a significant step in strengthening TB detection in high-burden HIV settings, underscoring USAID's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and delivering client-centered care that leaves no one behind.





Reviving Hope: Refurbished Ambulance Boats Transforming Healthcare in Delta's Creeks

In Delta's intricate network of creeks, access to healthcare has always been a monumental challenge. For communities in these flood-prone areas, isolation means limited medical resources. ECEWS working with the Delta State Government, with funding from US-CDC, is changing this reality.

We've breathed new life into two previously disused maritime ambulance boats, originally acquired through PEPFAR. As a cornerstone of our Community Care and Treatment (CCT) initiatives under the "Integrated Delivery of Health Services," these vessels underwent a complete overhaul: refurbished interiors, repaired engines, and fresh paint. They now serve as mobile health units.

Following the unveiling of these rebranded boats and their inaugural journey to Obotebe, a remote community in Burutu LGA. The refurbished boats have significantly supported the Department of Public Health-led Integrated Community Health Outreach in Delta State "as well as other emergency public health response such as during the last cholera outbreak, measles campaign and the likes "

"This is a monumental step forward for our people," reflected Akpomudje Christiana, Local Government Agency for the Control of AIDS (LACA), Manager, Warri Southwest. "These revitalized boats has been able to move drugs and other medical consumables to these hard-to-reach area in Warri South LGA, delivering health and well-being directly to the community."

"The ripple effect is profound. Communities like Ogbeljoh in Warri Southwest, and other wards, villages and

fishing settlements are" now direct beneficiaries. These mobile health conveyors reach hundreds of men, women, and children who previously faced immense barriers accessing healthcare.

"Before these boats were restored, getting medical help was a major struggle for us "in the remote wards of Warri Southwest LGA," shared Dr, Emiko Ofuyaekpowe, Executive Secretary/ Medical Officer, Delta State Primary HealthCare Development Agency, Warri South-West Local Government Authority, Ogbu-ljoh. "Now, with these fully equipped ambulance boats, our integrated primary healthcare and public health activities are in the local government. Most of the activities and the emergency health response that we've carried out wouldn't have been possible."

These mobile clinics has helped moved medical consumables and medications to these hard-to-reach areas and helped to improve the lives of community members, allowing more people access to healthcare services.

These boats represent our dedication to equitable healthcare for all.

In riverine areas, boats are a life-saving link. ECEWS is actively working with communities and stakeholders to foster ownership and commitment, ensuring these invaluable assets are properly utilized and maintained for years to come. This collaboration stands as a powerful testament to bringing vital healthcare closer to those who need it most.



It's been one year of growth, resilience, and innovation as ECEWS marks the first anniversary of its strategic partnership with Aviclaire Farms, a collaboration aimed at advancing food security and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State. Exactly a year ago, Aviclaire Farms was officially commissioned and began operations with the transplanting of its very first set of seedlings. Since then, the farm has operated as a demonstration site, serving as a learning hub for soil and environmental assessments, seed variety trials, improved agronomic practices, and irrigation system refinement.

Through dedicated experimentation and consistent learning, Aviclaire Farms has blossomed into a model of agricultural excellence, offering consultancy services and empowering communities with knowledge and tools for sustainable farming.

ECEWS is proud to have walked this journey with Aviclaire Farms, united by a shared commitment to improving food systems and strengthening community livelihoods.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone, we salute the incredible team behind Aviclaire Farms, whose passion and perseverance have made this vision a reality.

Happy 1st Anniversary to Aviclaire Farms! Here's to many more years of impact, innovation, and bountiful harvests.

ECEWS Celebrates One Year of Impactful Partnership with Aviclaire Farms



From Despair to Dough: Theresa's Recipe for Resilience



In her community, Theresa, a dedicated caterer and married mother of three, faced a devastating challenge. She skillfully crafted cakes and pastries, but when her husband fell seriously ill with a stroke, losing his job, their family was plunged into extreme hardship. Through the vital support of the ECEWS-SPEED project, Theresa's life, and that of her family, have been wonderfully transformed.

Recognizing the dire situation, Theresa's case worker from the ECEWS-SPEED project conducted a thorough assessment. The Household Economic and Vulnerability Assessment (HEVA) revealed a stark reality: the family lacked even enough food for the children. A care plan was immediately put in place to strengthen Theresa's income-generating activities before their situation worsened.

When the opportunity for Household Economic Strengthening (HES) support arose, Theresa's resilience was rewarded. After attending crucial financial literacy training, she received a substantial boost to her business. This initial investment in essential supplies — including flour, butter, sugar, and eggs — wasn't just provisions; it was a lifeline.

The impact was immediate and profound. During monitoring visits, it was confirmed that her business was not just revived but thriving. Theresa could now consistently meet demanding customer orders for her cakes, making a significant daily profit. Her entrepreneurial spirit soared; she began buying live fowl, preparing and selling them for an additional

healthy gain per bird. Critically, she could now consistently pay her children's school fees, and her husband's health was visibly improving as she could afford his much-needed medication.

Her growth continued to be impressive. She diversified her offerings, venturing into plantain sales, adding further profit. She also invested in dry ponmo (cow skin) and fresh fish in substantial quantities, generating significant gains from their resale. To support her booming baking business, she even acquired additional cooking gas capacity. Today, Theresa's business boasts substantial worth, generating a considerable average profit each month. She no longer stresses about accessing treatment, paying school fees, or meeting her family's daily needs. The transformation in her husband's health is equally remarkable; according to Theresa, "the husband can stand on his feet and can freely walk." Beyond economic success, Theresa's health journey mirrors her business triumph. She is virally suppressed, and the HIV-exposed infant (HEI) in her household tested negative after the last Dried Blood Spot (DBS) test. An active member of the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) Mofere, she's diligently built up her savings, a testament to her newfound financial stability and community engagement.

Theresa's story is a powerful testament to how targeted support and individual determination can turn adversity into a flourishing success, bringing health, stability, and dignity back to a family.



X-ray screening for confirmatory diagnosis. However, they were unable to do so due to lack of funds. The non-availability of a chest X-ray machine at Cottage Hospital Akpet posed a huge challenge in diagnosing and treating TB early, increasing the risk of TB transmission in the community. Additionally, the facility struggled to meet its assigned target for TB case identification.

Thankfully, a strategic partnership between ECEWS ACE-5 Project and KNCV Nigeria provided a long-awaited solution. This collaboration introduced a mobile chest X-ray screening service to Akpet Cottage Hospital for the first time. The screening took place at the hospital, eliminating transportation barriers and saving clients both time and money.

The ART Coordinator remarked:

"This is a game-changer. For the first time, we could screen clients here in our own facility—no more referrals required."

In just one day, nine clients were successfully screened using the mobile chest X-ray machine. Among them, two clients tested positive for TB and were immediately started on treatment, giving them a better chance of recovering and preventing the further spread of the disease within the community. The previously silent data has now started to show results, with Akpet Cottage Hospital beginning to build a record of TB screenings through chest X-ray.

Trust in the healthcare system within the community has also improved, and clients now view screening as accessible and beneficial. Charity, who was among those screened, shared her relief:

"I am glad I didn't have to travel far. They came here for me. I got tested, and I am grateful. I'm already taking my medication and feeling stronger."

The Medical Director at Akpet Cottage Hospital further stated:

"Before now, we had never conducted a single chest X-ray here. But with this support, people who would have gone undiagnosed are now receiving help. It means a lot to us."

Charity's story aligns with the broader goals of the USAID-funded ECEWS ACE-5 Project, which aims to improve early TB case detection, reduce delays in treatment, and eliminate healthcare access barriers for people living with HIV. Through strategic partnerships, individuals are provided with quality care.

Breaking Barriers: Mobile Chest X-Ray Brings Hope to Akpet Community

Charity (alias), a 35-year-old market vendor and mother of twin girls aged 5, expressed her frustration:

"I was told I needed to get a chest X-ray, but there was no way I could leave my children or afford the transport. So, I just stayed."

On May 23, 2025, Charity and eight other residents of Akpet Community in Biase LGA of Cross River State were screened as presumptive cases for tuberculosis (TB) and were required to travel to Calabar for chest



ECEWS Supports the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health in Validating its Mentor Mother program



As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the delivery of Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services, the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Akwa Ibom State AIDS Control Agency (AKSACA) and the State AIDS and STI Control Programme (SASCP), hosted a series of Joint Mentor Mother Support Validation (MSV) exercises across the state. These sessions brought together GC7 Mentor Mothers alongside those supported by implementing partners—including the ECEWS ACE-5 project—across the Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, and Eket senatorial districts.

The first phase of the MSV exercise took place from May 22 to 23, 2025, in Uyo, engaging participants from the Uyo and Ikot Ekpene Senatorial Districts. The event focused on standardizing operations, aligning roles and expectations, and strengthening coordination among Mentor Mothers. Discussions covered service delivery protocols, supervision frameworks, reporting structures, and strategies to optimize PMTCT outcomes at supported sites.

The second phase followed on May 27, 2025, drawing participants from Eket Senatorial District to the SACA Conference Room. The ECEWS ACE-5 team joined Mentor Mothers in reviewing field-level experiences and identifying implementation challenges, including patient follow-up barriers, documentation gaps, and logistical constraints. Together, participants co-developed context-specific solutions to improve service delivery and maternal-child health outcomes.

Across both sessions, the validation exercises fostered valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange, peer learning, and evidence-based planning. Facilitators guided discussions on equitable redeployment of Mentor Mothers, improved supervision mechanisms, and harmonized reporting systems to enhance the effectiveness of PMTCT interventions across the state.

Through its active participation, ECEWS reaffirmed its commitment to supporting community-level HIV programming and advancing maternal and child health in Akwa Ibom State. The exercises reinforced the indispensable role of Mentor Mothers in bridging service delivery and client engagement, particularly for high-risk pregnant and breastfeeding women. These efforts underscore the state's commitment to eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and scaling up inclusive, community-driven PMTCT services.



ECEWS and Howard University Teams Conduct a Joint Review of Pharmacy Services in Cross River State

In a collaborative effort to strengthen pharmaceutical service delivery, ACE-5 Pharmacy Team, comprising representatives from both ECEWS and HUGGINS at the project headquarters and Cross River State Office, conducted a joint supportive visit to the Northern Cluster of Cross River State in May 2025.

The visit was designed to enhance documentation practices, reinforce operational standards, and improve the integration of antiretroviral (ARV) medication pick-up at health facilities and across Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) points. It also provided a platform for targeted on-site mentorship of facility-based pharmacy teams to build capacity and promote consistent adherence to best practices.

During the review, the team identified several key gaps, including inconsistent use of bin cards, incomplete Enhanced Adherence Counselling (EAC) logs, and discrepancies in ARV pick-up documentation. In response, facility teams were supported to develop tailored remediation plans with clearly defined corrective actions, implementation timelines, and designated responsible officers. To ensure sustainability, a structured follow-up and tracking mechanism was introduced to monitor progress on identified gaps. This system is expected to foster accountability, strengthen routine pharmaceutical

operations, and promote continuous quality improvement across the cluster.

The joint visit underscores the commitment of both ECEWS and HUGGINS to delivering efficient, client-centered pharmaceutical services and improving treatment outcomes for Recipients of Care (RoCs) across supported facilities.



The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), led by the Uyo Zonal Commander, Mr. Ubong David Ekwere, paid an advocacy visit to the headquarters of Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS). During the visit, Mr. Ekwere commended ECEWS for its continuous support, collaboration, and strong partnership in the fight against human trafficking. He appealed for sustained cooperation to strengthen efforts in combating trafficking, particularly as preparations build toward the commemoration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30th. In his remarks, Dr. Andy Eyo, CEO of ECEWS, emphasized that human trafficking remains a global

Building Safer Communities: ECEWS Reaffirms Support for NAPTIP's Anti-Trafficking Drive

challenge, one that many people still do not fully understand. He reaffirmed ECEWS commitment to a robust working relationship with NAPTIP, especially in advancing the protection of women, men, and children in the communities they serve. Dr. Eyo highlighted ECEWS interventions in providing access to treatment for vulnerable populations, including sex workers living with HIV, while stressing the need for preventive approaches to save resources and protect lives. He also emphasized the importance of linking NAPTIP's work with strategic publicity and community engagement to raise awareness about human trafficking and illegal adoption practices. "We have the human resources that NAPTIP can leverage to deepen

their messaging, training, and outreach at the community level. We feel the pain of the victims, and together, we must crush the criminality and prevent the trauma of trafficking and its links to other forms of abuse, including rape. We are proud to partner with NAPTIP in this noble cause." Dr. Andy Eyo, CEO, ECEWS

NAPTIP, on their part, noted that they have sensitized 32 schools and several markets across the state and appealed to be integrated into ECEWS programs for broader community impact. They expressed gratitude for ECEWS' efforts and highlighted the need for deliberate collaboration, especially across the 31 LGAs where ECEWS operates in Akwa Ibom State. Together, both organizations are committed to advancing the fight against human trafficking and ensuring a safer future for vulnerable populations, particularly the girl child.



Strengthening Decentralized HIV Care: ECEWS hosts Strategic Review Meeting on DSD Hub-and-Spoke Model Implementation



From May 21 to 23, 2025, ECEWS ACE-5 State Pharmacy Team in Akwa Ibom State hosted a three-day strategic review meeting at Eemjm Hotel Hall, Uyo, focused on assessing the implementation of the Decentralized Hub-and-Spoke Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) model and the Community Pharmacy Antiretroviral Refill (CPAR) intervention. The meeting was organized in collaboration with HUGIN Nigeria and the Government of Nigeria, drawing participation from pharmacy representatives across all 31 LGAs implementing the DSD model.

Over the first two days, participants engaged in robust discussions aimed at improving decentralized HIV service delivery. Key focus areas included DSD validation protocols, documentation processes, adherence to multi-month dispensing (MMD3), referral systems, and ensuring quality standards at spoke sites.

Facilitators included Dr. Bala Gana, State Director for ECEWS ACE-5; Pharm. Anthony Achanya, State Program Manager, Howard University; Pharm. Festus Agu and Pharm. Haniel Haziell, Senior Pharmacy Specialists; alongside expert resource persons and policy-level stakeholders such as Pharm. (Dr.) Iniobong Josiah, Director of Pharmaceutical Services, Health Management Board; Pharm. Godwin Ubam, Director of Pharmaceutical Services, Ministry of Health; and Pharm. Emem Edet Nsikak, Director of Essential Drugs and Logistics, AKSPHCDA. Their combined technical and policy insights helped drive practical and solution-focused deliberations.

Participants engaged in structured review sessions, sharing field experiences and challenges encountered at both hub and spoke sites. Discussions centered on supervisory support needs, documentation accuracy, logistics coordination, and the provision of targeted technical assistance. Peer learning and constructive feedback highlighted the importance of continuous quality improvement across sites.

The third day focused on reviewing the CPAR intervention, exploring the growing role of community pharmacies in enhancing access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), improving client retention, strengthening data management, and maintaining service continuity through closer integration with public health facilities.

By the conclusion of the meeting, stakeholders had aligned on shared goals for the scale-up of DSD, developed actionable strategies to close identified gaps, and reinforced collaboration across LGAs. Most importantly, the forum reaffirmed a collective commitment by government agencies, implementing partners, and healthcare providers to advancing client-centered, decentralized HIV care delivery in Akwa Ibom State.





ECEWS CEO joins Maternal, Newborn, and Child Nutrition Health (AIM-MNCNH) as Advocacy Champion

Dr. Andy Eyo, CEO of ECEWS, was recently inaugurated as an Advocacy Champion for the Accelerating Implementation of Maternal, Newborn and Child Nutrition & Health (AIM-MNCNH) project. This significant initiative was organized by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN), Akwa Ibom State Chapter. This appointment underscores ECEWS' commitment to improving health outcomes in the region.

Represented by Dr. Bala Gana, Dr. Eyo emphasized ECEWS' strong alignment with Akwa Ibom State's key health priorities. ECEWS' participation as an Advocacy Champion signifies its dedication to collaborative efforts aimed at addressing critical health challenges. This strategic partnership with MWAN highlights a shared vision for a healthier future for women and children.

As an Advocacy Champion, ECEWS now joins a crucial multi-sectoral coalition. This powerful alliance is dedicated to scaling up evidence-based interventions focused on significantly reducing postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) and ultimately improving overall health outcomes for women and children. The primary focus will be on reaching and supporting underserved communities across the state, ensuring that vital health services reach those who need them most.



ECEWS Strengthens Malaria Data Management Through Integrated M&E Training in Enugu State



An effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system remains the backbone of any successful malaria program. In Enugu State, despite ongoing interventions, significant gaps persist in the documentation and reporting of malaria services across 577 enrolled health facilities. These gaps have led to non-reporting, inconsistent reporting, and under-reporting of malaria data, ultimately hindering accurate resource tracking, accountability, and effective decision-making.

To address these challenges, Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS), with funding from the National Malaria Elimination Program (NMEP) through the Islamic Development Bank/Lives and Livelihoods Fund (IsDB/LLF), organized a four-day integrated M&E training in Enugu State.

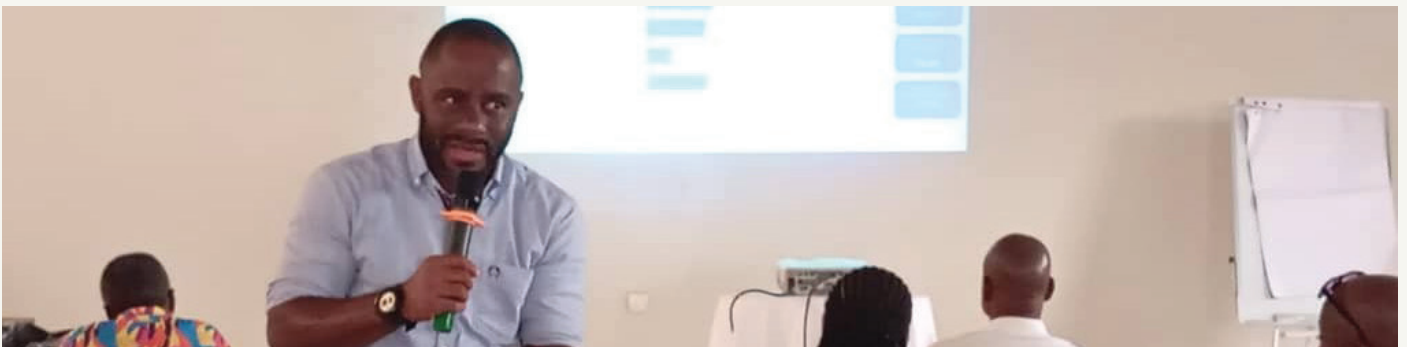


The training brought together key malaria program stakeholders, including 17 LGA M&E Officers, 17 LGA Malaria Focal Persons, 17 Heads of Department/Health Secretaries, 9 Health Educators, 7 staff of the State Malaria Elimination Program (SMEP), and 20 ECEWS staff. The primary aim was to strengthen the capacity of these stakeholders in quality malaria data reporting, supportive supervision, data triangulation, data quality assessment (DQA), and logistics monitoring for improved program outcomes.

The training was designed to enhance participants' capacity to correctly use National Health Management Information System (NHMIS) data capturing tools, apply DQA processes and tools, and improve coordination of Integrated Malaria Supportive Supervision (IMSV). It also focused on promoting data triangulation using NHMIS, LMIS, and facility-level records, strengthening logistics reporting with LMIS tools, and fostering peer learning and collaboration among data clerks.

Expected outcomes from the training include improved capacity of LGA teams to independently conduct DQAs, increased frequency and proper documentation of IMSV visits, stronger linkages between NHMIS and LMIS reporting systems, standardized use of malaria data tools, and the development of actionable rollout and follow-up plans at the LGA level.

This training represents a critical step towards bridging existing data gaps and reinforcing the integrity of malaria program reporting in Enugu State. By equipping frontline health workers and program managers with the right skills and tools, the program aims to ensure more accurate, consistent, and actionable malaria data to guide decision-making and optimize resource utilization in the fight against malaria.



ECEWS Conducts ART/PrEP Training for Service Providers Across Comprehensive Sites in Ebonyi State

As part of its ongoing commitment to improving the quality of HIV care and addressing identified program knowledge gaps, Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) organized a comprehensive five-day training on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for service providers across GP comprehensive sites in Ebonyi State. A total of 93 participants were engaged in the training, which was facilitated by technical leads from ECEWS thematic units.

The training also served as an opportunity to update participants on the new National HIV Guidelines, with a focus on improving service delivery to beneficiaries of care. Participants were supported to deepen their understanding of HIV transmission, progression, and prevention; identify and implement appropriate ART regimens based on patient profiles, screen and diagnose Advanced HIV Disease (AHD), monitor and manage side effects, drug interactions, and treatment failures;



provide care for special populations including pregnant women, children, and patients with co-infections like tuberculosis, and promote the uptake of PrEP among sero-discordant couples and other vulnerable individuals. The sessions covered a range of critical topics including antiretroviral therapy in adults and adolescents, HIV treatment failure, HIV drug resistance, adherence counseling, AHD management, disclosure for adults and children, adverse drug reactions, differentiated service delivery (DSD), PrEP for the general population including pregnant women, and viral load sample collection and utilization.

At the end of the training, participants developed key action points to improve service delivery to persons in care across all supported sites. These included improved knowledge and capacity for comprehensive HIV care, enhanced skills for AHD screening and diagnosis, better understanding of viral load testing for clinical decision-making, improved collaboration among service providers, and strengthened efforts to retain clients in care and increase PrEP uptake and adherence.

In another capacity-building effort, ECEWS team, from May 26 to 30, 2024, conducted additional ART/PrEP training for healthcare workers providing services to Key Populations (KPs) including female sex workers (FSW), people who inject drugs (PWID), and men who have sex with men (MSM). This training specifically targeted healthcare workers providing frontline care to persons living with HIV and those at high risk but HIV-negative.

The training aimed to improve understanding of HIV pathophysiology, transmission, and treatment; update providers on current ART guidelines and monitoring protocols; build provider knowledge on KP-specific care; and equip participants with skills to integrate ART services with PrEP, sexually transmitted infections (STI) treatment, family planning, harm reduction, and other essential services. It also addressed ancillary care, including non-communicable disease management, AHD care, and cervical cancer screening.

Participants concluded the sessions by developing actionable points to strengthen service delivery across supported sites. These included improved comprehensive HIV care delivery, enhanced AHD screening and diagnosis, increased use of viral load results in clinical decision-making, better team collaboration, improved retention of clients in care, and increased PrEP uptake among individuals at high risk of HIV infection.

ECEWS remains committed to strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers to deliver high-quality, client-centered HIV prevention and treatment services across its supported states.

Vision Restored, Hope Rekindled: A Recipient of Care's Journey from Darkness to Dignity

ECEWS ACE-5 team had been monitoring 60-year-old Mrs. Ima Friday Udoka, a widowed recipient of HIV care, for months. But when she began missing her antiretroviral (ARV) pickups in December 2024, it became clear that her deteriorating vision, caused by severe cataracts, was no longer just a medical issue; it was threatening her survival.

"Her viral load, which had been undetectable as of October 2024 was now at risk of rebounding," explained Aniekan Otong, a dedicated Health worker with the ECEWS ACE-5 project in Obot Akara. "We realized that if we didn't intervene, we risked losing her—not just to blindness, but possibly to treatment failure." For five years, Mrs. Udoka's world had dimmed. She abandoned her cassava farm and became dependent on neighbors for everything—from identifying her ARV pills to using the toilet. With no one to accompany her to the clinic, she began missing appointments, slipping further into vulnerability. When the NNPC Foundation announced its free cataract surgery outreach (April 2–9, 2025), the ECEWS ACE-5 team knew it was the opportunity they had been waiting for. Understanding her vulnerability, they prioritized her enrollment and supported her throughout the process.



In late March 2025, Aniekan Otong brought life-changing news: she had been selected for free cataract screening and surgery during the upcoming NNPC Foundation outreach at Comprehensive Health Center, Obot Akara. The elderly farmer, overcome with emotion, could hardly believe her ears. "If God lets me see again," she said softly, "I won't need my neighbour to lead me to the hospital like a child." With no funds for medical intervention, she had resigned herself to a life of dependence. "They told me after the surgery, I'd be able to see my ARV pills clearly again," she said, her voice shaking with hope. "No more missing doses—I'll take my medicine on my own, without waiting for help." For Mrs. Ima, this wasn't just about clearer vision, it was about reclaiming her independence, her dignity, and her identity as a provider. Her story reflects the core of ECEWS ACE-5 mission: delivering care that looks beyond HIV to address the full spectrum of challenges faced by vulnerable recipients. Through strategic partnerships like that with the NNPC Foundation, the ACE-5 project continues to transform lives—one intervention at a time.



ECEWS Supports Economic Empowerment in Okobo LGA, Akwa Ibom State



ECEWS recently supported the commissioning of the Open Stall Market at Ekeya Main Market in Okobo LGA, Akwa Ibom State, a project is designed to strengthen the livelihoods of ultra-poor women, promoting economic empowerment and sustainable growth within the community.

Our CEO, Dr. Andy Eyo, was represented by our Chief Finance Officer, Lion Heir Ntiah, at the ceremony. The District Governor, Lion Sir Maurice Ibok, described the project as "a symbol of empowerment, protection, and hope". The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was formally presented to Chief Edet Etim, Village Head, and Chairman of Ekeya Council of Chiefs.

In recognition of ECEWS' commitment to community development, our CEO, Dr. Andy Eyo was decorated with the Pragmatic Pin by the District Governor. ECEWS remains committed to advancing economic empowerment and improving lives across Nigeria.



ECEWS Conducted Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Training for CBOs Under the GC7, N-THRIP Project in Ebonyi State



In line with its commitment to promoting safe, inclusive, and accountable programming, Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) successfully conducted a three-day Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH) training for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and One-Stop-Shop (OSS) staff implementing the N-THRIP project in Ebonyi State. The training, held from 19 to 21 May 2025 at Las Palm Hotels in Uburu, Ebonyi State, brought together 40 participants including service providers from CBOs, OSS staff, representatives of GC7 Principal Recipient (PR), ECEWS PSEAH focal persons, and staff of the Government of Nigeria (GoN). The training was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen capacity and systems for effective implementation of PSEAH principles across project sites.

The sessions focused on both prevention and response mechanisms, emphasizing awareness creation and the establishment of strong referral pathways for services

available to survivors of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. A major focus of the training was building the capacity of designated PSEAH focal persons on key thematic areas including understanding the concept of PSEAH and its root causes, the dynamics of power imbalance and its connection to sexual exploitation and abuse, identifying and mitigating SEAH risks in workplaces, and protecting extremely vulnerable populations from SEAH. Participants also explored appropriate reporting channels, referral pathways for survivors, and strategies for self-awareness and self-care for SEAH focal persons.

Throughout the training, participants engaged actively through group discussions, presentations, and case studies tailored to contextualize PSEAH implementation in their respective workplaces. Facilitators underscored the importance of creating safe work environments with zero tolerance for SEAH, emphasizing that protecting the rights and dignity of every individual served is fundamental to the work of ECEWS and its partners. "This training empowers our partners to uphold these standards with responsibility and accountability," one facilitator stated.

The training concluded with participating CBOs and OSS staff developing action plans to strengthen PSEAH implementation within their organizations. These action plans included commitments to conduct step-down trainings for other field staff to further embed PSEAH practices across their operations. ECEWS reaffirmed its commitment to providing ongoing technical support and monitoring to ensure full compliance, sustainability, and best practices throughout the project cycle.

ECEWS Laboratory Team Sets New Standard for HIV Testing Quality in Delta State

From 6th to 9th May 2025, the ECEWS laboratory team in Delta State, through the US CDC-funded SPEED project, significantly advanced HIV testing quality. The team produced 1,281 precision-engineered Dried Tube Specimen (DTS) panels, designed to enhance HIV testing accuracy across 61 health facilities in Delta State.

This triannual initiative, meticulously executed in adherence to WHO Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP) and national standards, marks a crucial step in Nigeria's commitment to delivering high-quality HIV diagnostics.

Over four days, in collaboration with the Delta State Quality Improvement Implementation Team (SQIIT), the team meticulously characterized plasma samples through a controlled plasma pooling process, heat inactivation, and rigorous multi-stage validation to ensure the reliability of each panel. A total of 305 Proficiency Testing (PT) panels and 976 Quality Control (QC) panels were produced critical tools for monitoring HIV test kit performance and detecting potential false positives or negatives in rapid HIV testing.

"Quality is non-negotiable," emphasized Uche Okudo, Lead Senior Technical Officer for Laboratory Services in Delta State. "These panels are our frontline defense against diagnostic errors, protecting both the integrity of our health system and the lives of clients who rely on accurate results."

Beyond improving diagnostic reliability in Delta State, this achievement stands as a replicable model for continuous quality improvement in low-resource settings. By training members of the SQIIT on DTS production, ECEWS has built a sustainable framework for ongoing internal quality assurance that will benefit the HIV response far into the future.

As the panels were dispatched for last-mile delivery to supported facilities, the commitment and innovation demonstrated by the team in Warri served as a reminder that behind every accurate HIV test result is a dedicated group of professionals working behind the scenes to uphold global best practices.

ECEWS Trains Service Providers for Drone-Enabled Commodity Delivery in Cross River State



ECEWS, in partnership with the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) through Zipline, has launched a transformative initiative aimed at strengthening HIV prevention, treatment, and care services across Nigeria.

The project supports both facility- and community-based HIV testing, treatment, and adherence services, with a focus on improving client retention and enhancing the state's HIV response. As part of the service delivery model, trained Integrated Service Providers (ISPs) and Healthcare Workers (HCWs) stationed at selected Zipline drop sites will deliver drone-enabled differentiated services. This innovative approach ensures timely and efficient access to HIV-related care, particularly in hard-to-reach communities.

To equip service providers for effective delivery of these services, ECEWS conducted a two-day training in Cross River State. The training covered key areas including HIV Testing Services (HTS), management of clients on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), and commodity management. This initiative represents

a critical step in strengthening HIV service delivery within the Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) model, empowering providers to offer integrated, client-centered care.

The training aimed to build the competencies of service providers for high-quality HIV service delivery, utilizing presentations, role plays, and simulations to foster hands-on learning. The sessions were interactive and participatory, incorporating presentations, Q&A sessions, brainstorming, group discussions, role plays, and practical illustrations.

Participants demonstrated improved understanding of differentiated ART service models, documentation accuracy, and client-centered care principles. Special emphasis was placed on drone-enabled service delivery and strengthening the community-based service model. Through this training, ECEWS and its partners continue to drive innovative approaches to improve HIV outcomes, ensuring that no one is left behind, regardless of location.





Strengthening Laboratory Quality Systems Using the WHO-AFRO Stepwise Laboratory Improvement Process Towards Accreditation (SLIPTA) assessments

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of laboratory services under the USAID-funded ACE-5 project, ECEWS Laboratory Team successfully completed Quality Management System (QMS) assessments across remaining key priority health facilities in May 2025. This initiative aligns with Nigeria's national laboratory accreditation framework and adheres to ISO 15189:2022 standards, which emphasize quality and competence in medical laboratory services.

The facilities assessed during this phase included Comprehensive Health Centre Ukana, St. Mary's Hospital, Handmaid Hospital, General Hospital Ikono, General

Hospital Ikot Okoro, and Comprehensive Health Centre Ibeno. Each facility underwent a structured 2–3-day QMS assessment using a standardized checklist adapted from ISO 15189:2022 protocols. The evaluations focused on critical areas such as document and record control, equipment calibration and maintenance, internal audit practices, staff competency, biosafety protocols, and overall compliance with QMS requirements.

Findings from the assessments revealed varying levels of implementation across the facilities. However,

notable improvements were observed in documentation practices, staff awareness of quality procedures, and adherence to equipment maintenance schedules—demonstrating steady progress toward meeting national and international quality benchmarks.

The successful completion of these assessments underscores the ACE-5 project's commitment to strengthening laboratory systems in support of diagnostic accuracy, patient safety, and reliable healthcare delivery. Moving forward, tailored technical assistance will be provided to address facility-specific gaps, while periodic follow-up visits will ensure sustained progress and readiness for SLIPTA enrollment and eventual accreditation.

ASWHAN Coalition Launches in Delta to Champion PMTCT for Hard-to-Reach Women

In a landmark gathering held at the SACA Hall in Asaba, Delta State, the drive to eliminate mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV took a major step forward as the ASWHAN/GNP Love Alliance convened a pivotal coalition meeting on May 30, 2025. The quarterly meeting was organized to tackle persistent gaps and systemic barriers affecting access to PMTCT services among marginalized and hard-to-reach women in Delta State.

Representatives from ECEWS, Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), REDAID Nigeria, and key community-based organizations joined forces to develop strategies that specifically target vulnerable groups such as sex workers, female people who inject drugs (PWIDs), and adolescent mothers living with HIV. The coalition underscored the urgent need to reach these populations with lifesaving PMTCT services.

The meeting unveiled several critical challenges, including the pervasive impact of stigma, limited legal awareness among affected women, and entrenched spiritual misconceptions that discourage access to care. In response, participants developed bold action points aimed at breaking these barriers. Key strategies included advocacy visits to medical associations, police authorities, and religious leaders to enforce anti-stigma laws and promote ART adherence; sensitization campaigns led by social media influencers; proposals for flexible clinic hours and expanded community ART delivery models; and the use of mentor-mother networks to drive engagement among key populations and women in remote

locations. Plans were also made to inaugurate a state-level PMTCT Coalition Committee to sustain these efforts.

As a major outcome of the meeting, a four-member executive team was inaugurated to spearhead the implementation of these action points, marking a new era of strengthened collaboration, with ECEWS playing an active role in driving the coalition's agenda forward.

"This coalition is a game-changer," declared Dr. Chioma Ejifugha, a member of the ECEWS PMTCT team. "By amplifying community voices and tailoring interventions to the realities of hard-to-reach women, we're dismantling barriers to ensure that no woman is left behind."

With a follow-up meeting scheduled in two weeks, the coalition has set the tone for a transformative shift in PMTCT programming in Delta State, offering renewed hope in Nigeria's ongoing HIV response.

Delivering HIV-Free Babies in the Face of Stigma and Spiritual Myths

"These days, no pregnant woman should lose her life or her baby, not when care is free and within reach," says Dr. Eno Ndem, a dedicated member of the ECEWS ACE-5 team in Oruk Anam LGA. Yet despite global strides in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, fear and stigma continue to rob many women of life-saving care. In Nigeria, only 58% of HIV-positive pregnant women received antiretroviral therapy (ART) for PMTCT in 2022 (UNAIDS).

For Mrs. Abasiama Kufre (Not real name) a soft-spoken woman from a rural village in Akwa Ibom, these barriers nearly cost two lives—hers and her unborn twins.

The discovery came during a routine outreach in January 2025, when the ECEWS ACE-5 team tested Mrs. Kufre for HIV. The positive result was met not with despair, but with swift action. Immediate enrollment in ART and antenatal care at General Hospital, Ikot Okoro, through USAID-supported services. For weeks, she adhered to her treatment in secret, finding comfort in the confidential care of healthcare workers who assured her that her babies could be born HIV-free.

But in a close-knit village where every movement is noticed, secrecy is fragile. The medications were the first tell. Unlike the casual routine of prenatal vitamins, ARVs demanded precision; pills taken exactly twelve hours apart, their packaging unfamiliar. She set phone alarms to avoid missing doses, often excusing herself from family gatherings to take them privately. Where other expectant mothers joked about forgetting their supplements, Mrs. Kufre's careful rituals deepened suspicion around her. Then came the swelling. What doctors recognized as treatment-interruption edema, her family saw something far more ominous. Her mother-in-law, a respected elder who had guided many women through pregnancy, frowned at her puffy legs. "Nnyin, mmi nde edem?" (My daughter, what is happening to you?) She asked in Ibibio, her voice laced with worry.

The village had its own explanations. "Na bad blood!" (It's bad blood!) whispered a neighbor in Pidgin. "Dem don poison am," (She's been poisoned,) muttered another. A local prayer house declared it a spiritual attack, and soon, the pressure became overwhelming. By February, caught between medical truth and mounting fear, Mrs. Kufre made a desperate choice; she stopped her ARVs. The medicines meant to save her became another secret buried under shame.

As her swelling worsened, her family withdrew her from the hospital entirely, placing their faith in prayers and traditional remedies. The ACE-5 team's calls went unanswered. "We knew time was running out," recalls Dr. Ndem. Refusing to give up, the team devised a careful approach; one that addressed the visible crisis without forcing disclosure. "Mama," they urged her mother-in-law in Pidgin, "dis swelling no be ordinary thing. Government don pay for everything—why risk her life and the pikin dem?" The plea worked. A week later, Mrs. Kufre returned to the hospital, barely able to walk. The team restarted her ART without delay. On April 16, under the protective cover of Nigeria's Free to Shine program, Mrs. Kufre delivered HIV-negative twins via cesarean section at UUTH.



The newborns received prophylaxis, and follow-up tests confirmed they were free of the virus.

With ongoing counseling from the ACE-5 team, Mrs. Kufre found the courage to disclose her status to her husband. His response was simple but profound: "Thank God that we came to the hospital o. I didn't know we could access free care like this."

Today, Mrs. Kufre remains adherent to her treatment, formula-feeding her babies to ensure their protection, and rebuilding her strength with the support of healthcare workers who never gave up on her.

Her story stands as powerful evidence that eliminating mother-to-child transmission isn't just about medicine, it's about patience, trust, and walking alongside women until they are ready to take each step forward.

"These small victories are why we persist," says Dr. Ndem. "When women like Mrs. Kufre triumph, entire communities learn that healthcare works, one life at a time."



ECEWS Facilitates Expert Clinical Review for Pediatric Case in Onna Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State



As part of the Enhanced Expert Support Initiative (E2SI), ECEWS ACE-5 team facilitated a scheduled pediatric case review at General Hospital Awa in Onna Local Government Area (LGA), Akwa Ibom State.

The review, led by E2SI Expert Dr. Ofonime Dixon-Umoh, was aimed at providing specialized care and expert guidance for the management of a complex pediatric Recipient of Care (RoC).

The session included a structured consultation involving the child, caregiver, and key members of the clinical care team. Upon arrival, Dr. Dixon-Umoh engaged with the hospital's Medical Superintendent, the ART Coordinator, Government of Nigeria (GoN) clinicians, and the child-caregiver pair.

The consultation was conducted collaboratively with GoN clinician Dr. Ekaette Udoudo and the LGA Lead,

Dr. Ukeme Ekanem, to strengthen integration of expert input into routine facility-based care.

After a comprehensive history and physical examination, the child was diagnosed with Pediatric AIDS (Stage IV), presenting with neurological deficits (delayed developmental milestones), tuberculosis co-infection, and protein-energy malnutrition secondary to advanced HIV disease. In response, Dr. Dixon-Umoh outlined a holistic, multi-pronged treatment plan.

This included continuation of antiretroviral therapy (ART) intensified nutritional rehabilitation in collaboration with Centre for Clinical Care and Clinical Research (CCCRN) and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) partner to provide additional household support. Zinc supplementation was also prescribed to aid in nutritional recovery.

To strengthen caregiving and improve adherence to care, the expert recommended that the child's mother assume primary caregiving responsibilities, while the father resumes work to help stabilize family income. A follow-up review was scheduled for two weeks, with a strong emphasis on adherence to ART, improved nutrition, and active engagement with the care team.

The Onna LGA clinical team has since begun implementing the expert's recommendations and continues to monitor the child's progress closely. This intervention reflects ECEWS ACE-5's commitment to improving pediatric HIV outcomes through expert-led, collaborative, and client-centered care.





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