



Strengthening Community Health and HIV Response in Nigeria

Partnership with Vitamin Angels Alliance yields results

A Production of the Community Health and HIV (CHH) Team | February, 2016

Through the Strengthening Community Health and HIV Response (SCHH) project, Christian Aid works in partnership with Vitamin Angels Alliance to provide Vitamin A supplements and deworming (VAS-D) to Nigerian children under the age of 5.

Community health agents (CHAs) established through the SCHH project sensitise community members on the benefits of the supplement and encourage them to take up the service while Vitamin Angels Alliance provides the supplements at no cost.

In poor, marginalised and hard-to-reach communities where Christian Aid works, a lack of adequate nutrition can affect the immune system and bodily functions of children, making them more prone to ill health, disease and death.

Approximately 670,000 children under the age of 5 die worldwide every year due to a lack of vitamin A in their diets¹.

VAS_D within easy reach

Wasega Iusu, a farmer from Igbon, a remote community in Logo local government area (LGA), Benue State, says his children received VAS-D after a small health post was set up in his community for this specific purpose.

Previously, community members had to travel to the public health centre at Ikyor to access the service. Wasega wasn't able to go there because the journey was too long for his four young children to make on foot.



Wasega's children benefitted from Christian Aid's partnership with Vitamin Angels.

Credit: Christian Aid/Nneoma Anieto

Wasega has seen visible improvements in his children's health since they received VAS-D, which means he has to pay for healthcare less often and can use the family's income on other vital needs.

First time for Ocholongwa's children

Shortage of Vitamin A supplements provided by the government has been a common reason for the very low access in marginalised communities. But the partnership between Christian Aid and Vitamin Angels has meant many children who were previously unable to receive VAS-D can now access it.

In Edeje community, Agatu LGA, Benue, Madam Ocholongwa's children recently received the supplement for the first time. Ocholongwa said health workers who previously came to the

community had often left after dispensing the supplement to only a few children, complaining that they had run out of supplies. Sometimes, health workers didn't reach their community at all.

A CHA told her the supplement would be distributed in Edeje for three days and stressed its importance. Ocholongwa's children finally received Vitamin A.

Ocholongwa with her children at the administration point.

Credit: Ohonyeta Caregivers/Godwin Ondoma



No to patent medicine vendors

Wider provision of VAS-D has eliminated the need for self-medication and reduced patronage of patent medicine vendors in some communities.

Helen Gabriel, 41, from Olumaha community in Apa LGA, Benue, often used patent medicine vendors to buy deworming treatments for her three-year-old son Monday – the medicines were usually ineffective. She never took him to receive the government provided supplement because of the distance to the distribution centre.



Women in Olumaha at the mobilisation for MNCH week. Credit: Ohonyeta Caregivers/Godwin Ondoma

Helen found out from a CHA that VAS-D for under-5s would be coming to her community, as part of the Christian Aid and Vitamin Angels project. Her children have now received VAS-D several times.

'My children were given Vitamin A and Albendazole and they don't complain anymore,' Helen says. 'I now know the importance of Vitamin A and deworming.'

Getting the word out

In addition to providing VAS-D in Christian Aid's SCHH target communities, Vitamin Angels have trained Christian Aid partners on the benefits and administration of the supplements.

After receiving this training, Anglican Diocesan Development Services (ADDS) was able to run an information session for parents in Ukpe community, Vandeikya LGA, Benue, on the benefits of VAS-D for under-5s.



Mobilisation of parents in Ukpe Community.

Credit: Anglican Diocesan Development Services

With new knowledge about the positive benefits for children in their community, Ukpe's traditional and religious leaders encouraged the community to take their children to receive VAS-D during MNCH (Maternal, Newborn and Child Health) Week. Parents brought their children in large numbers, with a record 7,133 children receiving VAS-D in Ukpe community alone.

The alliance between Christian Aid and Vitamin Angels has put VAS-D within easy reach of marginalised communities and made parents more aware than ever of the benefits of supplement.

Through SCHH, Christian Aid works with other international NGOs involved in service delivery to provide quality health services to marginalised communities, where health services might otherwise be unavailable. Our work with Vitamin Angels Alliance is one of these partnerships.

ⁱ Black, R., Allen, L., Bhutta, Z., Caulfield, L., de Onis, M., Ezzati, M., et al. (2008). *Maternal and child undernutrition: global and regional exposures and health consequences*. The Lancet

