

Strengthening Community Health and HIV Response in Nigeria

A Collection of Success Stories

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

Through the Strengthening Community Health and HIV project, Community Health Agents (CHAs) were established in project communities to educate community members on health issues and support them to adopt health seeking behaviour. The Community Health Agents use the Strengthening Community Health manual to support their health education in communities; in line with the “fruitbowl” disease integration strategy employed on the project, the SCHH manual contains health solutions to a variety of common ailments faced by households in communities. The CHAs in project communities educate community members on common ailments using the manual and have recorded remarkable successes in helping beneficiaries adopt healthy behaviours.

Net Use

In Kango Community, Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, the Community Health Agents as part of their health promotion activities sensitised members on the importance of sleeping inside long lasting insecticidal nets to protect themselves from malaria. To ensure the information given during sensitization outreach by the CHAs is practiced by community members, Christian Aid partner in the community, Kubwa Diocesan Development and Welfare Services (KDDWS) provided long lasting insecticidal nets at a highly subsidized rate of N100 per net. As a result many members of Kango community purchased the affordable nets and put them to use.

Mama Mary, 38, a mother of two children who was sensitised by the CHA and privileged to purchase the net at the subsidized rate said “my children fall sick many times, but since we started sleeping inside net, the sickness has reduced, I am enjoy my net!”

Mama Mary and other members of Kango who were trained by CHAs on the importance of net use now use nets to sleep and were privileged to purchase these nets at the subsidized rate offered by Christian Aid partner.



Mama Mary with her 2 children inside her net purchased at just N100. Credit: Kubwa Development Diocesan Welfare Services

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene adopted in Kango Community

Using the Community Health manual, Community Health Agents educate community members on simple solutions to common health challenges that affect their families. In Kango community, the Community Health Agents educated community members on basic preventive techniques and emphasize the importance of sanitation and hygiene. They stressed the importance of covering left over food to community members and warned that exposed food could be contaminated leading to illnesses including lassa fever if the food had been exposed to rats.

Through their education, Mrs. Ridiya Adamu a 48 year old mother of 5 realized that covering her food properly to stop it from being contaminated was important for her family's well-being. Ridiya's children often complained of stomach ache and she frequently had to spend money on drugs to cure their stomach ache. She learned from the CHAs that simply covering her food properly and keeping her surroundings clean could be the only solution to the recurring problem.



Ridiya eating with her children. Credit: Kubwa Development Diocesan Welfare Services

Ridiya carried out the lessons she learned from the CHAs and was amazed to discover that it worked; members of her family stopped complaining of stomach ache. She thanked the head of her community for accepting the SCHHR programme when it was introduced to the community and said “the money I was spending on drugs and on transporting my family members to hospital has reduced. We are now using the money to take care of school and our business”.

Respite for Shidem

Through the Community Health Agents on the SCHHR project, families are enlightened on the importance of family planning and child spacing. Most families enlightened through the SCHHR project though realising the importance of child spacing and family planning were unable to access lasting and effective family planning services in their local communities.



Shidem, mother of 9 children finally has respite. Credit: Jireh Doo Foundation

Shidem Targema, a 47 year old farmer and mother of 9 children In Mbaamatso Community of Benue State, said she had been trying to access family planning services. She took pills which failed her so she still got pregnant; she also tried to control it 'naturally' but was unsuccessful. She was over burdened with taking care of her children and could neither go to her farm nor make any money for her upkeep.

With the partnership established by Christian Aid (UK) Nigeria with Marie Stopes International to provide family planning services to members of SCHHR project communities, Shidem was able to access lasting and effective family planning services. She said ***"I'm happy I now have peace of mind and no anxiety, I don't worry or bother about counting days to monitor my safe period since I took family planning from the facility"***. Shidem's health has improved tremendously, she can farm at will, which has contributed to increased her income

New Opportunities for Peter

The Community Health Agents who promote the health of community members through health education are not paid for their labour. Christian Aid (UK) Nigeria in partnership with its local partners devised an alternative reward scheme to support the economic capacity of the community health agents. On the reward scheme, the community volunteers can request for provision of materials to support their income generation activities. Supporting the income of the volunteers is also a strategy devised to ensure the project's sustainability beyond the lifespan of the project; since the agents will be empowered to generate income they will be unlikely to abandon their duties or consider their duties unfruitful.

Peter Bulus, a 20 year old Community Health Agent in Gafere Community, Kuje Area Council Federal Capital Territory, was rewarded for his efforts on the SCHHR project through the alternative reward scheme. In his 3 years as Community Health Agent, Peter a secondary school graduate has received a grinding machine, a camera and a cow. He has been able to support his parents who earn very little income from farming and contributes to the education of his younger siblings.



Peter and his siblings near his grinding machine provided through Christian Aid's alternative reward scheme. Credit: Kubwa Diocesan Development Services

Peter's dream of getting higher education was truncated by his parent's inability to purchase a Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) form for him however with proceeds from his grinding machine and camera, he has purchased the required forms and looks forward to continuing his education. An excited Peter said "Nobody for do all these things for me if not for these reward package". My dream of going back to school would have died if not for these reward package."

