

FALL 2011

## AIHA PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

- Nigeria Social Work and OVC Support Initiative

## HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Partnerships in Nigeria

*With an HIV prevalence rate of 3.1 percent among adults between the ages of 15-49, Nigeria is home to 2.6 million people living with HIV — the third largest national epidemic in the world. Nigeria's AIDS epidemic is complex and varies widely by region. Youth and young adults in Nigeria are particularly vulnerable to HIV, with young women at higher risk than their male counterparts. There are many risk factors that contribute to the spread of HIV, including prostitution, high-risk practices among itinerant workers, high prevalence of STIs, clandestine high-risk heterosexual and homosexual practices, international trafficking of women, and irregular blood screening. With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and CDC/Nigeria, AIHA's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center currently manages one partnership in Nigeria. In May 2009, AIHA established a small country office in Nigeria to provide programmatic and logistical support in country.*

## Social Work Initiative Strengthens OVC Care

Nigeria has a population of 149 million people and is estimated to have the third largest number of PLWHIV in the world. According to the country's Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, there are some 17 million orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria. In response AIHA established in 2008 an institutional twinning partnership linking the Federal School of Social Work in Enugu and the Department of Social Work at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka with a US-based consortium that includes Hunter College School of Social Work, Howard University School of Social Work, and the Nigerian Social Workers Association.

In late 2010, experts from AIHA's Tanzania Social Work and OVC Support Initiative — including partners from the Institute of Social Work in Dar es Salaam and Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois, Chicago — replaced the Hunter consortium and the Nigeria Social Work and OVC Support Initiative was established. Key elements of the Initiative include

faculty and curriculum development at both the pre-service and in-service levels. Partners are also working to increase the capacity of Nigerian social work professionals and educational institutions to advocate for implementation of OVC standards. At that time, partners focused on revising and expanding the Para Social Worker Training Curricula to align it more closely with the Tanzania Program. AIHA's Nigeria Social Work and OVC Support Initiative supports the Nigerian Government's health system strengthening efforts by building sustainable capacity at partner institutions to train Social Workers and Para Social Workers to provide much-needed care and support to orphans and vulnerable children, as well as other vulnerable populations. The revised training curriculum includes an introductory course, supervised field training and mentoring, and a follow up course. This new training package was piloted in the spring of 2011 and the first series of trainings were conducted in August and September of that year.



Community-based care providers often work with vulnerable children and families on a daily basis, yet many lack the necessary child development, social work, and case management skills they need to effectively provide care and support. AIHA's Nigeria Social Work and OVC Initiative is helping to change that by strengthening in-country capacity to provide pre-service training for Para Social Workers and in-service training for Social Workers. As a result, caregivers are better able to identify client needs and link them to the appropriate services.

## CONTACT US

For more information about our projects in Nigeria, contact JUSTICE CHUKWUDI ULUNTA, AIHA Country Director, at [jstluntah@gmail.com](mailto:jstluntah@gmail.com).

# Rhoda's Story



Rhoda Bassey (far right) joins a group of girls who participate in vocational training at Vantaged Teen Centre as they admire their tailoring work. Rhoda opened the Centre four years ago in response to the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children living in and around the Nigerian capital of Abuja.

"I come from a humble background, so whatever I have achieved in my life has been aided by the benevolence of well-meaning individuals," says Rhoda Bassey, 52. "When I opened Vantaged Teen Centre four years ago, it was because I wanted to help people in similar situations — that is my passion," she explains. "Our mission is to be a passage to hope for the less fortunate ones. We work with young people made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, empowering them by giving them the opportunity to acquire life skills and vocational training," Rhoda continues.

With three paid staff members and seven volunteers, the Centre also provides educational support so orphans and vulnerable children can remain in school, counseling and home visits, and income-generating activities for caregivers and widows. Currently, 10 teens are enrolled in the Centre's nine-month vocational training course and 72 children receive educational and psycho-social support. Rhoda attended a Para Social Worker Training conducted by Twinning Center partners in Abuja in June 2010. What she learned has changed the way she and her staff work with vulnerable children and families, she admits.

"During the training, I learned that social work is, above all, about problem solving within human relationships. The best interests of the children must be at the hearth of every action we take," Rhoda says. "I must say, though, that the guidelines on professional conduct were the most important things I took away from the training. These have become our standard," she stresses. "The training has also helped me realize the

importance of networking and case management," Rhoda says. "Many of our clients require other services and this course has taught us how to refer cases to the appropriate organizations to help children access the care and support they need."

# Joy's Story

"My worst nightmare began when mummy took ill," says 17-year-old Joy Clement. "She left home and never returned. To this day, we do not know if she is dead or alive," Joy continues, explaining that her mother was plagued with psychological problems. When her mother left, Joy — along with her sister Mercy, 15, and brother Lucky, 13 — were forced to seek shelter with their maternal uncle. "We moved to Dutse Bokuma Bwari, where the uncle lives with his wife and three boys. It is an 8-room compound and we share it with three other families," Joy explains. "Our grandmother lives in a village in Kaduna State. She sells firewood and sends money when she can, but sometimes we go without food for two or three days," she says.

The children's unstable living conditions make them particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse, and health risks — especially since the Bwari area has the highest HIV prevalence rate in all of Nigeria. One of Joy's neighbors works at Vantaged Teen Centre. She shared Joy's story with the NGO's founder and CEO Rhoda Bassey more than a year ago. Since then, things have been getting better for Joy and her siblings.

"I think maybe I would be dead by now if it weren't for mummy Rhoda. For sure, my brother and sister would have dropped out of school," Joy says, noting that the family receives counseling, as well as food, clothing, and educational support from the Centre. "Since I am not in school, I participate in training for cooking and sewing. This will help me earn a living and maybe even go back to school," Joy says, thoughtfully adding, "I would like to become a nurse or even a social worker, so I can help people feel happy and secure the way mummy Rhoda does for me."



At Vantaged Teen Centre, an NGO in Abuja, their mission is to offer "a passage to hope" to orphans and vulnerable children such as 17-year-old Joy Clement (back row, right). The Centre's staff and volunteers work with young people to empower them through vocational training, counseling, financial and educational support, micro-credit and other assistance for income generation, advocacy, and referrals to medical and other service providers.

## AIHA/Nigeria

The HIV/AIDS Twinning Center

Justice C. Ulunta, Country Director  
112 Ogui Road  
Asata, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria  
Tel: (234) 803-431-2049  
E-mail: [justluntah@gmail.com](mailto:justluntah@gmail.com)  
[www.TwinningAgainstAIDS.org](http://www.TwinningAgainstAIDS.org)

