



Promoting sustainable community based care and support for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Edo state, carried out by Health Care and Support Initiatives (HCSI), Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, with fund from the World Bank through Edo State Agency for the Control of AIDS (EDOSACA)

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

As the number of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS rises, the burden of the epidemic on individuals, families and communities is increasingly evident, exacerbated by wide spread poverty. Some of the critical indicators of the social consequences of the epidemic are the increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and a general stigmatization of PLHIV. The project **promoting sustainable community based care and support for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)** which was implemented in Oredo and Orhionmwon Local government Areas of Edo state did not only address general stigmatization against PLHIV, it went further to providing economic empowerment for both vulnerable households and PLHIV in project communities. The overall goal of the project was to promote the survival and improve the quality of life of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and people affected by HIV/AIDS (PABA) especially Vulnerable Children (VC). The project was able to create improved access to quality health services for PLHIV and OVC in project communities.

Health Care and Support Initiative (HCSI), Catholic Archdiocese of Benin registered 1673 PLHIV and 1371 OVC into the program and for the duration of the project span (2015-2016) provided through our trained community volunteers different services like; Nutritional service, Counseling service, Psychosocial service, Home based care,

Health Education, capacity building on Micro Enterprise fundamentals, provision of school fees and educational materials to OVC and economic empowerment for PLHIV.

Community mobilization and stigma reduction outreaches were carried out in some communities. The outreaches provided avenue to educate members of the communities on the modes of transmission of the virus. Members of the various communities were educated on abstinence, care and support for PLHIV. Staff of Health Care and Support Initiative (HCSI), Catholic Archdiocese of Benin city also carried out HIV Testing Services in those communities.

Kids club were conducted in all the project communities to offer psychological support to kids. During kids club sessions activities were divided into two; Learning session and Game session. In the learning session, children were taught personal and environmental hygiene. E.g Washing of hands, cutting of finger nails. Gender roles/norms were also discussed. These roles are considered appropriate for people because of their sex. Gender roles or norms are passed down from parents to their children and are also learned from other family and community members. Parents treat girls and boys differently sometimes without even knowing it. Kids from vulnerable households were provided with educational material and school fees to enable them access quality education and caregivers from vulnerable households were also empowered with either vocational skills or income generating activities. Health Care and Support Initiative (HCSI) also facilitated issuance of birth certificates to OVC in project communities.

Health care and support initiative (HCSI), Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, through project interventions impacted positively on the lives of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the project communities. Below are some pictures of the activities carried out.