

Quarterly Project Report

Nigeria CUBS

April – June 2014

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Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Nigeria (CUBS)

Quarterly Report

April 1 to June 30, 2014



CUBS beneficiaries in Enugu State
April 2014

This report was made possible by the generous support of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Task Order No. GHH-I-02-07-00058-00 of Contract No. GHH-I-02-07-00058-00 under the AIDSTAR I Indefinite Quantity Contract.

The contents are the responsibility of the Community-Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CUBS) project and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Contract No: GHH-I-00-07-00058-00

Submitted By: Dr. Zipporah Kpamor, CUBS Project Director

Project Title: Community Based Support for OVC in Nigeria (CUBS)

Recipient: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

To: Ms. Doreen Magaji, USAID OVC Manager

Reporting Period: April 1 to June 30, 2014

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Acronyms

AIDSTAR	AIDS Support and Technical Resources
AO	assistance objective
CPC	child protection committee
CSO	civil society organization
CUBS	Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
DQA	data quality assurance
FMWA&SD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
HES	household economic strengthen
IQC	indefinite quantity contract
IR	intermediate result
LGA	local government area
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NPA	National Priority Agenda
NPOPC	National Population Commission
OR	operations research
OVC	orphans and vulnerable children
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PY	project year
QA	quality assurance
SMWA&SD	state ministry of women affairs and social development
SPA	State Priority Agenda
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TWG	Technical Working Group
VSLA	voluntary savings and loan associations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Summary

A. Executive Summary

Management Sciences for Health (MSH), in collaboration with Africare and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWA&SD), continues to implement the Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Nigeria (CUBS) project. Through funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CUBS provides support and coordination for scaling up HIV activities in Nigeria using community-based responses to:

- increase the number of OVC served with 6+1 services;¹
- strengthen the capacity of national and state governments to better protect and care for OVC;
- address OVC-related gender issues;
- increase local capacity to implement, monitor, and evaluate OVC programs; and
- document and disseminate lessons learnt.

Through its 38 partner civil service organizations (CSOs), the project provides quality services to OVC and continues to make progress towards meeting its project year (PY) 5 and life of project targets. A review of this quarter's data shows that the project provided 4,894 OVC with a minimum of one care service; 2,571 of these children were newly enrolled in OVC care programs. The total number of OVC served in PY 5 increased to 53,111, surpassing the CUBS' PY 5 annual and Life of Project (LOP) targets. This quarter, the project also focused on the disbursement of block grants, a pillar of CUBS' exit strategy and the close out of state offices and 17 CSOs in the Niger-Delta states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

As the project prepares to close in October of 2014, collaboration with the federal, state and local government and implementing partners (IPs) remains a high priority as we work together to transition our work to the state governments. With the



A vulnerable child

¹ 6+1 services: the six services for OVCs include education, health, psychosocial, shelter, legal protection, and nutrition plus one service for OVC caregivers, household economic strengthening.

FMWA&SD taking the lead, CUBS helped seven states to adapt the National Priority Agenda (NPA) on OVC to their local contexts. The State Priority Agenda (SPA) on OVC now serve as the guiding principles for OVC programing in the states.

As part of interventions to continue protecting Vulnerable children from harm, help them when they are in need, and promote their overall development, CUBS supported 116 Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and other community protection network to carry out campaigns against drug abuse and violence in Kaltungo Communities in Gombe state and form the “Change Agent Group” against harmful practices against women and girls in Ohunowherre Community of Enugu State..

CUBS’ major project implementation challenge this quarter was getting stakeholders to fully commit to continuing the project interventions as Africare and MSH pull out.

The following sections provide a detailed report of the achievements and challenges that CUBS encountered this quarter and the project’s plans for next quarter.



CUBS beneficiaries in Kebbi State

B. Activity Financial Summary

CUBS' FINANCIAL SUMMARY
Activity Name: Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Nigeria (CUBS)
Activity Objective: Support the Government of Nigeria in implementing its <i>National Plan of Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)</i> by developing and strengthening community-based service delivery for OVC, building community ownership of OVC interventions, reducing gender discrimination in OVC programming, and increasing OVC involvement and advocacy.
Implementing Partner: Management Sciences for Health (MSH) Inc.
USAID/Nigeria Assistance Objective (AO): AO 3 - Increased Nigerian capacity for a sustainable HIV/AIDS and TB Response
Life of Activity (start and end dates): October 7, 2009 – October 6, 2014
Total Estimated Contract/Agreement Amount: \$20,907,645
Obligations to date: \$20,305,116
Current Pipeline Amount: \$ 2,314,323
Accrued Expenditures this Quarter: \$928,348
Activity Cumulative Accrued Expenditures to Date: \$17,990,793
Estimated Expenditures Next Quarter: \$1,141,708
Report Submitted by: Dr. Zipporah Kpamor, CUBS Project Director
Submission Date: July 31, 2014

II. About the Community Based Support for OVC in Nigeria (CUBS) Project

Through the CUBS project, PEPFAR and USAID strengthen the capacity of Nigeria's federal and state government agencies to plan and implement OVC programs. The CUBS project provides these agencies with support and coordination for scaling up HIV activities using community-based responses to identify, locate, and protect OVC. Under the AIDS Support and Technical Resources' (AIDSTAR's) indefinite quantity contract (IQC) mechanism, MSH and Africare collaborate with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWA&SD) and the state ministries of women affairs and social development (SMWA&SD) to address these focus areas through CUBS' five-year contract. The project also supports the implementation of Nigeria's *National Priority Agenda (NPA) on OVC* by developing and strengthening community-based OVC service delivery.

Using a bottom-up approach to mobilize families and OVC care and support stakeholders, CUBS integrates a fragmented OVC service delivery system, mobilizes community support for OVC, and raises awareness about OVC needs to reduce the children's experience of stigma, discrimination, and isolation. The CUBS project provides capacity building and on-the-job mentoring for state and community-based providers and institutions, implements targeted systems strengthening activities, and offers small grants to CSOs supporting OVC service delivery.

The project's partnerships leverage existing resources and build on established federal, state, and community foundations to improve OVC service delivery and expand best practice implementation. By October of 2014, CUBS will have provided 50,000 OVCs in 11 focal states (i.e., Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kebbi, Rivers, Sokoto and Taraba) with comprehensive OVC services that are consistent with Nigeria's national OVC guidelines.

Project Objectives

1. Provide support for coordination and scale-up of HIV activities
2. Mobilize and support community-based responses that identify, locate, and protect OVC
3. Deliver a holistic service package focusing on the multifaceted needs of OVC
4. Address gender-related issues in OVC programming
5. Document and disseminate successful, innovative approaches, sustainable models, and evidence-based best practices

Project Components

- *Capacity building and technical assistance:* CUBS builds capacity and provides technical support to national and state-level agencies, CSOs, and faith based organizations (FBOs).
- *Community mobilization and coordination:* CUBS fosters coordination and ensures OVC service quality, policy development, and advocacy through establishing OVC forums.
- *Systems strengthening:* CUBS strengthens OVC support systems to enhance the effectiveness of the national OVC program.

- *Service outreach expansion:* CUBS expands coverage and access to OVC services.
- *Resource leveraging and linking:* CUBS leverages and links resources, including clinical and community-based partners.
- *Small, innovation grants for CSOs:* CUBS provides CSOs and FBOs with small grants to support the identification of new OVC service delivery approaches, to expand OVC services, and to build the technical capacity of staff.



A caregiver conducting her small scale business

III. Quarterly Data Achievement on Intermediate Results

Results #1: Increased Access to 6+1 Services for OVC and Caregivers									
Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 5 Target	Achievement				Total	% of Target Achieved	Comment
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
	% of children with improved well-being using the child status index (CSI)	90%		50%	46%		50%	50%	Based on preliminary analysis, further analysis is ongoing
1.1 (C1.1.D)	# of eligible clients (OVC) provided with a minimum of one care service	50,200	17,990	30,277	4,894	0	53,111	105.8%	Target Exceeded
	Newly enrolled	1,600	1,537	410	2,571	0	4,518	282.4%	Target exceeded
	Previously enrolled	48,600	16,453	29,817	2,323	0	48,593	99.99%	
	Education (male)		1,094	1,987	697	0	3,778		
	Education (female)		1,212	2,376	716	0	4,304		
	Health (male)		4,041	9,162	2,149	0	15,352		
	Health (female)		4,419	8,918	2,234	0	15,571		
	Psychosocial support (male)		7,611	14,493	2,742	0	24,846		

	Psychosocial support (female)		8,398	13,742	2,642	0	24,782		
	Shelter (male)		619	676	117	0	1,412		
	Shelter (female)		620	675	144	0	1,439		
	Protection (male)		720	1,279	477	0	2,476		
	Protection (female)		781	1,165	373	0	2,319		
	Nutrition (male)		2446	5,720	1,185	0	9,351		
	Nutrition (female)		2,416	5,610	1,233	0	9,259		
	Economic Strengthening (male)		0	74	5	0	79		
	Economic Strengthening (female)		0	122	9	0	133		
1.2 (C5.1.D)	# of eligible clients (OVC) who received nutrition services	No target	4,862	11,330	2,418	0	16,192		
1.3	# of caregivers trained in caring for OVC	0	0	0	430	0	430		Although this target has been surpassed, CUBS trained caregivers for newly enrolled OVC in Q3
1.4	# of OVC referred for clinical services	No	369	71	1	0	441		

		target							
Result #2: Strengthened Capacities of National and State Governments for Coordination									
Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 5 Target					Total	% of Target Achieved	Explanation
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
2.1	# of AIDSTAR states with comprehensive OVC plans	11	2	5	3	0	10	90.9%	NPA adaptation took place this quarter in Taraba, Sokoto and Kebbi
2.2	# of technical working groups coordinating the delivery of social services for vulnerable children at the state and LGA levels ²	11 states/(33LGAs)	10/36LGAs	10/36LGAs	10/36LGAs	0	10/36 LGAs		LGA target achieved in 10 (91%) of the project-supported states; activity will not be conducted in the last state.
2.3	# of AIDSTAR states with existing, functional OVC referral systems	11	9	11	11	0	11		Target achieved
2.4	# of persons from state ministries and LGAs trained in leadership and management	30	28	39	0	0	67		Target exceeded due to increased demand from

² This indicator was formerly “The number of functional state and LGA community coordination mechanisms (OVC forums) in place to monitor OVC programs.”

									partners
2.5	# of persons who successfully completed an in-service training in strategic information including data collection, collation, analysis, and use	10	60	15	0	0	75		Target exceeded due to increased demand from partners

Results #3: Strengthened Capacity of Communities to Better Protect and Care for OVC

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 5 Target	Achievement				Total	% of Target Achieved	Explanation
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
3.1	# of child protection committees (CPCs) coordinating the protection of vulnerable children at the community level	0	116	116	116	0	116		
3.2	# of CSOs that refer OVC using the existing, functional state referral systems	38	38	38	38	0	38		Target achieved

Results #4: Reduced Vulnerability Status of the Girl Child and Women

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 5 Target					Total	% of Target Achieved	Explanation
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			

4.0	% of households with reduced vulnerability of female OVC and female heads of households	0	0	0	46%	0	46%		Preliminary result findings yet to be validated
4.1	# of OVC reached with individual and/or small group preventive interventions that are based on evidence and/or meet the minimum standards required	600	1,859	4,202	323	0	6,384	1,064%	Target exceeded Prevention messages were integrated into Girl groups and kids' club activities
4.2	# of female child-headed household supported by the OVC program	No target	20	20	0	0	20		
4.3	# of programs that address protection issues for female OVC and caregivers	39	38	38	38	0	38	97.4%	Target achieved

Result #5: Strengthened systems for documenting & disseminating evidence best practice

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 5 Target					Total	% of Target Achieved	Explanation
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			

5.1	# of persons trained in the use of the CSI	50	60	15	0	0	75		The SMWA&SD in Akwa Ibom requested support
5.2	# of service sites/delivery points that received a data quality assurance (DQA) visit	38	0	38	0	0	38		Target achieved
5.3	# of CSOs that provided data that was complete, on a time, and based on the national <i>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan for OVCs</i>	38	38	38	38	0	38		Target achieved
5.4	% of service sites/delivery points that received a quality assurance (QA) visit	100%	0	100%	0	0	0		QA was conducted in Q2; Target achieved

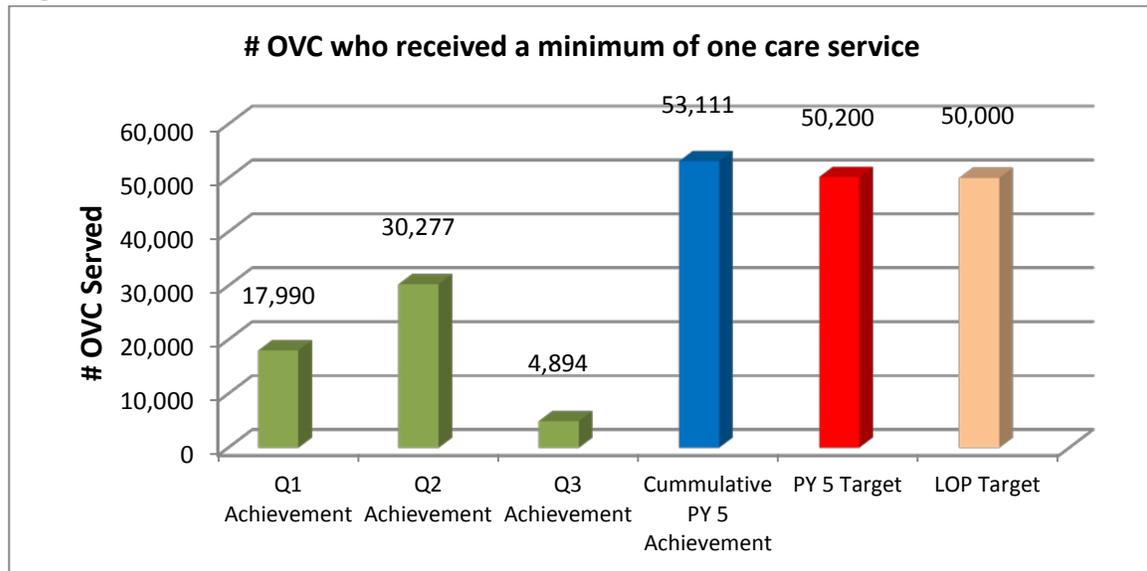
IV. Quarterly Progress

IR 1: Increased Access to 6+1 Services for OVC and Caregivers

Progress towards the attainment of project goal

- Almost at its end date, the CUBS project continues to support the provision of holistic and comprehensive services to families and children enrolled in the project. During the quarter under review, 4,383 OVC received health care services, 1,413 received education services, 5384 received psychosocial support, 850 received protection services, 2418 received nutrition services, 261 received shelter and care services, and 14 received household economic strengthening services which bring the total number of OVC reached with a minimum of one care service this quarter to 4,894. This brings to 53,111 the number of children who have received one minimum care service in PY 5, surpassing both the PY 5 and Life of Project targets as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



- As part of interventions to continue protecting Vulnerable children from harm, help them when they are in need, and promote their overall development, CUBS

supported 116 Child Protection Committees (CPC) and other community protection network to carry out various activities across all 11 CUBS supported states. Among many good examples are campaign against drug abuse and violence by CPC in Kaltungo Communities in Gombe state and formation of “Change Agent Group” against harmful practices against women and girls in Ohunowherre Community of Enugu State.



Change agents discussing in a small group during their training

- **Block grants:** The CUBS project continues to administer block grants as part of its exit strategy. In order to create community ownership, these block grant proposals were developed by the project-supported CSOs in partnership with leaders from the beneficiary communities. The proposals targeted needs within the communities that, once addressed, will directly benefit OVC and their caregivers as well as other members of the communities. The block grant projects are funded jointly by CUBS, the CSOs, and community members. This quarter, 33 CSOs and communities successfully used USAID-approved procurement guidelines, as introduced by CUBS during the CSOs’ organizational development trainings to procure needed items. This is the first time the CSOs have undertaken such major procurements on their own, with CUBS guiding the process from the sidelines. Their success in this activity demonstrates how well the CSOs and communities have absorbed and taken ownership of the procurement process. This indicates a major achievement in CUBS’ sustainability and exit strategies.

IR 2: Strengthened capacities of national and state governments for coordination

- **Leadership and Coordination** – During this quarter, the USAID CUBS project provided technical assistance to the SMWA&SD and CSOs in Kebbi, Imo and Taraba on coordination of provision of quality care and support services using the family-centered approach. Staff of the SMWA&SD and CSOs received intense mentoring and coaching on the use of checklists and other coordination tools during supervisory visits. USAID CUBS project trained Enugu SMWA&SD and LGA staff on leadership and management, to further strengthen the leadership and coordination of OVC program in the State.
- **Adaptation of the National Priority (NPA) agenda for OVC** –The USAID CUBS project aims to strengthen the coordination of OVC projects by supporting the implementation of the NPA. The NPA is the policy document to provide guidance for OVC programming in Nigeria developed by the FMWA&SD. To fulfill this mandate, the USAID CUBS supported seven states - Imo, Sokoto, Kebbi, Taraba, Enugu, Gombe and Ekiti - to adapt the NPA to the local context. The State SPA will serve as reference material by stakeholders to guide OVC programs.



- **Technical Working Group Trainings:** The Technical Working Groups (TWGs) form a part of the social welfare structure that will continue the support of OVC programs in the states and communities when USAID CUBS comes to an end. To help the TWG members to develop skills they need to work together to improve OVC support, USAID CUBS trained 44 TWG members in Ekiti and Kebbi states on advocacy, collaboration and resource mobilization for sustainability, while in Imo

and Taraba states, the project provided technical assistance on presentation skills to enable the TWGs hold successful quarterly meetings.

IR 3: Strengthened capacity of communities to better protect and care for OVC

- **Care givers training** – To ensure the continuity of care and sustainability of access to quality OVC services for children within their homes, USAID CUBS trained 430



Care giver training in Gombe

OVC Caregivers on how to provide OVC services. The caregivers' skills in small business management and homestead gardening were strengthened. They also received training in nutrition

counseling, psychosocial support, safe motherhood, family planning, and HIV and AIDS/STIs prevention in various sites across in Gombe, Imo, Sokoto, Enugu and Taraba. This is in line with the project's strategy of building community systems from the bottom up, and strengthening households. We believe that this is a more sustainable strategy, because children will continue to be assisted by trained caregivers long after the CUBS project ends.

IR 4: Reduced Vulnerability Status of Girl Children and Women

- **Distribution of Startup Equipment and materials to 14 Girls empowered with skill acquisition:** For the past year, CUBS has supported 14 adolescent girls in Rivers State gain vocational skills. They learned computer skills, hair styling, and/or dress making. After completing their trainings last quarter, CUBS provided equipment or start-up grants to support their small businesses. In a colorful ceremony that we witnessed by caregivers,



CUBS' beneficiaries at a skills acquisition center

members of CPC, TWG and staff from the Ministry of Social Development and Rehabilitation in Rivers, the 14 new entrepreneurs received the equipment and start-up grants they need to start their small businesses. Beneficiaries expressed their sincere appreciation to CUBS and the CSO staff for their consistent follow-up, mentoring and financial support that have helped them to complete their training.

'I thank God for USAID CUBS and Hope and Care Foundation for this support...Now I have a chance at a bright future. My sisters, after all the suffering and the shame of begging, we can now become somebody and even help others,' said Happiness Sunday one of the 14 beneficiaries.

At the ceremony, the state ministry of Social Development and Rehabilitation, committed to replicating this intervention with 30 adolescent female OVC per LGA in the 18 LGAs of Rivers State.

IR 5: Strengthened Systems for Documenting and Disseminating Evidence based Best Practices

- **CSO Board Training-** The continuing existence of functional CSOs is the hall mark of the USAID CUBS project's sustainability at community level. In order to strengthen the development of these organizations and improve board governance, the project focused on training their board members. Twenty-four CSO board members in Gombe and Taraba States were trained on resource mobilization, transparency, accountability and advocacy.

'We now have a better understanding of the role of a Board of Trustee, and of our roles and responsibilities as members of the Board. Thanks to the USAID CUBS training we have the knowledge and the tools to ensure our organization has the resources to fulfil its goal.' Said a participant from Centre for Community Health & Development (CHAD) in Gombe

society to strengthen the social welfare system by providing technical assistance to the state and community actors while the government and CSO partners took



A CUBS beneficiary in Rivers

the lead. In a ceremony as we closed the project offices in Delta, Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Bayelsa, the project handed over the program files, tools and database of OVC to their various SMWA&SD. In attendance at the handing over were representatives of CSOs implementing partners, TWGs, CPC, State Agency for the Control of AIDS, Association of OVC Network in Nigeria, caregivers, some OVC and Local Government Staff. The smooth close out of 17 CSOs in the four Niger-Delta states on schedule and with minimal support from the USAID CUBS project also demonstrates how much the CSOs have grown in their management of small grants.

Now, it is up to the stakeholders and partners in the Niger-Delta states protect and sustain the project's achievements.

- **Monitoring, evaluation, documentation, and dissemination of best practice:** This quarter, CUBS conducted a data review meeting at the country office from 12th to 14th May 2014. The exercise is part of CUBS' efforts to strengthen established M&E, information management, reporting, and documentation systems and promote sustainable structures and best practices among partner organizations and in the 11 states.
- **Refresher trainings:** CUBS conducted refresher trainings on M&E tools and documentation for 15 community volunteers in Ekiti State to ensure high-quality data that they continue to generate high quality data for use in planning. These trained volunteers continue to be relevant in providing accurate data for OVC services in their community to their CSOs, LGAs OVC Desk officers and SMWA&SD.

Opportunities

- As a result of continuous advocacy by CSOs partners in Imo state to the MTN Foundation, the Foundation has agreed to empower more OVC caregivers in the state using the Household economic strategies of USAID CUBS by equipping skills acquisition centers where caregivers and adolescent OVC will be trained. At these centers, caregivers and OVC will be trained to acquire dress making, hair dressing and soap making skills. Beneficiaries who complete their training will be given sub-grants to start and/or expand small businesses. This will address the low or no household income among caregivers that have been identified as critical needs in project supported communities. Profits from these businesses will be used to improve household nutrition and pay for an education for younger OVC.
- There is an opportunity in the adoption of the USAID CUBS Girl child empowerment initiative by the Rivers State Ministry of Social Development and Rehabilitation. The plan is to replicate the initiative with 30 adolescent female OVC per LGA in all 18 LGAs in the State. Because the initiative that started with 14 girls in one LGA has been taken over by the SMSD&R, it creates an opportunity for scale up.

Challenges

- High expectations from community leaders and caregivers in the project focus states for CUBS to enroll more children into the program and empower more caregivers with skill acquisition and income generating materials as a result of improvement in quality of life of those that have been empowered through the CUBS project.

Next Quarter's Expected Results and Related Tasks

IR 1. Increased number of OVC served with 6+1 services

- Monitor community-based block grant activities
- Support the safeguarding of children and women in Ohunowerre community in Enugu State
- Update the directory, review the process, develop a tool to collect results from the frontline SMS activity

IR 2. Strengthened capacities of national and state governments to better protect and care for OVC

- Hand over to and support 11 SMWASD and the FMWASD to make use of OVC databases.

IR 3 Strengthened community support for OVC care

- Support the SMWA&SD to ensure staff at the state and LGA levels use the *OVC Service Provider Referral Directory*

IR 4 Reduced vulnerability status of girl children and women

- Launch the OVC Gender training manual and give CSO Partners 2 Days Orientation on use of manual
- Write Position Paper on Gender in the CUBS Project and Project End report.

IR 5 Strengthened systems for documenting and disseminating evidence best practices

- Review of impact of CUBS OD intervention - finalize report on the assessment of strategies of intervention
- Facilitate short-term technical assistance visits to support project close-out
- Support to CSO partners who will be selected for external DQA visits by USAID and Nigeria M&E Management Services
- Collate extensive CUBS database and relevant documents to be handed over to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs for sustainability
- Conduct end of project dissemination meeting
- Write end of project report
- Produce Project video



A caregiver with her wards in Rivers State

Annex 1: Success Stories

Pressing Palms into Pride

CUBS Economically Empowers Communities to Care for Vulnerable Children

Who looks after children when their parents die? In taking lives, conditions such as HIV & AIDS often reach further down the family tree and sever children from an adult's care, unless other community members step in as caretakers. In Nigeria, many citizens heroically decide to provide for children who otherwise would be stranded, but taking on such enormous responsibilities with meager resources seriously limits how well caretakers can provide for the children and for themselves. Nigeria's National Agency for the Control of AIDS estimates that AIDS has orphaned 1.8 million total children, and the unfortunate reality is that AIDS is not the only cause for Nigerian children to be made vulnerable. In 2011, as part of a larger project that began in 2009 called CUBS, Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), Africare partnered with Management Sciences for Health to implement a Household Economic Strengthening (HES) initiative that is economically empowering female heads of OVC households. HES provides training and support to women in 11 Nigerian states so that they can gain better control of their lives and better provide for the children in their care. The women receive training in areas including business planning, market information, record keeping, savings



CUBS beneficiaries pound palm fruits to form agricultural co-operatives around palm oil production.

Photo: Management Sciences for

and credit options, maternal and child health, balanced diets and food preparation. Upon completing training, the women are free to pursue income-generating paths of their choosing, and beneficiaries in many communities opted to cultivate cassava or maize and so on. However, based on an analysis of local markets, Africare encouraged the women around palm oil production. Since March 2011, two CUBS-supported women's co-operatives in Akwa Ibom State, which has one of Nigeria's highest HIV prevalence rates, produced a combined total of more than 4,800 liters of palm oil and earned more than \$8,000 from palm oil and palm kernel sales. Each co-operative also successfully secured outside investment that expanded their operations. Caregivers of the Adang Itam community initiated the "Cooperate Women" Co-operative in January 2011 with the express purpose of earning money to provide for local orphans. Later that September, all 10 of the co-operative's members received HES training. Then in December 2012, after running a profitable business utilizing a community mill, "Cooperate Women" obtained a \$3,500 loan to buy more tools and build their own mini palm mill. Only two months later, in February 2013, the women had fully repaid their loan.

The “Cooperate Women” caregivers have put the income from this successful operation to good use. Glory Edet Akpan, a member of the cooperative, said, “Unlike before, I can now feed the orphans under my care twice a day and buy them books and uniforms for school, thus building their self-esteem in the community.” The co-operative has also established a reserve of funds for members to draw upon in the event of an emergency.

In the rural community of Ikot Abasi Nsit, seven female caregivers were trained and assisted in forming a co-operative. The members made initial financial contributions, and palm oil production commenced in October 2011. The co-operative grew to 10 trained women by the end of the year, and in March 2013 the co-operative won a \$167 grant from the Women and Community Livelihood Foundation to boost their production capacity. To date, the women have produced more than 960 liters of palm oil and have made more than \$1,400 from palm oil and palm kernel sales. The profits have been crucial to the well-being of the community’s vulnerable children. Ukeme Monday, a member of the Ikot Abasi Nsit co-operative, affirmed, “I know the orphans under my care would not have had the opportunity to further their education nor feed well had I not been trained on the [HES] and not been engaged in palm oil production in my group.”



Extracting oil from palm fruits

Photo: Management Sciences for Health

Ninety women have received CUBS HES training in Akwa Ibom State. These women have always been eager to secure better futures for themselves and the children they look after, but a lack of support and training has frustrated their efforts. HES is economically empowering women to overcome the many obstacles they face and more fully realize their household’s potential, and these women can now afford important expenses for their children such as school fees, uniforms, books and meals. HES directly supports heads of households and fosters an environment where orphans and vulnerable children can become better educated, lead healthier lives and have more hope for the future. “Thanks to Africare,” said Christiana Okon, an HES beneficiary from Ikot Abasi Nsit, “Today I am a proud sponsor of orphans under my care.”