

## End of Project Report

---

Nigeria CUBS

October 2009 – September 2014

This report was made possible through support provided by the US Agency for International Development, under the terms of Award No. GHH-I-00-07-00058-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development.

---

Nigeria Community-Based support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children  
200 Rivers Edge Drive  
Medford, MA 02155  
Telephone: (617) 250-9500  
<http://www.msh.org>



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

End of Project Report  
October 6, 2014



*Inna Kura, a caregiver beneficiary of the CUBS program, shown here with seven of her 10 grandchildren*

**Contract No:** GHH-I-00-07-00058-00  
**Submitted By:** Dr. Zipporah Kpamor, CUBS Project Director, Management Sciences for Health  
**Project Title:** Community Based Support for OVC in Nigeria  
**To:** Doreen Magaji [OVC Manager], USAID

## Contents

Acronyms .....	4
I. Executive Summary.....	6
II. Project Scope and Assumptions.....	11
A. Country context .....	11
B. Project scope.....	12
C. Project objectives and strategies.....	13
D. Project-wide assumptions, known constraints, and dependencies .....	23
III. Project Management Approach.....	24
IV. M&E Design and Timeline.....	25
A. Decentralization .....	25
B. National M&E plan and system .....	25
C. Human capacity development .....	25
D. Support the use of data to guide decision making at all levels .....	26
E. Promote a cross-cutting approach to M&E .....	26
V. Achievements by Major Result Areas.....	27
A. Result 1: Access to 6+1 VC services increased.....	27
B. Result 2: Capacities of national and state government for vulnerable children coordination strengthened.....	36
C. Result 3: Community support for vulnerable children’s care strengthened .....	41
D. Result 4: Vulnerability status of girl child and women reduced .....	44
E. Result 5: Systems for disseminating evidence-based best practices strengthened .....	49
VI. Sustaining and Expanding the Project Impact .....	57
VII. Challenges, Lessons Learned, Conclusion and Recommendations .....	58
VIII. Annexes.....	62
Annex 1: Core Project Indicators and Results.....	62
Annex 2: List of Project Materials Developed.....	67

## Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIDSTAR	AIDS Support and Technical Assistance Resources
AONN	Association of Orphans and Vulnerable Children NGOs of Nigeria
BLC	Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa
BCK	Basic Care Kits
CCRN	Centre for Clinical Research
CHEW	Community Health Extension Worker
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contract Officer's Representative
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CPN	Child Protection Network
CRA	Child's Right Act
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSI	Child Status Index
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CUBS	Community Based Support for Vulnerable Children
DQA	Data Quality Assurance
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIDA	Federation of Female Lawyers
FMWASD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
FVC	Female Vulnerable Children
GoN	Government of Nigeria
GCDA	Guidance and Counseling Development Association
HCT	HIV Counseling and Testing
HESCoP	Household Economic Strengthening Community of Practices
HES	Household Economic Strengthening
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HTC	HIV testing and counseling
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IQC	Indefinite Quantity contract
IP	Implementing Partner
IHVN	Institute of Human Virology Nigeria
ICAP	International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Program
JCHEW	Junior Community Health Extension Worker
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LGA	Local Government Area
LACA	Local Government Action Committee on AIDS
LLITN	Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation

MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NHOCAT	National Harmonized Organization Capacity Assessment Tool
NPA	National Priority Agenda
NPopC	National Population Council
NOMIS	National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Management Information System
NMEMS	Nigeria Monitoring and Evaluation Management Service
NWDC	National Women Development Centre
OICI	Opportunities Industrialization Centers International
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PESWAC	Perpetual Succor for Women and Children
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centers
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV
PSS	Psychosocial Support Services
RH	Reproductive Health
SACA	State Agencies for the Control of AIDS
SMWASD	State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
SPA	State Priority Agenda
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TA	Technical Assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Vulnerable Children
VSLA	Voluntary Savings and Loan Associations

## I. Executive Summary

### Overview

Despite efforts to ramp up care and support activities for vulnerable children and their caregivers through policy development, Nigeria continues to face significant hurdles to deliver services to this group. The Situation Assessment and Analysis on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Nigeria, 2008 revealed that extreme poverty, abuse, and neglect, as well as the inadequacy of social welfare systems that could prevent children and families from falling through the gaps, continue to place Nigeria's 17.5 million vulnerable children at risk of significant harm and of being unable to reach their full developmental potential. Vulnerable children are more likely to be victims of abuse, live in institutional care or on the street, engage in hazardous and/or exploitive labor, and experience higher rates of stigma and discrimination. They are more likely to drop out of school (in particular as many children leave school to care for ailing family members), and suffer psychosocial distress. Female children are known to bear a significant share of the burden as they often have to carry a disproportionate load of the care-giving responsibilities when family members become sick or die of AIDS and other chronic illnesses.

In a response to this crisis, the Government of Nigeria (GoN), through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) developed the National Priority Agenda for Vulnerable Children (NPA), a coordinated approach to address the needs of this group. The NPA commits the GoN to ensuring that all poor and vulnerable children have equitable access to and benefit from comprehensive social protection services; all children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect and have a legal identity; vulnerable children are healthy and well-nourished and have equitable access to and benefit from quality basic education; and vulnerable children have an adequate standard of living conditions.

To support the implementation of the NPA, the U.S. Government, through PEPFAR and under the auspices of USAID, developed the CUBS project, a five-year contract to provide Nigeria's federal and state government agencies with support and coordination for scaling up HIV activities using community-based responses to identify, locate, and protect vulnerable children. Awarded in October 2009 and running through October 2014, CUBS was implemented by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and Africare in collaboration with the FMWASD and the State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development (SMWASD) to strengthen the social welfare system for quality services provision for vulnerable children.

Using a bottom-up approach to mobilize families and other stakeholders in the care and support of vulnerable children, CUBS integrated what was a fragmented service delivery system, mobilized community support for this population, and raised awareness about the needs to reduce vulnerable children's experience of stigma, discrimination, and isolation. CUBS worked in 11 target states – Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kebbi, Rivers, Sokoto, and Taraba – reaching 36 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and a total of 116 communities. The project engaged in partnerships with 38 civil society organizations (CSOs) in the 11 states to support its goal and objectives. The project also integrated a small grants component that enabled them to respond to new and innovative opportunities for expanding access to high quality services and addressing programmatic gaps. Through a competitive process, the 38 CSOs received fixed obligation grants of between N1,000,000 (\$6,250) to N2,000,000 (\$12,500) yearly to provide support services to vulnerable children in their communities.

The goal of the project was to ensure sustainable access to care and support services for orphans and vulnerable children. Specifically, CUBS aimed to increase access to 6+1 services for vulnerable children (services in the areas of health; nutrition; psychosocial support; shelter and care; education; legal support; and household economic strengthening); strengthen the capacity of national and state agencies and programs for vulnerable children; reduce the vulnerability of girl children and women; and strengthen systems for disseminating evidence based best practices.

In order to achieve the project's goal and objectives, CUBS used strategies that are anchored in the principles expounded in the NPA and PEPFAR's guidelines for OVC programming. Through training, mentorship, and coaching, CUBS built the capacity of FMWASD, the SMWASD, LGAs, CSOs, communities, and additional relevant stakeholders such as the ministries of health and education, law enforcement agencies, and others, in the areas of systems strengthening and service delivery. CUBS fostered coordination, ensured the quality of services for vulnerable children, and pursued policy development and advocacy through the establishment of OVC technical working groups (TWGs), child protection committees (CPCs), and referral systems that promote program ownership and sustainability. CUBS strengthened the systems that support vulnerable children to enhance the overall effectiveness of the NPA by building capacity to implement the national M&E system for OVC, supporting the development of national and state plans for OVC, and building the capacity of 38 CSOs to deliver quality services.

## **Results**

A total of 53,111 vulnerable children were enrolled in the CUBS project, under which they were provided with a minimum of one care service, primarily through the local project-funded CSOs. The project trained 17,086 caregivers to care for orphans and vulnerable children. Community volunteers from the 38 CSOs worked side by side with members of the 116 child protection committees (CPCs) that were created with CUBS' support, and were tasked with protecting and improving the well-being of children in their communities. The volunteers and CPC members mentored and coached caregivers and facilitated access for all vulnerable children to comprehensive social protection, health, education, and psychosocial support services. They also helped to ensure that the children were safe from abuse, violence, exploitation, neglect, and had a legal identity.

The key indicator to measure project success was the percentage of children with improved well-being, as determined by the Child Status Index (CSI). The CSI enabled an assessment of a child's current needs, monitoring of the child's health and well-being, and tracking of their progress in six holistic areas: food and nutrition; health; shelter and care; psychosocial care; protection; and education and skills. From longitudinal assessments using the CSI, CUBS determined that it had measurably improved the well-being of 64% of the children enrolled in the project. Similarly, through advanced analysis of results from our service data, we were able to determine that the project had reduced the vulnerability of 64% of families served.

CUBS expanded the reach of household economic strengthening activities (HES) with trainings on micro-enterprise fundamentals (an integration of income generation, homestead farming, and household nutrition) to 1,300 female caregivers. All trained beneficiaries were supported to develop simple business plans which were assessed for viability. Of the women trained, 326 qualified to receive seed grants to a maximum of \$64.52 each to start or expand a small business.

CUBS' beneficiaries who participated in the HES activities also received step-down training from project partners on how to start and conduct Voluntary Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). A total of 92 VSLAs were established across 11 states that enrolled a total of 2,467 members (both women and men)

and supported more than 6,000 vulnerable children. HES beneficiaries were also encouraged to form cooperatives around the production of crops relevant to the economy of their respective states. Hence, by pooling resources together, co-op members would be able to boost production capacity and make a profit from the sale of products already in demand locally.

The project strengthened social welfare systems by supporting the mapping and review of existing training programs for social work in the universities and other higher institutions in the south of Nigeria; established 47 OVC departments/units at the state and LGA levels; identified at least one designated staff at each of the newly-established OVC departments and units, trained and equipped them, and then progressively coached and mentored them. Now the desk officers in the 11 CUBS focus states and 36 LGAs are competent in OVC programming and have become mentors to their colleagues in other states. CUBS supported the use of the National OVC Management Information System by all 38 CSOs, the states and LGAs. The project also strengthened the National OVC M&E system through training of staff, printing and distributing data collection forms and registers, supporting joint data quality assurance visits, and in the use of information for decision making at the national, state, LGA, and community levels.

The CUBS project facilitated Vulnerable Children Situation Analyses in four states – Ekiti, Rivers, Taraba, and Gombe – in partnership with the State Agency for the Control of AIDS (SACA), Pact Nigeria’s REACH project, and the SMWASD. The state governments used the results of the surveys for planning and budget allocation purposes.

CUBS also facilitated the formation of 46 TWGs at the state and LGA levels. The TWG is a forum for the exchange of information and promotion of coherent and greater coordination and harmonization among stakeholders for the implementation of OVC programming at the state and local government area levels.

### **Challenges**

CUBS experienced several challenges during its implementation, but the project team and its partners were able to creatively address them. Major challenges included the floods of 2012, which hampered community level activities and retention rates of children in the program due to displacement of families and children, but this challenge also resulted in opportunities for collaboration between partners in the affected states. Separately, the incessant transfers of OVC focal persons who were trained at the SMWASD demonstrated inadequate political will and a lack of ownership at the state level for improving the situation of Nigeria’s vulnerable children. This slowed down project interventions and thus limited their effect. Finally, insecurity in most parts of the country disrupted work and made monitoring and supervision difficult. CUBS’ work with community-based CSOs and volunteers and use of mHealth interventions ensured continued support to allow uninterrupted work.

The bane of many development projects is the lack of sustainability. MSH and Africare did not want CUBS to suffer the same fate, and thus the project team instituted strategies focused on sustained implementation of the vulnerable children program/activities beyond the life of the project. CUBS institutionalized effective systems and improved mechanisms to support project implementation at the state and local levels; facilitated the formation and institutionalization of TWGs and CPCs; and built the capacity of CSOs in program management and caregivers in the provision of quality vulnerable children’s services. The project team transitioned project responsibilities to the key state/local stakeholders, such that by the end of the project, CUBS had transferred all required skills, as well as responsibilities for continuing activities to committed individuals and organizations at the state and community levels.

## Lessons learned

The CUBS project team took away several lessons during the course of the project:

**Investing in community-centered infrastructure while also expanding government services at the community level ensures sustainable care and support for vulnerable children:** CUBS implemented much of its programming through 38 CSOs and the formation of 116 child protection committees in the project communities. Following training in leadership and management as well as in resource mobilization which incorporated real-world experiences, the CPCs owned the project and became the eyes, ears, and legs of the project in the community. They mobilized community level support, advocated for provision of services and resources at the community level from local governments and partners, integrated vulnerable children resources, and ensured that services were provided to vulnerable children. This approach was sustainable since they live with these children in their communities. Working through existing and acceptable community structures is key to sustainability.

**Building government capacity is necessary for sustainability:** While investing in communities was one key strategy, strengthening the government structure for leadership and coordination is also vital to continuity. Eleven (11) desk officers from all states were trained by CUBS to develop capacities in coordinating all efforts for vulnerable children, M&E, and other areas, and now these desk officers coordinate and manage their own state programs. With minimal support, they have adapted their state priority agenda and some states now have a budget line for vulnerable children which will assure the continued implementation of the NPA.

The government can be slow, and its workers may not always understand what is required of them; however, when development practitioners patiently work with government and respect its policies and procedures, it leads to state and eventually country ownership of and institutionalization of programs.

**Institutionalizing documentation at all levels creates a repository of data and information that can inform future programming efforts:** CUBS recognized the importance of documenting all programming activities early on in the project. Despite the limited capacity of the CSOs in this area when the project debuted, all 38 CSOs are now maintaining proper records in various technical areas as well as in M&E, finance, and human resources. At the state level, the SMWASD now reports more frequently to FMWASD as a result of CUBS' training in this area. All of this documentation is contributing to a huge repository of data for further analysis that can inform future implementation approaches by all stakeholders.

**Performance based management for grantees is an effective approach for instituting change:** CUBS was the first MSH project in Nigeria to implement a small grants program. The project learned that using a performance based management approach for CSOs, particularly for a small grants program, is efficient and effective. This approach triggered warning signs when corrective action was necessary; identified gaps or root causes of non-performance, which helped CUBS plan and execute appropriate interventions in collaboration with the grantees; and ultimately held organizations and individuals accountable for their performance and deliverables of agreed-upon bench marks.

**Transparency and accountability are key to healthy partnerships:** USAID and CUBS ensured that all parties knew what was expected of them, and worked with the various stakeholders to identify gaps, successes, and areas in need of improvement. This ensured efficient use of resources, eliminated duplication of efforts, and largely bridged gaps of uncoordinated intervention in CUBS' states among its many partners.

## **Conclusion**

The bottom-up approach to programming for OVC is an approach that works. In implementing the CUBS project, the team found that community-led and community-centered mobilization better meets the direct, short-term needs of vulnerable children, while also laying the foundation for long-term sustainability of the response. Fusing the implementing partners' planning, logistical, and monitoring/evaluation systems with successful community-grown OVC initiatives led by women, men, and children enabled CUBS to reach a greater number of vulnerable households with services. The project team actively aligned itself and partnered with community-based leadership and learned first-hand that the extensive needs of vulnerable children are best met by reinforcing, supporting, and expanding existing community structures and using community-based workers to coordinate support and services to households, caregivers, orphans, and other children most in need.

## **Recommendations**

Interventions dedicated to improving the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children require relatively long periods of time to produce significant and stable results. Therefore continued strategic investments by community members and the government in programs for vulnerable children, as well as assistance from donor partners, are necessary to achieve positive changes.

CUBS supported the implementation of the National M&E plan by ensuring that the national data collection tools were used at all levels and supported the decentralization of NOMIS. However, staff and volunteers reported that the forms were too many and not user friendly. There is a need to consolidate and harmonize forms and make them electronic to better enable them to feed directly into the DHIS, which is the nationally accepted database.

Compensating family and community volunteer caregivers is one way of securing the growth of programs and guaranteeing vulnerable children's access to basic essential services such as food, healthcare, and education. Job creation through financial compensation for currently unpaid female heads of household and volunteer labor at the community level is essential to building a sustainable vulnerable children's response.

The HES initiative focused on economically empowering female heads of vulnerable children's households (caregivers) to increase their financial decision-making power. CUBS found that strengthening the household economy mitigated the burden of care for vulnerable children placed on female caregivers, increased their status in the community, and improved the self-esteem of the children and reduced their vulnerability. In line with national international guidelines, CUBS recommends this family-centered HES approach be implemented for holistic OVC programs right from the start of projects.

The key to sustainability is working with existing and acceptable community structures. The project recommends the continuing engagement of strengthened CSOs, TWGs, and child protection committees to advocate for and provide life-saving services and support to vulnerable families in CUBS states including Kebbi, Gombe, Taraba, Ekiti, Enugu, Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom, where the Local OVC Partner Initiative in Nigeria will not have coverage.

## II. Project Scope and Assumptions

### A. Country context

Nigeria has the second highest burden of HIV-infection in the world, in spite of a relatively low prevalence of 3.4 percent<sup>1</sup> when compared to some countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. Approximately three million people are estimated to be living with HIV. The HIV and AIDS pandemic has touched the lives of the entire Nigeria population either directly or indirectly, leaving many children orphaned and families made vulnerable. The Situation Assessment and Analysis on OVC in Nigeria, 2008, revealed that there are over 17.5 million children who could be categorized as vulnerable, of whom an estimated 7.3 million had lost one or both parents due to various causes. Of that number, nearly one-third (2.23 million) were orphaned by AIDS-related causes, while about 260,000 children were living with HIV.<sup>2</sup>

While poverty is at the core of many issues surrounding vulnerable children, the HIV and AIDS epidemic deeply complicates the overall environment. The social and emotional effects of HIV and AIDS are numerous and profound and have placed children at a significant disadvantage. Millions of HIV-affected children are highly vulnerable, as they are more likely to be victims of abuse, live in institutional care or on the street, engage in hazardous and/ or exploitive labor, and experience higher rates of stigma and discrimination. More specifically, children who live with an ill adult or who have been orphaned by AIDS have a dramatically greater risk of abuse and exploitation,<sup>3</sup> dropping out of school as they leave their studies to care for ailing family members, and psychosocial distress.<sup>4</sup> Female children are known to bear a significant burden as they often carry a disproportionate share of the care-giving responsibilities when family members become sick or die. As a result, many are deprived of school and educational opportunities as well as the subsequent economic empowerment associated with education. Female vulnerable children may also be forced into sexual unions that lead to early acquisition of HIV infection, or early pregnancy and all of its associated negative effects.

#### **Government of Nigeria (GoN) Response**

In 2012, in an effort to institute a coordinated approach to address the needs of vulnerable children, the FMWASD developed Nigeria's comprehensive National Priority Agenda (NPA) for Vulnerable Children (2013-2020) in extensive consultation with other ministries and levels of the GoN, the private sector, CSOs, other partners, and donors – including the USG through PEPFAR, which is the largest contributor to programs for vulnerable children in Nigeria. Similar plans are expected to be developed by 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory as well.

The NPA's overarching goal is to “ensure the protection of the most vulnerable children, improve the quality of life and well-being of all vulnerable children in Nigeria and reduce child poverty.”<sup>5</sup> The NPA

---

<sup>1</sup> National HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey-Plus (NARHS Plus) 2012

<sup>2</sup> Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD), The Situation Assessment and Analysis on OVC in Nigeria, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Cluver L, Orkin M, Boyes ME, Gardner F, Meinck, F. (2011). Transactional sex amongst AIDS-orphaned and AIDS-affected adolescents predicted by abuse and extreme poverty. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*. 58, 336-342.

<sup>4</sup> Atwine B, Cantor-Graae E, Bujunirwe F. (2005). Psychological Distress among AIDS Orphans in Rural Uganda. *Science & Medicine*. 61 (3), 555-564.

<sup>5</sup> National Priority Agenda (NPA) for Vulnerable Children in Nigeria 2013-2020

builds on the progress of the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2006-2010) and is based on the understanding that investment in the poorest and most vulnerable children in Nigeria is a prerequisite towards achievement of the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (NV 20:2020)<sup>6</sup> and its specific goals. The NPA adopts a dual-pronged approach which ensures that all social sector actions are sensitive to the most vulnerable children and their families, while at the same time it pursues additional specific actions to directly reach these children. This approach moves from a response for vulnerable children which is direct service-delivery focused, to a comprehensive response which aims to build and strengthen integrated and linked systems. The NPA is built around six major commitments, which focus on the critical priorities that must be addressed in order to ensure the achievement of the objectives and targets of NV20:2020. The NPA commits to ensuring that all poor and vulnerable children have equitable access to and benefit from comprehensive social protection services; all children are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect and have a legal identity; vulnerable children are healthy and well-nourished and have equitable access to and benefit from quality basic education; and vulnerable children have an adequate standard of living conditions.

The NPA Results Framework includes ambitious targets related to safety, violence, education, nutrition, and disease prevention/treatment indicators, as well as to overall social welfare system strengthening. In many cases, objectives and targets laid out in the NPA are overly ambitious because they are based on the assumption that Nigeria will meet the MDGs when, in fact, as of 2013 the country is still lagging behind in attaining many of them. Nevertheless, the USG through PEPFAR as well as other donors have aligned their programs for vulnerable children to the NPA.

As partnerships with the Nigerian government, UNICEF, and other donors continue to be productive and strengthened, PEPFAR support has been instrumental in helping the FMWASD with the articulation of standards for vulnerable children's care and guidelines for the establishment of programs for vulnerable children; PEPFAR has also been encouraging the GoN to provide the resources and leadership necessary to accelerate implementation of the NPA and state plans. Through the CUBS project, PEPFAR provided essential support for strengthening key federal, state, and local government agencies to enhance their role in leadership and coordination of programs targeting Nigeria's vulnerable children, while simultaneously supporting the provision of services by community based organizations in 11 states that substantially benefitted women and children.

## **B. Project scope**

The CUBS project provided Nigeria's federal and state government agencies with support and coordination for scaling up HIV activities using community-based responses to identify, locate, and protect vulnerable children. Under the AIDS Support and Technical Assistance Resources (AIDSTAR) indefinite quantity contract (IQC) mechanism, MSH and Africare collaborated with the FMWASD and the SMWASD to address these focus areas through a five-year contract. The project also supported the implementation of the NPA by developing and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations for community-based vulnerable children service delivery.

Using a bottom-up approach to mobilize families and other stakeholders in the care and support of vulnerable children, CUBS integrated what was a fragmented service delivery system, mobilized community support for this population, and raised awareness about this group's needs to reduce their experience of stigma, discrimination, and isolation. The CUBS project provided capacity building and on-

---

<sup>6</sup> Nigeria Vision 20:2020

the-job mentoring for state and community-based providers and institutions, implemented targeted systems strengthening activities, and offered small grants to CSOs supporting service delivery for vulnerable children.



Map showing CUBS’ target states (indicated in green).

The project’s partnerships leveraged existing resources and built on established federal, state, and community foundations to improve service delivery and expanded implementation of best practices. By October of 2014, CUBS had provided over 53,000 vulnerable children in 11 focal states – Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kebbi, Rivers, Sokoto, and Taraba – and 116 communities with comprehensive, targeted services that are consistent with Nigeria’s NPA.

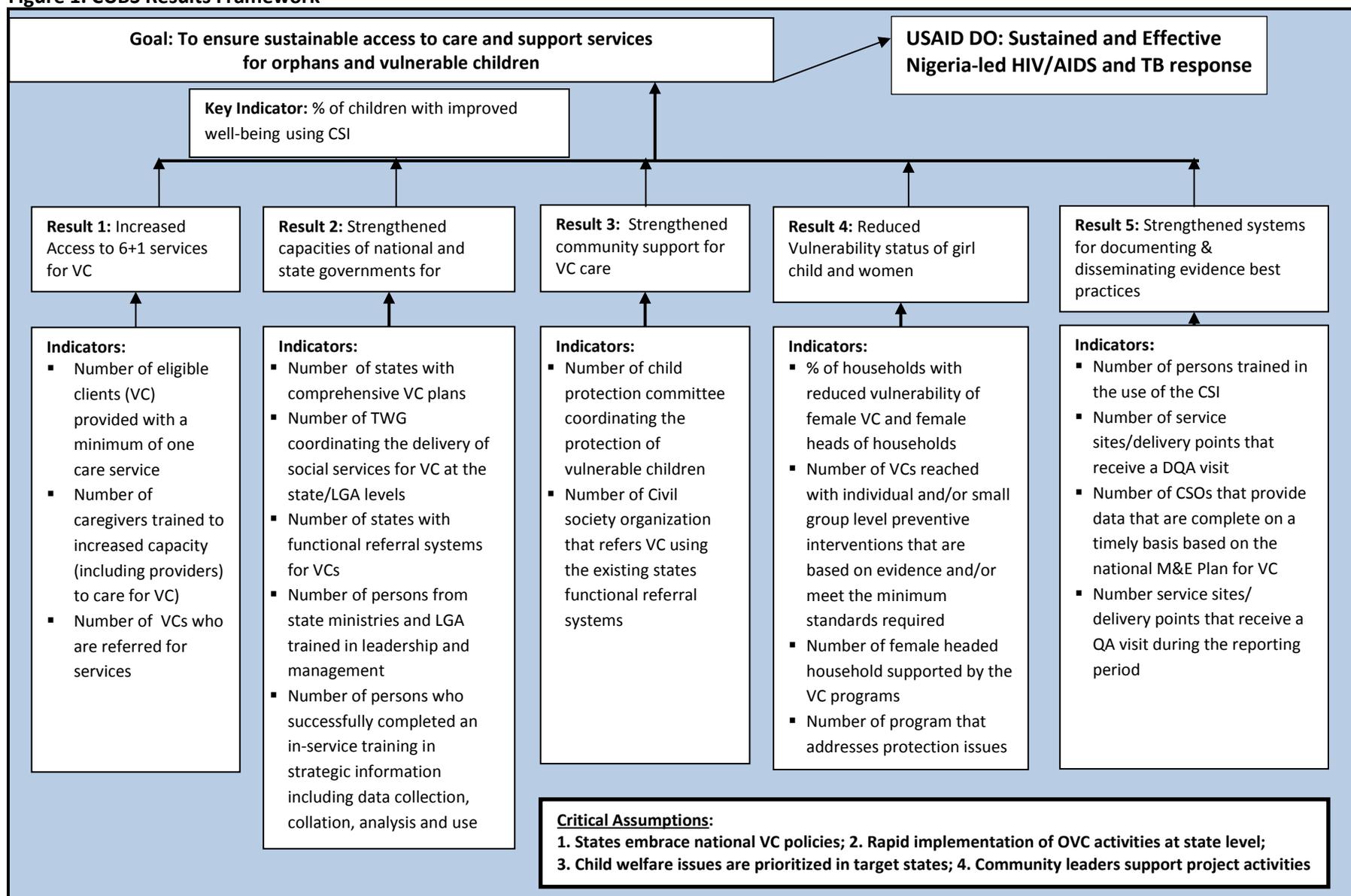
### C. Project objectives and strategies

The project aimed to improve the well-being of vulnerable children by ensuring sustainable services at the community level. Specifically, the project attained this through the achievement of the following objectives:

- Increased access to holistic service package focusing on the multifaceted needs of vulnerable children, including home based care for infected children, gender issues, stigma and discrimination
- Strengthened capacities for national, state, and local government for coordination and scale up of activities and strategies that improved policies and legislation and channeling resources to communities
- Strengthened community structures and mobilized support for community-based responses that identify, locate, and protect vulnerable children, in addition to providing both immediate and long-term socio-economic assistance to vulnerable households
- Mainstreamed gender in vulnerable children’s programming that particularly reduced the vulnerability of the girl child, female headed households and the burden of care that rest on females.
- Strengthened the documentation and dissemination of evidence and best practices in the care and support of vulnerable children.

Figure 1 on the following page shows the CUBS results framework, where the above objectives are listed as result areas.

**Figure 1. CUBS Results Framework**



The CUBS project aimed to enable children made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS and other factors to develop and thrive in a safe and healthy environment. To this end, the project worked to offer vulnerable children services in the context of a community-based, family-centered, child-focused approach that brought in participation from multiple sectors to address their need. Actors in these sectors leveraged different skills and competencies that contributed to the identification of needs and assets of vulnerable children, training, monitoring and evaluation of the program.

CUBS' strategies and approaches mirrored principles found in the NPA and in PEPFAR's guidance for OVC programming. Specifically, these principles ensured that stakeholders made decisions that were in the best interest of the child; that vulnerable children had that same opportunities that other children had; that interventions were family-centered, rights-based, and took into consideration all stages in the life cycle of the child; that they addressed gender and diversity issues; and finally, that children and communities participated fully in all decisions or interventions, thus promoting ownership. The strategies promoted linkages and partnerships, integrating activities that strengthened the weakened social welfare service system to deliver quality services and reduce stigma and discrimination.



*OVC caregiver in Enugu.*

When the project began, the CUBS team was faced with a national social welfare system that was unable to deliver needed social services to vulnerable children. The system was fragmented and uncoordinated. Care, support, and protection services for vulnerable children were not well integrated with other social sector planning and service delivery at national, state, and community levels. The existing mandates and responsibility for the social welfare workforce for vulnerable children were spread across multiple ministries and departments at both federal and state levels – including FMWASD and the federal ministries of youth development, health, and education. At the state level, social welfare workforce structures often did not reflect the federal agencies' composition and structure. In particular, functions and capacity were very often inconsistent and varied significantly from state to state, as well as between the LGAs.

To address these system challenges, CUBS set out to support the FMWASD, which has the primary mandate to lead and coordinate the social welfare workforce and set up formalized systems, mechanisms, and incentives for multi-sectoral planning, implementation, and monitoring. The project team developed a series of 13 strategies that worked at the national, states and community levels in many areas, including but not limited to capacity building, system strengthening, increased access to service delivery, psychosocial support services, child protection services, household economic strengthening, and gender. The ultimate goal: to build long-term, in-country support for the coordination of vulnerable children interventions, and mobilize and support community based responses to identify, locate, and protect vulnerable children. The major project strategies included:

- 1. Investing in capacity building and technical assistance:** A major component of the project was an investment in building capacity and providing technical support to national and state-level

agencies, CSOs, and faith-based organizations (FBOs). Capacity building formed a key component of CUBS' system strengthening and sustainability strategy. The FMWASD, SMWASD, LGAs, CSOs, communities, and additional relevant stakeholders including ministries of health and education, law enforcement agencies, and others, largely benefited from the various capacity building opportunities, which cut across systems strengthening to service delivery, showing the various levels of interventions for the project.

- **Cascade trainings:** CUBS leveraged Master Trainers at the national level to train state level trainers made up of staff from the SMWASD and CSOs in the health; nutrition; psychosocial support; shelter and care; education; legal support; and household economic strengthening service areas. The state level trainers then cascaded the same training down to LGA and community levels.
- **Support to social welfare workforce:** CUBS supported the FMWASD in the social welfare workforce assessment and creation of vulnerable children desks in the SMWASD where they did not exist, developed terms of reference (TORs) for the desk officers and trained them to execute their functions.
- **Mentorship and coaching:** By embedding the CUBS project staff in the SMWASD, the project was able to mentor and coach government staff regularly in the coordination and management of OVC programs.

**2. Mobilizing and coordinating community engagement:** CUBS' system strengthening approach was multipronged. It aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the NPA and foster coordination, ensure quality of services for vulnerable children, develop policy and promote advocacy for the establishment of functional vulnerable OVC-focused forums and referral systems that would promote program ownership and sustainability. Among the two main focus areas were:

- **The establishment of CPCs and TWGs:** CUBS provided technical support to community members, CSOs, LGAs, and SMWASD to establish child protection committees (CPCs) and OVC TWGs at the LGA and state levels. CPC members were drawn from community and religious leaders, representatives of women's associations, men's and youth groups, representatives of the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), and police and Legal Aid organizations. Membership in the TWGs covered representation of both the LGA level and the state level. LGA representatives included the major stakeholders representing local authorities' community development and multi-sectoral interests. At the state level, the TWG membership was widened to include staff from SMWASD, and the health, education, agriculture, and justice departments respectively. Other members came from line agencies such as the State Agencies for the Control of AIDS (SACAs), the Malaria Control Program, State Universal Basic Education, the Directorate for Employment, Millennium Development Goals offices, Legal AID Council, donor agencies, implementing partners, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. CUBS supported the development and use of terms of reference, and guides to make these structures functional, and trained members how to mobilize community members and resources in support of vulnerable children, distribute resources in a transparent manner, and be accountable for the quality of programs for these children in their communities.
- **Updated vulnerable children's services referral directory:** When vulnerable children, caregivers, and other community members are not aware of existing services or where to access them, their ability to benefit from these services is low. CUBS facilitated a vulnerable children stakeholder workshop in each of its 116 project communities; these events identified and documented available services in communities and gathered information on the services, which individuals or groups were providing the services, and how to access the

services. These documents have helped to facilitate the integration of services for vulnerable children with services available in other sectors of the society. They aim to increase access to comprehensive services through referrals. The documents are owned by the community and are updated regularly during the CPC and TWG meetings.

3. **Strengthening the overall social welfare systems for vulnerable children:** To ensure that the systems in place were responsive to the complex needs of OVC and supported the NPA, CUBS worked toward the following system improvements:
  - **Support to the M&E system:** CUBS offered technical assistance (TA) and mentoring in data management for a functional multi-sectoral referral system, standardizing M&E functions, data collection, and analysis for decision making. The project prioritized the decentralization of NOMIS from the federal to the state-level, and CSOs developed an effective process for gathering and reporting service information through this simple, easy to use system. Through this system, the project facilitated processes to make information accessible, easily digestible, and available to local governments, providers, vulnerable children, and their families.
  - **Mobilized stakeholders for the NPA implementation:** CUBS provided TA first to the FMWASD to develop the NPA in collaboration with other development partners and then to the SMWASD to improve the states' and service providers' understanding of the NPA, SOPs, and other guidelines. In collaboration with staff from the FMWASD, CUBS facilitated workshops that adapted the NPA to state-specific contexts, thus creating state plans for vulnerable children that aligned with the national plan.
  - **Support to CSOs:** The project also provided technical and financial support for community level interventions in partnership with CSOs that provide comprehensive services to vulnerable children that are based on need and in line with national guidelines; mobilize communities to seek resources, and foster ownership and participation; and leverage sources from other partners when necessary.
4. **Expanding service outreach:** CUBS expanded coverage and access to vulnerable children's services, prioritizing which service was to be provided to each child based on need. CUBS' strategies supported the provision of services in health; nutrition; psychosocial support; shelter and care; education; legal support; and household economic strengthening.
5. **Increasing access to health service delivery:** HIV and AIDS have reversed the gains made in child health, leaving many communities with unacceptably high infant and child morbidity and mortality rates. The aim of health care services for vulnerable children is to ensure that these children are in good and stable health status, starting with the most vulnerable, who often have little or no access to health care services. Strategies for health service delivery included:
  - **Capacity building:** CUBS conducted a health and nutrition training for health workers, nutrition workers, CSO staff, and project staff to strengthen their capacity for a sustainable and quality service delivery. This training was conducted at state and community levels directly benefiting the caregivers.
  - **HIV prevention services:** CUBS integrated age-appropriate HIV prevention activities for vulnerable children, including behavior change communication messages such as emphasis on abstinence in Kids Club activities, and community/school-based peer education programs. The project also mobilized vulnerable children, their caregivers, and communities for the uptake of HIV counseling and testing (HCT). CUBS partnered with other PEPFAR and USAID-funded projects that focused on prevention, such as the Enhancing Nigerian Capacity

- for AIDS Prevention (ENCAP), implemented by Deloitte, and the Prevention Organizations AIDS Care and Treatment project (ProACT), implemented by MSH, to leverage support for the training and the provision of test kits.
- **Reproductive health trainings:** CUBS supported the training of caregivers and guardians on reproductive health (RH) issues to empower them on how to talk to children about abstinence and safe sexual behavioral practices and support healthy life decisions.
  - **Referral and linkages:** CUBS ensured that HIV infected mothers and their children were linked to treatment projects such as ProACT to access anti-retroviral treatments (ARVs). In addition, CUBS facilitated access to health services for survivors of sexual and/or physical abuse.
  - **Health promotion and disease prevention services:** CUBS trained caregivers and vulnerable children's households to monitor children's health and gain access to healthcare; provided preventive health care packages (Basic Care Kits) to households to prevent malaria and diarrheal diseases; and facilitated access to other health services including immunization.
  - **Emergency management of minor ill health:** Through the CPCs, CUBS advocated for free treatment of sick vulnerable children in primary healthcare centers (PHCs), secured funds from government, agencies, and philanthropists to treat vulnerable children with major ailments, and provided funding to cover the cost of emergency management of minor ailments in vulnerable children when the other options were not available.
6. **Educating stakeholders on nutrition:** Food insecurity is a significant and increasing challenge in households with orphans and vulnerable children. Malnutrition is the underlying factor in more than 50% of deaths among children under age five, which is why CUBS employed strategies to facilitate sustained access to locally available, nutritionally sound food for households with vulnerable children. Particular emphasis was placed on:
- **Capacity Building:** CUBS trained staff from the FMWASD, health workers at PHCs, nutrition officers, and CSO and project staff on health and nutrition for a sustainable, quality service delivery. This training was simplified and cascaded down to caregivers, mothers of children under age five, and pregnant women.
  - **Health promotion and disease prevention:** Interventions such as immunization campaigns, community based growth monitoring and promotion, and hygiene and sanitation campaigns were integrated into the nutrition training for caregivers.
  - **Promotion of home gardening:** CUBS encouraged and supported caregivers to start vegetable gardens for food. CPCs advocated for land and other farm inputs from government and philanthropists. Food harvested from these gardens went to food banks that supported vulnerable families in urgent need of food.
  - **Referral and linkages:** CUBS helped foster referrals and linkages for food and agricultural support for vulnerable households through the project's HES interventions.
7. **Providing psychosocial support services (PSS):** The shock and trauma surrounding the illness or death of a parent has serious effects on a child's mental health. These effects include stress, often characterized by anxiety, loss of self-esteem and confidence, stigma and discrimination, and depression. Caregivers also have their own psychological struggles with grief, fear, and anger that necessitate care and support. CUBS' strategies ensured that vulnerable families received appropriate and confidential guidance and support to ensure that vulnerable children were well-adjusted, developed appropriate physical and social interactions, and had access to safe spaces in which they could share their problems. Specific activities included:

- **Caregiver trainings:** CUBS trained caregivers to build vulnerable children’s self-esteem and coping skills and to create supportive places where these children could talk openly about their fears. Caregivers were also trained in child counseling, support group facilitation, and mentoring, to address end-of-life planning, grief and trauma coping mechanisms, and conduct life skills education. The project also trained caregivers to organize family days and integrate community recreational activities into children’s daily routines.
- **Kids’ Clubs:** CUBS provided opportunities for play and development of life skills through the kids club, peer education/youth clubs, girls groups, and other groups. These were established by each CSO in all CUBS communities.
- **Counseling for vulnerable households:** CUBS put trained counselors at the disposal of vulnerable households needing PSS and also made social and emotional support services available and accessible at the community level.
- **Community engagement:** Community wide dialogue among local leaders, healthcare workers, social welfare workers, religious leaders, and residents raised awareness of vulnerable children’s psychosocial needs, with CUBS offering training to ensure that all community members could assist in identifying children with particular needs. Community members also raised awareness on stigma reduction and created platforms where children’s voices could be heard.

**8. Reinforcing protection services:** Children have different needs that must be met to ensure that they grow into strong and responsible adults. Children’s needs are children’s rights. Tools such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Child’s Right Act (CRA) of 2003 have been developed to help vulnerable children’s programmers appreciate the rights accruable to adults and children, and the need to protect these groups from all forms of violation of their human rights and discriminatory practices. CUBS’ strategies prioritized the elimination of stigma, social neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and exploitation as well as increased access to legal support. The strategies placed the best interest of the child and his/her family above all else. Specific activities included:

- **Securing legal identity:** Birth registration in Nigeria is a requirement for enrollment in secondary school, for providing scholarships and for the issuance of travel documents. The National Population Council (NPopC) issues a standard birth certificate with a specific number when a child is registered. Despite its importance, the coverage of birth registration has been very low. Under CUBS’ leadership, CSOs and communities worked with NPopC to train CSO staff and provide the required forms to ensure that vulnerable children have their births registered and are issued birth certificates.
- **Establishing CPCs:** CUBS mobilized community members to form CPCs in every community and trained members to recognize abusive situations and how to access legal aid. This provided platforms for community action on child exploitation issues and the conduct of community sensitization and dialogue on child protection issues.
- **Promoting legal services:** The project established linkages with organizations such as the Legal Aid Council and the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA) that provide pro-bono legal services for referral in case of child abuse and deprivation of basic rights.

**9. Ensuring shelter and care:** It is important for all children and their families to feel safe and protected from danger. While in previous generations, extended family members provided care for vulnerable relatives, the increasing numbers of individuals in dire need of support, exacerbated by increasing poverty, means many families are less able to help. For older caregivers, poverty is the main problem they face, and they may also be frail and in need of care

and support themselves, which makes them unable to support vulnerable children in many cases. When they do accept the responsibility of caring for vulnerable children, they often need help to do so adequately. Where no members of the extended family are available to take up caregiver responsibilities, children become heads of households, a situation that is not ideal. The CUBS strategies for shelter and care services aimed to provide safe, secure, adequate, and habitable accommodations with the availability of at least one adult (18 years or older) who was able to provide love, support, and protection in a family setting. CUBS emphasized:

- **Family reintegration and fostering:** Through the CPCs and CSO volunteers, the CUBS project sought out the biological family members of abandoned vulnerable children and reintegrated them back into their families. When members of biological families could not be found, they were integrated into families of community leaders.
- **Advocacy for the provision of minimum living conditions:** Specific needs included clothing, toiletries such as bathing and washing soap, deodorants, and sanitary towels, as well as beddings. The CPC also advocated to government for the provision of houses for homeless indigent families and child headed households.

**10. Prioritizing vulnerable children’s education:** A child who has access to quality primary schooling has a better chance in life. A child who knows how to read, write, and do basic arithmetic has a solid foundation for continued learning throughout life. Education is important to children’s social integration and psychosocial well-being and school attendance helps children affected by trauma to regain a sense of normalcy and to recover from the psychosocial impact of their disrupted lives. CUBS’ education strategies focused on both short-term and long-term approaches:



*CUBS’ girl beneficiaries in Gombe, reintegrated back into school.*

- **Short-term approach:** This was an immediate intervention to address school age children who were out of school for a variety of reasons. Efforts assessed children’s educational needs and personal situations to inform the development of a sustainable approach. In this regard, CUBS identified children who had dropped out of school and facilitated their enrollment back into school/vocational centers. The project provided appropriate scholastic

materials/equipment for learning and follow-up supportive supervision to retain children in school and improve performance.

- **Long-term approach:** The main goal was to enable all children to attend and successfully complete basic education/vocational learning. CUBS worked with households, communities, and local authorities to address the identified barriers to education; conducted advocacy and strengthened existing structures (ministries of education, National Union of Teachers, Universal Basic Education, the State Universal Basic Education Board, Parents and Teachers Associations, Schools Management Committees, the National Poverty Eradication Program, the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency in Nigeria, and Local Government Education Authorities) to promote access to quality education. The team mobilized and sensitized parents and community stakeholders to become involved in school management, funding, governance, and teaching/learning activities. In addition, CUBS also provided block grants that met the need of the schools in exchange for a waiver of school levies for vulnerable children. This also benefited other children from the communities.

**11. Integrating household economic strengthening into the overall programmatic approach:** Most vulnerable children are disinherited by powerful relatives and in order to survive, they are involved in child labor, are sometimes trafficked, and are sexually harassed.<sup>7</sup> In consonance with national guidelines for vulnerable children service delivery, CUBS conducted specific activities to promote sustainable incomes and enable caregivers to meet the basic needs of all children in their care.

- **Assessments:** CUBS conducted rapid assessments of households to analyze their economic potential. Simple business plans for qualifying heads of households were developed and costed. Business opportunities within communities were assessed for referral purposes.
- **Training:** Heads of households were trained in entrepreneurship development that included ideas for business start-up and expansion, book keeping, savings and loans programs, and asset protection. CUBS also leveraged their expertise in home management to include nutrition education, home gardening, and personal hygiene in these trainings.
- **Financial Intermediation:** CUBS provided small grants for business expansion and start-up as well as facilitated the linkage of qualified beneficiaries with micro-finance institutions, philanthropists, and relevant government institutions for support.
- **Savings:** The project also facilitated the formation of/access to Voluntary Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA).

**12. Engendering vulnerable children's programming:** To address overarching gender issues, CUBS used innovative strategies and implemented specific interventions that reduced the vulnerability of older female vulnerable children and female heads of vulnerable children's households. The strategies are built upon the principles of increasing gender equity in HIV and AIDS activities and services; reducing violence and coercion; addressing male norms and behaviors; and increasing women's access to income and productive resources. CUBS gendered approach looked beyond project outputs to encompass health and income indicators and how to measure them using feedback loops as quality assurance measures. This approach aligned with the paradigm shift of the Nigerian government and PEPFAR towards vulnerable children's service delivery, a shift which increasingly focused on achieving quality outcomes as a route towards achieving program sustainability. During the project's lifetime, CUBS and its partners:

---

<sup>7</sup> CUBS Gender Needs Assessment Report 2010

- Reviewed national guidelines and SOPs related to the needs of women and girls around HIV and AIDS and integrated structured gender activities and components related to comprehensive prevention package into identification and selection of CUBS CSO partners.
- Advocated to families to send girls to schools and address the obstacles at the family level that may prevent girls from attending schools.
- Liaised with school authorities to ensure formation of girls' groups, which offered training on life skills and sessions on prevention of HIV, AIDS and STIs. In addition, CUBS advocated for general improvement in the school environment, especially provision of separate, safely-located functional toilets for girls and women, to aid sanitary waste disposal. This also included ensuring availability of water in schools to reduce incidences of hygiene-related sexually transmitted infections (STIs). CUBS collaborated with UNICEF on a hand washing campaign which reinforced water and sanitation messages.
- Encouraged male involvement and participation in group workshops and dialogues that promoted greater understanding of gender norms as an underlying cause of violence, leading to the development of violence prevention strategies for themselves and their communities. CUBS promoted the inclusion of male partners in reproductive health (RH) discussions regarding family planning and antenatal care, as appropriate, to gain their support for female RH decisions and choices.
- Facilitated access to correct and consistent family life health education for vulnerable adolescent girls by training caregivers in RH. The curriculum focused on teaching caregivers how to communicate with female youth in the areas of sexual education, HIV, AIDS, STIs, and pregnancy prevention. They were taught how to access clinical services, including HCT, antenatal care, PMTCT, access to ARVs, and modern contraceptive methods for vulnerable children using the referral directories. Trained caregivers raised awareness around the needs of adolescent girls in reducing sexual vulnerability, with emphasis on the roles that both female and males play in the family.
- Encouraged appropriate placement of children, especially child-headed households. CUBS ensured that siblings were not separated, and promoted strong family linkages to older caregivers if new placements were not possible.
- Collaborated with FIDA and other state agencies and community institutions to establish CPCs to address issues of violence and inheritance matters as well as to advocate for access to social services and the rights of women and children.
- Trained community members to become mediators in Alternative Dispute Resolution involving women and children. These mediators helped to resolve civil disagreements at the community level and ensured appropriate referrals to law enforcement.
- Supported strengthening of livelihoods that served as the vehicle for reducing vulnerability traceable to poor income base and powerlessness in decision-making for females.

**13. Enhancing the organizational development of partner CSOs:** CUBS relied on CSOs to implement many of their interventions in the project communities. Through a competitive bidding process, CUBS identified 38 CSOs to provide community based services. Early on, the project team realized that majority of the organizations were neither viable nor sustainable. CUBS needed to help them achieve their own organizational objectives so they could help advance the project's goal. CUBS' strategies in this area included:

- **Assessments:** In early 2010, at baseline, CUBS staff used the National Harmonized Organization Capacity Assessment Tool (NHOCAT) to assess all 38 partner CSOs' levels of organizational development and develop plans that guided specific interventions for each CSO. Subsequent periodic reviews provided data that were used to refine the plans. An

assessment at the end of the project enabled a comparison with the baseline survey and a determination of the effectiveness of the interventions was made.

- **Capacity development:** CUBS implemented participatory, co-owned, organizational development interventions – driven by the CSOs themselves – to address gaps identified by assessments.
  - Strategic interventions were geared towards the development of/or refocusing of each organization’s mission, vision, strategic plan/goals, and values to build a culture of performance.
  - Techno/structural interventions focused on structure development and/or re-engineering such as the development of policies, change management, knowledge management, and organizational learning systems to help each CSO manage its workforce and maximize its potential.
  - Management and leadership development Interventions included the use of mentoring, coaching, participatory management styles, and the conducting of technical skills training to mitigate challenges and strengthen capacities of it partners.

**14. Providing small innovation grants to CSOs:** CUBS integrated a small grants component that enabled the project to respond to new and innovative opportunities for expanding access to high quality services and addressing programmatic gaps. Through a competitive process, CUBS selected 38 CSOs that received fixed obligation grants of between N1, 000,000 (\$6,250) to N2,000,000 (\$12,500) yearly to provide support services to vulnerable children in their communities. Critical activities to ensure CSOs received and used these funds to provide scaled up services included:

- **Bidder’s conferences for CSOs to ensure development of high quality proposals:** Workshops were conducted by CUBS’ grants/contract staff with support from the technical advisors.
- **Convening of evaluation panels:** The project convened a panel of government, donor, and program management representatives to evaluate proposals and make funding decisions. The panel evaluated applications received from the call for proposals and scored them according to agreed-upon criteria. Key considerations included past organizational performance, prior history with PEPFAR/USG funding, number of vulnerable children served, and operating budget were key considerations.
- **Pre-award assessments and issuing of grants:** Once CSOs had been recommended for funding, the OD advisor, state program managers, and grants/contract staff conducted institutional and technical capacity assessments of proposed grantees to understand what potential areas of support would be needed post-award. Critical to the assessment was the need to ensure that systems of all new agencies and community level entities were in compliance with donor rules and regulations.
- **Continued support to grantees:** CUBS conducted recurring gap analyses that informed continuing coaching, mentorship, and other organization development interventions. CUBS’ 38 CSO partners had innovative approaches to educate communities, address stigma, involve local government leaders and traditional and religious leaders, and reach out to hard to access vulnerable children.

## **D. Project-wide assumptions, known constraints, and dependencies**

Nigeria has a federal system of governance that supports the devolution of powers to the state governments. While policies are developed at the federal level, implementation of such policies is the domain of the various states. To ensure a relatively seamless transition of policies from the federal to state levels, CUBS collaborated with and supported the FMWASD to develop policies while at the same

time supporting the target SMWASD to implement such policies. CUBS often encountered the usual, expected delays between policy formulation and implementation, some of which were made more complex by the differing capacities of the state governments in human and material resources. All of these factors were taken into consideration in project interventions which were based on the specific contexts within which we found the respective states.

### III. Project Management Approach

MSH, in partnership with Africare, used a multi-pronged, bottom-up approach to mobilize families and communities to improve the well-being of vulnerable children through the provision of holistic, family-centered care and support. In so doing the project integrated a fragmented service delivery system and raised awareness to reduce the stigma, discrimination, and isolation of vulnerable children.

The CUBS partnership utilized a decentralized approach that supported the devolution of responsibilities for the care and support of vulnerable children from the national to state and finally to community-based service providers. All through the decentralization process, the CUBS project team worked closely with, and provided technical support to, the FMWASD to enhance their capacity to provide leadership in the national vulnerable children response in Nigeria. At the national and state level, project staff provided technical assistance to FMWASD and the SMWASD to:

- Improve states and local providers' understanding of national vulnerable children guidelines
- Motivate states to implement these guidelines and support vulnerable children's programs
- Build state-level capacity to provide effective oversight, coordination, and monitoring for vulnerable children's services

The partnership leveraged existing resources and built upon already established federal, state, and community foundations to improve vulnerable children services and practices and disseminate lessons learned. All interventions emphasized the utilization of a gender sensitive approach to their work in order to close the vulnerability gap between male and female vulnerable children.

The CUBS project was fully integrated into MSH's Nigeria Country Office Support Platform. Under the supervision of the Project Director Supervisor in the MSH home office, the Chief of Party (COP) was responsible for overall project leadership and authorized to make decisions representing the partnership. The COP served as the primary liaison with MSH HQ, the USAID/Nigeria, and the Contract Officer Representative (COR). The COP coordinated regular meetings with stakeholders and ensured that implementation of the work plan met agreed-upon targets. The team leveraged MSH's existing networks and resources in Nigeria for the CUBS project, thus ensuring coordination among all MSH projects in country. Through regular staff meetings which included the participation of all MSH staff, local subcontractors, and the state representatives from field offices, all key stakeholders were kept abreast of the project's progress. These meetings enabled all staff to review policies and procedures, discuss issues, and receive updates on project activities. The Nigeria country management team had bi-weekly calls with MSH headquarters and quarterly finance reviews with MSH's home office Chief Financial Officer.

## IV. M&E Design and Timeline

### A. Decentralization

In keeping with the decentralization of responsibilities for implementation to the state and local government levels while the Federal Government develops guidelines to guide quality, the CUBS team focused on building capacity for collection, collation, and use of data at the state and local government levels. The project also simultaneously supported policy development and data use at the national level. In so doing, the CUBS project harnessed several advantages of decentralizing capacity for collection and use of data:

- Decentralization fostered local ownership of the data and empowered local staff to use the data to guide decisions regarding the health services provided at that level.
- Gaps were easily identified and corrective measures put in place on a timely basis, leading to greater accessibility to services.
- Based on experience elsewhere that showed that the issues affecting the availability of quality data may vary in different areas, a decentralized approach to monitoring and evaluation led to the development of solutions that best fit the needs of each area of the CUBS project.

Even though a decentralized approach was used, systems were established to ensure that all data generated at the local government and state levels were sent to FMWASD to be used for tracking progress. This approach ultimately led to a “bottom-up” approach to the building of capacity for monitoring and evaluation and greater sustainability of the system.

### B. National M&E plan and system

Based on the “Three-Ones Principle,” CUBS used its resources to support and strengthen the development and operationalization of a single national decentralized M&E system for vulnerable children’s programming within Nigeria using the guidelines of the national M&E Plan for vulnerable children. Existing tools such as registers, intake forms, and summary sheets that were developed by the FMWASD were used to capture and report frontline data. This approach presented many advantages, the most significant being that it prevented the creation of parallel systems and the duplication of efforts among stakeholders. In instances where adaptation of existing tools was necessary to capture data to meet some unique reporting requirements of the PEPFAR New Generation Indicators, it was done in close consultation with the relevant federal and state agencies. CUBS introduced the CSI into the system, using it as a management tool to determine the needs of individual vulnerable children upon enrollment and to track changes in their status every six months. The data collected from the use of this tool was analyzed periodically to give an update on the status of the group of vulnerable children who benefited from the project.

### C. Human capacity development

To strengthen M&E capacity at all levels, CUBS tailored its trainings to meet the unique needs of the staff within each level of the system where data collection and collation is done. This approach to capacity building for M&E was necessary since it had been observed that there were wide variations in the availability of qualified staff at the various levels within the system. The main strategies used for M&E capacity building within CUBS included formal training within a group setting, one-on-one mentoring of staff during site visits, and continuous support through e-mail and telephone. All of the

capacity building sessions were participatory and sought to develop individual and group capacity by a “learning through doing” approach.

#### **D. Support the use of data to guide decision making at all levels**

CUBS placed a very high emphasis on the continuous generation and dissemination of high quality verifiable data for decision-making and to guide actions. Throughout the project lifespan, CUBS not only focused on the generation of data but also on the development of capacity at all levels with the system to use data. Recognizing the unique data needs at the different levels within the system, all training was tailored to suit the specific situation. For instance, CSOs funded through this project needed to track their own progress regularly to be able to estimate their likely success against their targets at different stages in the project.

#### **E. Promote a cross-cutting approach to M&E**

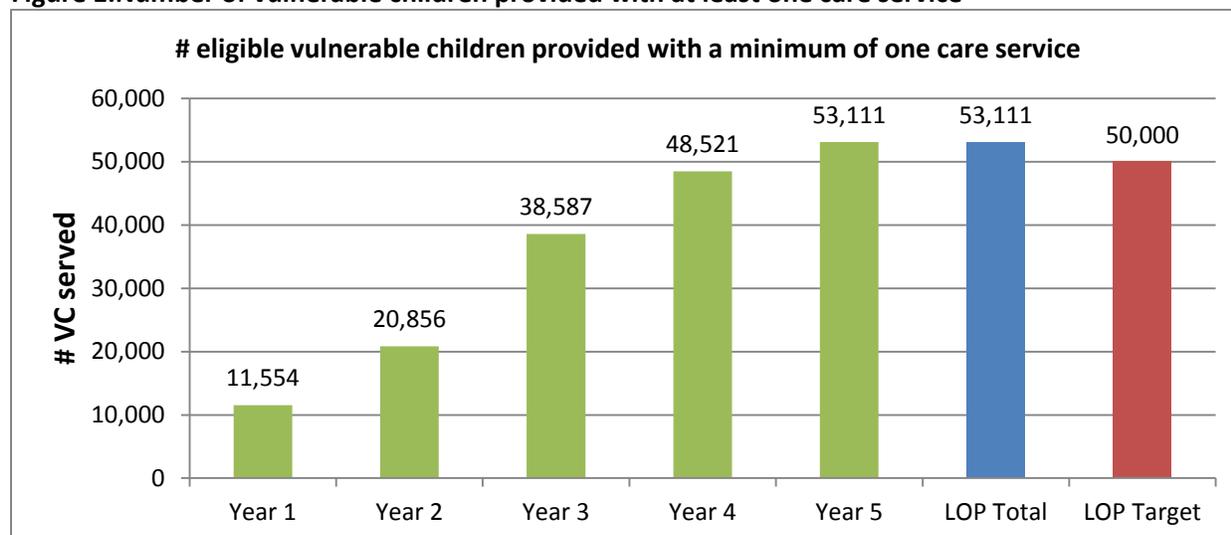
CUBS’ staff approached M&E as a cross cutting issue which supports program implementation and not as a separate activity. Staff of the M&E and technical units, in collaboration with appropriate state level staff, regularly conducted joint reviews of the outputs of the different CSOs and that of the overall project to assess implementation progress.

## V. Achievements by Major Result Areas

### A. Result 1: Access to 6+1 VC services increased

CUBS contributed significantly to the improvement of the well-being of vulnerable children in Nigeria. By the end of the project, we had reached 53,111 vulnerable children with life-saving services surpassing the target of 50,000 children. Service provision for each child was prioritized based on the most felt need. The use of community members to identify and facilitate service provision and training caregivers to provide services at home are strategies that increased access to services for this target population.

**Figure 1. Number of vulnerable children provided with at least one care service**



\*In this figure, "LOP" means life of project.

From longitudinal assessments using the Child Status Index (CSI), the project determined that it had improved the health status of 64% of the children enrolled in the project. The CSI enabled assessment of a child's current needs, monitoring of the child's health and well-being, and tracked progress in six holistic areas: *food and nutrition; health; shelter and care; psychosocial care; protection; and education and skills*. The community volunteers measured each vulnerable child's CSI scores every six months over the life of the project and aggregated the data to show trends in their progress. Every child received a score of 1–4 in each of the six areas, based on the following matrix:

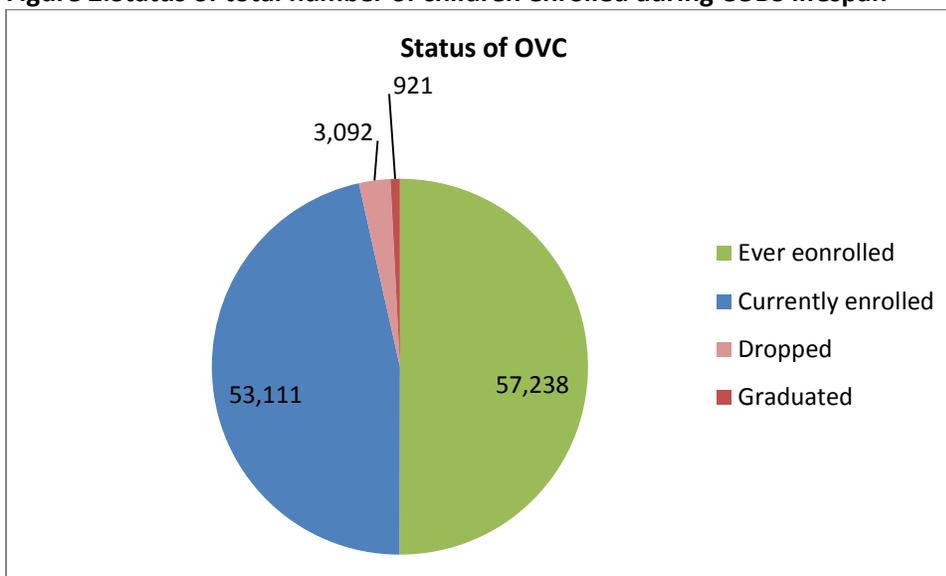
**Table 1: Scoring matrix for CSI**

<b>4</b>	<b>Good</b>	The child's status or situation is good; there are no concerns and no apparent risk for the child in this factor.
<b>3</b>	<b>Fair</b>	The child's status or situation is generally acceptable, but there are some concerns on the part of the caregiver or care worker. Additional resources might be helpful, if available.
<b>2</b>	<b>Bad</b>	There is concern that the child's status or situation is observably not good. Additional resources or services are needed.
<b>1</b>	<b>Very Bad</b>	The child is at serious risk on this factor. Urgent attention to the child or the situation may be needed.

The CSI also allowed CUBS to track and assess the impact of its interventions through two indicators in each of the six areas. CSI data on a cohort of 12,000 vulnerable children showed that, after being enrolled in a CUBS-supported CSO for six months, 30 percent of the children had improved status across all 12 CSI indicators. After being enrolled for 12 months, 40 percent of the children showed improved status across the 12 CSI indicators. Although another 40 percent of children had showed “no change” after 12 months, many of the children may have regressed without CUBS’ support to improve their care. These trends were consistent for all cohorts and across the life of the project. It is worth noting here that CUBS is the only project in Nigeria that has been able to follow a cohort of vulnerable children over a period of three years, collecting relevant data and analyzing it to inform program intervention.

CUBS’ community-based, bottom-up approach involved supporting CSOs to mobilize community resources to identify and meet vulnerable children’s needs in a sustained manner. As part of this approach, community volunteers repeatedly visited caregivers to support and mentor them to ensure that the children in their care continued to receive quality care. This community-based approach enabled volunteers to closely monitor vulnerable clients, leading to a low loss to follow up rate, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Status of total number of children enrolled during CUBS lifespan**



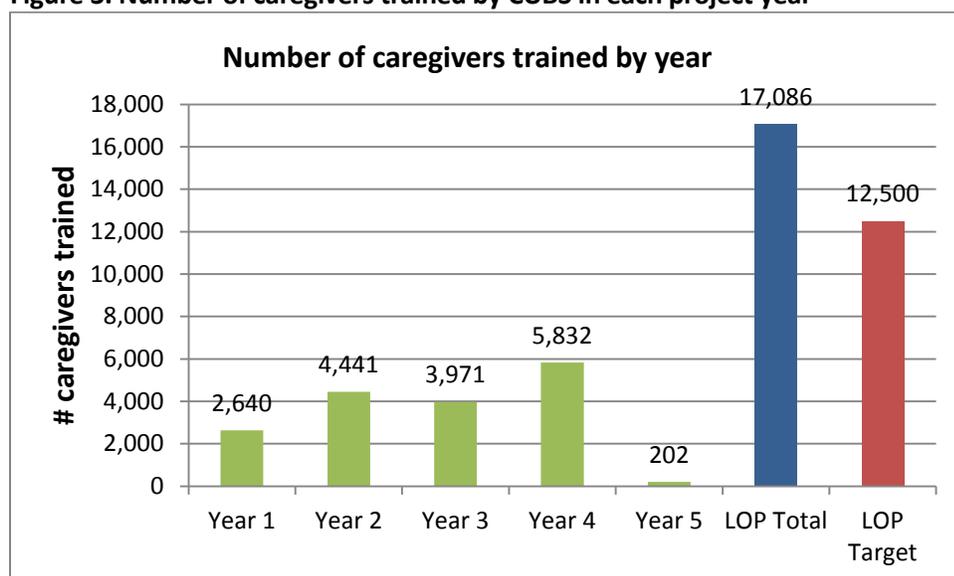
Of the 57,238 children ever enrolled in the CUBS project, 53,111 (93%) have remained in the project; 921 (2%) have graduated because they turned 18 years old; and 3,092 (5%) have dropped out of the project. Throughout the life of the project, CUBS maintained the lowest lost to follow-up rate among all vulnerable children’s programs in Nigeria. The majority of children dropped from the project can be accounted for by the fact that two CSOs, Guidance and Counseling Development Association (GCDA) and Perpetual Succor for Women and Children (PESWAC), decided to discontinue their partnership with CUBS. These two CSOs left the project with a total of 2,700 vulnerable children in their care. The CSOs assured CUBS of their commitment to continue supporting these children and, in fact, the majority of children who dropped out of the CUBS project have continued to be cared for by the CSOs that enrolled them.

### Caregivers Training

Traditionally, Nigerian communities have taken on the responsibility of caring for children in the wake of their parents' death or the absence of family support. To assist community members in the care and support of the large number of vulnerable children in Nigeria, CUBS organized training for caregivers and CSO staff.

To ensure care continuity and sustainability, CUBS trained 17,086 caregivers of vulnerable children, (975 males and 16,549 females) to provide 6+1 service for their children and wards. The total number trained was 40 percent higher than the project target of 12,500 as shown in Figure 3. The volume of caregivers trained made it easier for more vulnerable children to be reached.

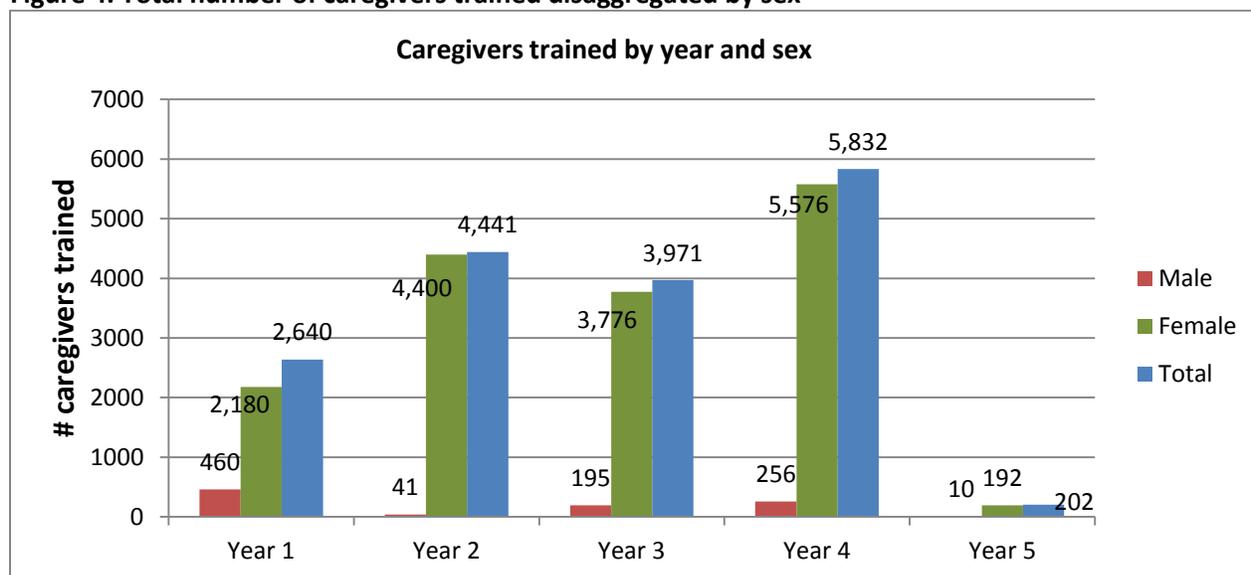
**Figure 3. Number of caregivers trained by CUBS in each project year**



Caregivers of all enrolled vulnerable children were trained every year, although counted only once. Figure 4 on the following page shows that an overwhelming majority of the caregivers were women, which is in line with the culture in Nigeria, where the burden of child care is traditionally a women's role. CUBS organized many caregivers training every year, as the project continued to enroll large numbers of vulnerable children. This is in line with CUBS' 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.

CUBS designed the caregiver trainings to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of services provided to vulnerable children. Caregivers learned a variety of skills relating to parenting, counseling, food security, environmental cleanliness, and nutritional sufficiency. The caregivers also learned strategies that helped them increase their assets and resources, improve their communication skills, interact socially with children, and helped children improve their school performance. CUBS interlinked the service delivery with the finance trainings to reinforce the adage that says 'Health is Wealth.' This idea was well received and made it easier to implement health promoting ideas in order to save money. Caregivers also appreciated that CUBS conducted trainings in their local languages and dialects, using trainers who understood the local context and culture. This enabled the caregivers to participate actively and ask questions.

**Figure 4. Total number of caregivers trained disaggregated by sex**



Through the trained caregivers and service providers, the CUBS project reached 53,111 vulnerable children with comprehensive services that improved the well-being of 64 percent of the children reached.

The following sections describe the 6+1 services that were provided for the enrolled children during the project lifespan:

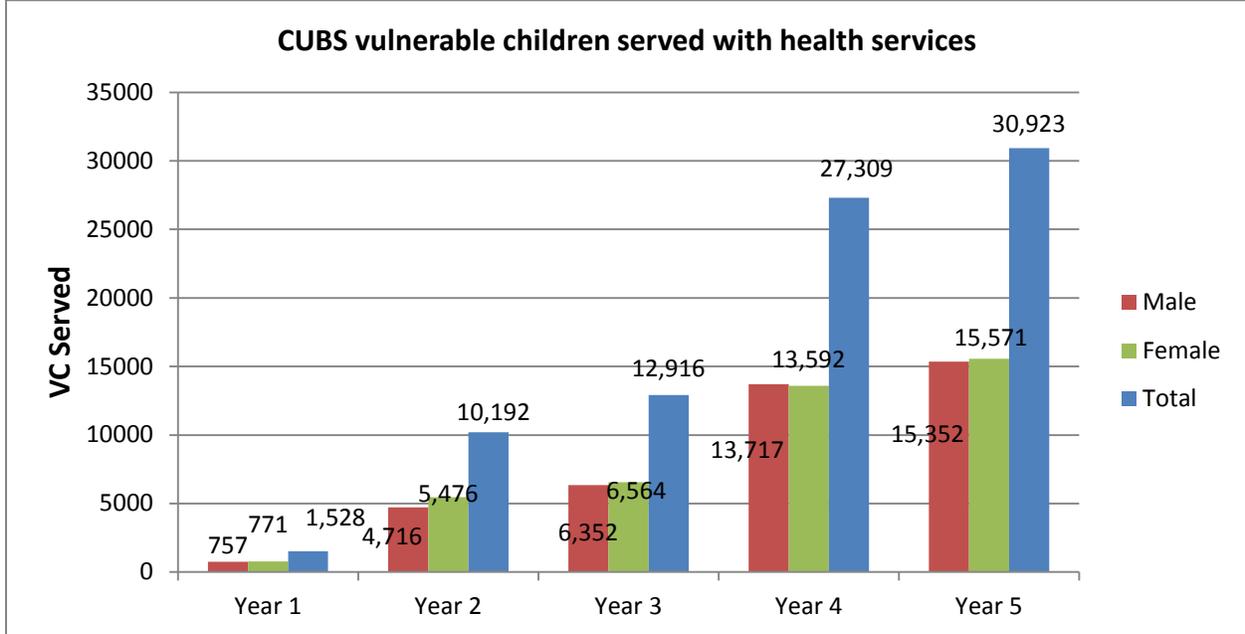
### Health

The CUBS project provided several health oriented services to enrolled children. These included provision of Basic Care Kits (BCKs) containing Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets (LLITN), Water Guard, and water storage kegs for households with children under age five, in order to prevent diarrhea. CUBS and the CSOs also offered age-appropriate health education sessions on prevention of HIV and other diseases; drug and substance abuse; immunizations; and behavior change communication and counseling. RH education services and sessions on personal hygiene were provided for adolescents, with provision of BCKs that contained sanitary pads for female vulnerable children.

CUBS project also ensured that children enrolled in the program had access to age-appropriate preventive and curative health care services which included referral and linkages to immunization services, malaria treatment, HIV treatment and care of infected Vulnerable children in health facilities within their communities through programs supported by the GoN and other US Government implementing partners that provide these services. Deworming drugs were administered to vulnerable children who were less than five years old. Emergency health care bills were paid for some vulnerable children in all the states.

CUBS trained CSOs and CPCs to advocate for health facilities to provide free care for vulnerable children. In 116 communities, CUBS worked with health facility staff to designate a focal person for vulnerable children and trained these focal points in growth monitoring, health education, HIV testing and counseling, PMTCT, and basic child care skills. These efforts helped more than 30,000 vulnerable children access health care. Figure 5 on the following page shows the number of children reached with health services.

**Figure 5. Children enrolled in CUBS reached with health services, disaggregated by year**



### Education

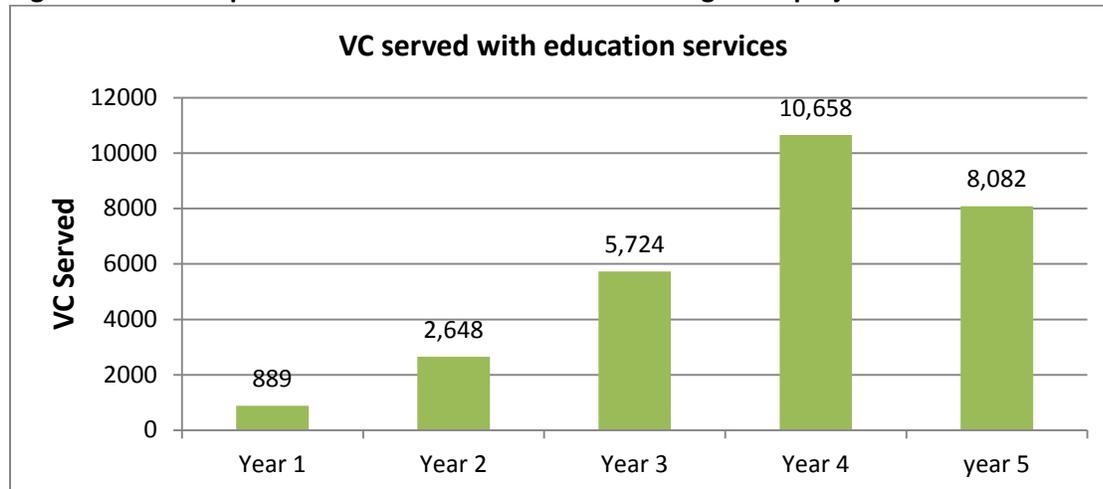
The CUBS project applied multiple strategies to ensure that vulnerable children were enrolled and attended school. The project advocated to state government for provision of educational materials in schools and at the community level. These advocacy visits have yielded positive result in states like Rivers, Ekiti, Delta, Taraba, and Akwa Ibom where the government gave priority to vulnerable children when distributing educational materials. In other CUBS states where this government buy-in was not secured, the project provided education materials to 1,440 enrolled vulnerable children. The project also supported vulnerable children with after school home-work supervision through home and school visit by community volunteers to help students achieve higher standards education performance.

As part of project sustainability, CUBS provided block grant materials such as text books, school lockers and chairs, library tables and chairs, science laboratory equipment, and cassava processing machines to 175 schools and communities which resulted in schools waiving fees/tuition and other levies for vulnerable children enrolled in the CUBS project, in many cases enabling these children to remain in schools to complete their education. Other children in these communities also benefitted in the block grant materials provided for their schools. This gesture circumvented the provision of special services to vulnerable children that might have resulted in them being singled out for stigma and discrimination by their peers or school leaders.

As an immediate intervention to enable out-of-school children to reintegrate into the classroom, CUBS provided school bags, sandals, uniforms, text books, and writing materials to these youth. This was a one-off activity because it was not sustainable. That notwithstanding, distribution of scholastic materials was welcomed and brought relief to vulnerable families as noted by Oni Odunola, a CUBS beneficiary, who said, "Previously, we often didn't have anything to eat and sometimes we were sent home from school for not paying the levies. It was tough. But now, after FOSHPAD (a local CSO supported by CUBS) has helped... going to school is not challenging. I have books, school uniforms, and sandals. And to eat is not challenging. We have relief."

School performance was monitored through regular visits to vulnerable children’s schools and mentoring of their caregivers on how to assist their children after school hours and during holiday/ vacations. Figure 6 on the following page shows the number of children reached with educational services in different project years.

**Figure 6. Children provided with education services during CUBS project**

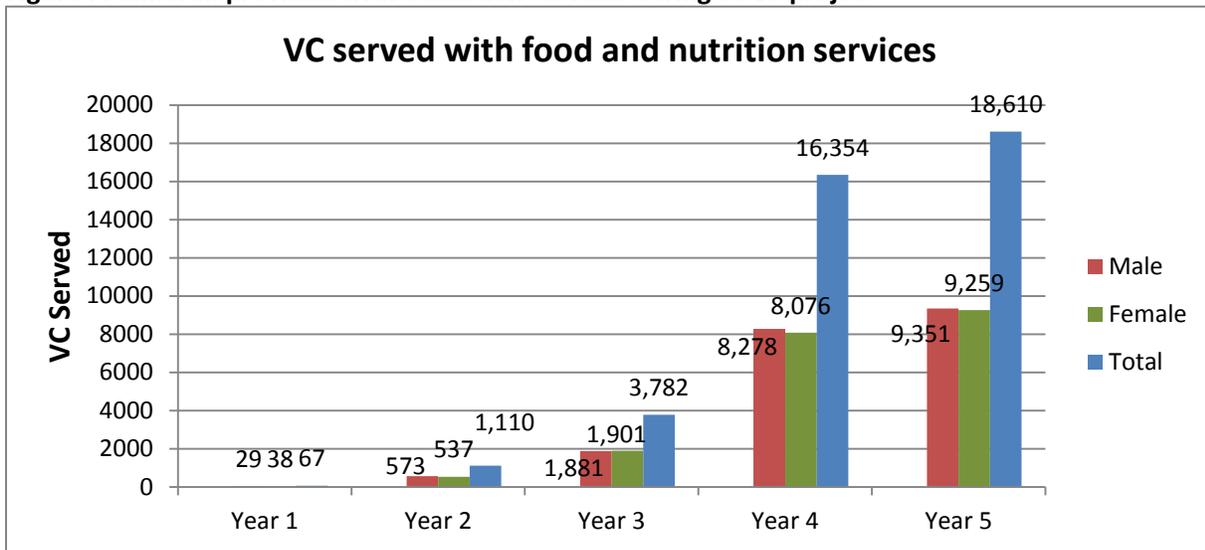


**Food/Nutrition**

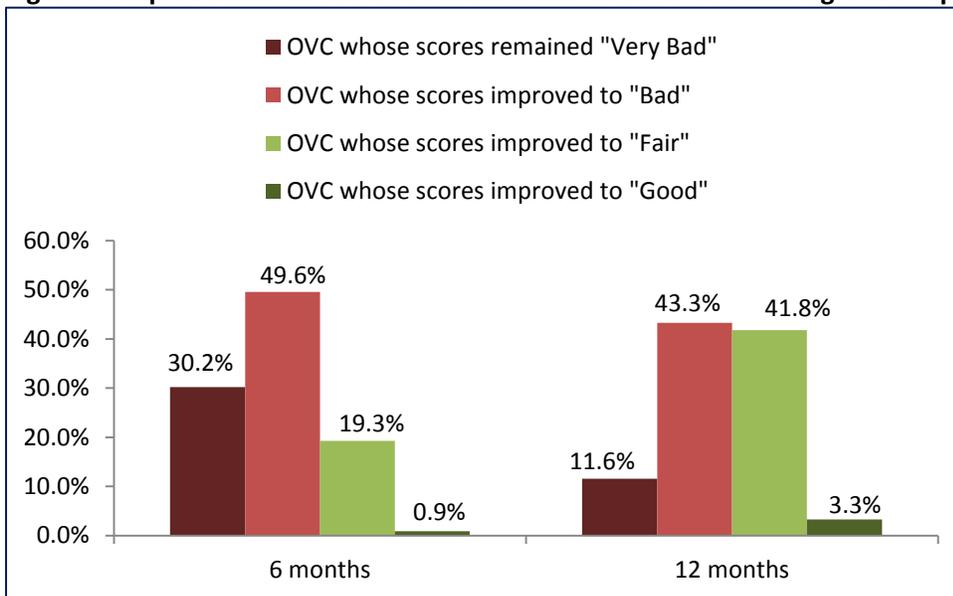
Caregivers of vulnerable children were trained on animal husbandry and home gardening to improve the quality of food they provided for their children in the long term. They were also trained on how to utilize locally available foods to provide an adequate nutritious diet for their children. In the short term, CUBS also facilitated the establishment of community-based food banks and ensured vulnerable children and their households’ access to adequate and nutritious food. This community food bank intervention yielded impressive results in states like Gombe and Taraba, where food banks were not only established but government and community leaders provided land and agricultural/farming materials to CPCs who managed these food banks together with caregivers. CUBS also established linkage with other programs, and private sector and corporate businesses that provided and leverage food support for vulnerable children in Kebbi, Gombe, Enugu, Bayelsa, and Rivers states. Exclusive breastfeeding for infants between 0-6 months was also promoted by community volunteers and CPC members.

The CUBS project reached 18,610 vulnerable children with food and nutrition services and as shown in Table 7 on the following page. Table 8 illustrated changes in nutritional status. Seventy percent of vulnerable children showed improved nutritional status after six months of CUBS’ support, rising to 88 percent after 12 months.

**Figure 7. Children provided with education services during CUBS project**



**Figure 8. Improvement in children's nutritional status after receiving CUBS support**



**Psychosocial support (PSS)**

During the project period, CUBS developed multiple activities to address the psychosocial needs of vulnerable children to help foster stable, nurturing, and emotionally secure environments for the enrolled children in their respective communities across the 11 project focused states. For example, the project supported the creation and funding of Kids Clubs in all communities. These gave all enrolled children the opportunity to improve their social well-being and develop life skills and healthy relationships. At Kids Club meetings, participants also learned about career development, coping with peer pressure, values and value clarification, and effective communications.

The project also ensured that children living with HIV received appropriate and confidential counseling

and support, and had access to a safe environment where they were able to discuss their problems. As a way of broadening the children’s horizons, CUBS organized excursions to airports, the zoo, amusement parks, higher institutions of learning and other places of interest, which greatly increase their perspective on their world and motivated them to think about their futures. After an excursion to the airport in Imo, one girl said, “I have resolved in my mind to face my studies, and become a pilot.”

To improve the quality of psychosocial support and skills development in children, CUBS partnered with Sesame Square, a USAID project, to provide educational and play materials for vulnerable children in Akwa Ibom State. This intervention served an additional purpose of stimulating interest in early child education in the state.

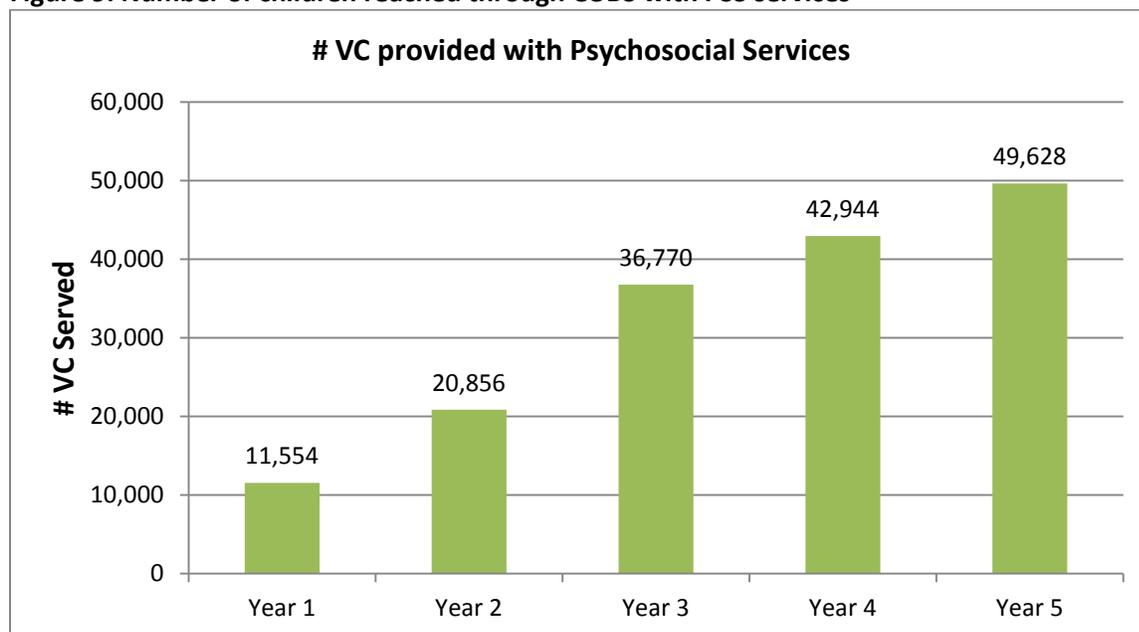


*CUBS beneficiaries performing a traditional dance as part of kids clubs’ activities in Bayelsa.*

CUBS considered PSS one of the most essential services for fostering well-rounded development in vulnerable children and thus supported all 38 CSOs to provide PSS to the children they served. Despite these improvements PSS remained one of the most challenging service

areas due to our limited understanding of grieving and coping in children, which is not unrelated to the lack of evidence/knowledge and proven intervention in this domain. Figure 9 shows number of children reached with psychosocial services in different project years.

**Figure 9. Number of children reached through CUBS with PSS services**



## Legal Protection

In some areas of Nigeria, patriarchal norms exclude women from making decisions within the home and community and males have more authority over family assets. Because women and children are often considered their husband and father's property, violence and sexual abuse often go unreported and unpunished. As a result, many Nigerian women and children are in desperate need of legal support to assist them in child custody cases and protect them from physical and sexual abuse and disinheritance.

Throughout the project period, protection issues of vulnerable children were addressed through the provision of birth registration, and the establishment/strengthening of child protection committees who take up cases of child abuse. During CUBS project, the CSOs obtained birth registration certificates for 12,723 vulnerable children. In collaboration with Child Protection Network (CPN), International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA), Legal AID council and the community child protection committees (CPC), the project took up cases of rape and abuse of the girl child across the project states.

As part of its intervention to protect vulnerable children from harm, help them when they are in need, and promote their overall development, CUBS supported 116 CPCs and other community protection network to carry out various activities across all 11 CUBS supported states. Among many good examples is the campaign against drug abuse and violence by the CPC in Kaltungo Communities in Gombe state. Through constant dialogue, CPC members persuaded members of notorious gangs in Kaltungo to disband and take up alternative means of livelihood. The former gang members now serve as peer educators and role models, making Kaltungo a safer town for families to grow and enjoy life. Another example is the formation of a "change agent group" against harmful practices towards women and girls in Ohunowherre Community of Enugu State. This group has advocated for and raised awareness of the effects of harmful traditional practices that have deprived young girls of schooling and their future. The group has mobilized the whole community in Ohonnuwerre to stand and say no to the old practices and is taking measures to abolish them.

Through the passage of the Child Rights Act in seven states, family courts were established to help try children in safe spaces by trained legal personnel who can interpret the laws within the best interest of the child. Cases involving children are handled professionally and with dispatch, with minimal stigma and discrimination against the child. More children have access to justice and feel protected as indicated by the increased number of reported and tried abuse cases.

### **Shelter and Care**

As a way of providing shelter and care services to vulnerable children, the project leveraged clothing materials from other implementing partners and individuals for children in need, especially in Bayelsa, Rivers, and Ekiti states. Effective collaboration with state governments has led to the provision of shelter and care materials. Throughout the project period, 9,951 vulnerable children benefited from shelter and care services. In Enugu, CPCs mobilized communities to build a house for a homeless and destitute caregiver thus giving her children a safe place to live.

## B. Result 2: Capacities of national and state government for vulnerable children coordination strengthened

### 2.1 State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development (SMWASD) and Local Government Areas (LGAs)

The CUBS project worked assiduously in strengthening the capacity of the state systems to fulfill their coordination role to better protect and care for vulnerable children. The project has been able to institutionalize the functioning of the coordination forums at state and LGA levels in 11 states; these structures are critical to ensuring oversight and coordination of all vulnerable child-related matters. CUBS' first step was to work with the states to identify and designate vulnerable children desk officers at the state and LGA level. The project then supported them to develop job descriptions for this cadre of staff since this was a new cadre at that level. CUBS then trained the new staff on vulnerable children program management.



The CEO of Honorbirth with the wife of the Governor of Imo State

By the end of the project, CUBS had trained 170 state and LGA staff in leadership and management for vulnerable children coordination; the trainees came from across 36 LGAs in all 11 CUBS states. After the trainings, CUBS equipped the new vulnerable children's units with laptops, registers, and data collection tools for the collation of data

from CSOs. This training has been one of the most impactful of all the trainings on the project. With the training completed, activities focused on vulnerable children gained momentum in the communities, as the new cadre of staff worked to remove previously existing obstacles. The new staff also played a significant role in the selection and training of the TWG and CPC members. Now the states and LGAs call for and administer the TWG meetings. They ensure that the meetings are held on schedule and that follow up items from the meeting are acted upon.

CUBS has worked with the SMWASDs and LGAs to strengthen coordination at both levels by funding coordination meetings. In Sokoto and Kebbi States, for example, as part of its coordination role, the SMWASD partnered with all NGOs that are intervening in the area of vulnerable children to help in programming and to assess progress made so far with regards to these children's welfare, review the vulnerable children work plan, and discuss challenges faced by NGOs. They brought the NGOs together and talked to them as partners rather than competitors. Previously, government officials were suspicious of NGOs, viewing them as rivals, which hindered coordination and cooperation.

The project also supported the trained staff to advocate for government appropriation for vulnerable children at the state and LGA levels. By the end of the project, the governments of Ekiti, Gombe, Taraba,

Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, and Delta states had budget lines for vulnerable children’s programs in their request for state appropriation. Before CUBS, there were never any provisions like this in government budgets, and in the few instances where the budgetary provisions were made, they were never released.

The CUBS project provided technical support to all 11 project states in various forms and worked closely with the State Commissioners of women affairs and senior management in ensuring the articulation of VC activities into the ministry budget. In Gombe and Ekiti states, the SMWASD vulnerable children division was supported in a presentation of their activities to their respective First Ladies. This secured more long term funding for vulnerable children activities in their states. In Sokoto, the project team in collaboration with Nigeria Northern Education Initiative (NEI) supported the development of state comprehensive vulnerable children strategic plan of action; in Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom, the project team collaborated with UNICEF and other IPs to support the hosting of child protection networks. In Taraba and Gombe states, CUBS team supported staff from the Jalingo and Zing LGAs to develop six-month action plans that were eventually funded by the LGAs. The CUBS team provided technical support for implementation.

As a result of the project’s support for the SMWASD in Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Taraba, Gombe, and Akwa Ibom states, vulnerable children desk officers can now monitor and support CSOs and can carry out DQA on data reported by CSOs within the state on their own.

Following the finalization of the NPA, one of the next steps was to adapt it to the context of the states. The CUBS project, in collaboration with the FMWASD – which led the process – facilitated the adaptation of the NPA into state priority agendas (SPAs) in 10 of its 11 states, achieving 91% of its target. The three-day workshop brought members of the TWG to brainstorm on the current situation of vulnerable children in their states, identify gaps, and choose appropriate strategies to close those gaps. They also brainstormed to identify what resources were required and where to get the resources, as well as assigned targets, indicators, and persons (or organizations) responsible for the activities. The SPAs have been finalized and are being used to guide vulnerable children’s program planning, implementation, supervision, and monitoring. The TWGs use the SPAs to request specific donor support, which helps to avoid duplication of interventions and inefficiencies.



*Supporting system monitoring and documentation through a donation of laptops to Ekiti SMWASD.*

## 2.2 Vulnerable Children’s Referral Directory

While there are many interventions offered at community level, many vulnerable families are still unable to meet all of their needs because they are not aware of what services are available and where they are provided. Early on, CUBS decided to address the problems of inadequate service delivery to some vulnerable families, recognizing that no one organization could provide all the 6+1 services, and also that some organizations were providing duplicate services to some beneficiaries. At a networking meeting that brought all implementing partners together, the referral directory was developed to serve as a guide to available services and other resources within the community.



*NPA adaptation in Bayelsa State.*

In all CUBS communities, project team members served as the secretariat, and collected information from CSOs, NGOs, and government agencies. CUBS collected information on the type of organization, the specific services it provided, location, office hours, and whether clients needed to pay user fees. This information was gathered into a comprehensive list and disseminated to all the service delivery points in the communities. It is now widely used by CSOs that support and provide services to vulnerable children.

## 2.3 Collaboration

Very early in the project, the CUBS team recognized that partnership and collaboration were vital for greater impact. CUBS sought out opportunities for collaboration and to leverage programs that were already running. CUBS collaborated with various IPs, public and private establishment, NGOs and CSOs to help achieve its goal of improving the well-being of vulnerable families. In Ekiti State, CUBS collaborated with PACT, the Association of OVC NGOs of Nigeria (AONN), and the SMWASD to disseminate the PEPFAR Guidelines on Vulnerable Children’s Programming to CSOs and also supported the Ekiti State Agency for the Control of AIDS in negotiating a contract for NGOs funded by the World Bank HIV/AIDS Fund II. Three of CUBS’ CSOs benefitted from the grant award.

## 2.4 Vulnerable Children Technical Working Groups (TWGs)

The NPA provides a framework and approach to reducing child vulnerability and poverty and overcoming the significant inequities in the country. Its specific goals call for reducing the number of children living in poverty to 15% and significantly improving the quality of life and well-being of all vulnerable children. To contribute to this goal, CUBS identified influential leaders and citizens to form state- and LGA-level technical working groups (TWGs) to focus on orphans and vulnerable children. In addition to the traditional stakeholders, such as social workers, CSO directors, and CPC chairmen, CUBS also recruited representatives from health facilities, donor agencies, implementing partners, child protection networks, religious bodies, law enforcement agencies, LGA Social Welfare Units, and SMWASD to be part of the TWGs. In total, CUBS facilitated the formation of 46 vulnerable children TWGs with more than 400 members.

The technical working group is a part of the national vulnerable children’s framework and has its own formal terms of reference (TOR). According to the TOR, members must work to:

- Develop and integrate a strategy regarding orphans and vulnerable children into state development plans.
- Adapt the national plan of action to state strategic plan and develop work plan annually.
- Facilitate mobilization and allocation of resources for vulnerable children’s programming.
- Coordinate, supervise, and monitor the dissemination of programs for orphans and vulnerable children in accordance with national guidelines at state and local government levels.
- Maintain a management information system on vulnerable children.
- Sensitize and train leaders and technical persons at state and local government levels in provision of services to ensure that vulnerable children benefit appropriately.
- Ensure that vulnerable children and their caregivers participate substantively in the planning, development; implementation, monitoring and assessment of interventions intended to benefit them.
- Establish a functional vulnerable children’s TWG at the LGA-level to monitor and document issues of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of vulnerable children and their households.
- Mentor, coach, and support representatives of state and local structures on vulnerable children for effective delivery of quality services

CUBS trained all members of the TWG in leadership and management, meeting coordination, and networking, to building their skills to enable them to effectively deliver on their mandate. Since their formation, the TWGs have been fulfilling their TOR. Specifically, the TWGs:

- Advocated for SMWASDs to increase budget allocation for vulnerable children service delivery
- Established and enforced laws to prevent street roaming and hawking during school hours
- Maintained and ensured the update of management information system on vulnerable children in 11 states.
- Sensitized and trained over 1000 leaders and technical persons at state and local government levels in provision of services to ensure that vulnerable children benefit appropriately.
- Ensured that vulnerable children and their caregivers participated substantively in the planning, development; implementation, monitoring and assessment of interventions intended to benefit them.
- Established a functional vulnerable children’s TWG at LGA level.
- Mentored and coached state and local structures for effective delivery of quality services. The TWGs also monitored and documented issues of abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation of vulnerable children and their households.



*Members attend a TWG meeting in Rivers State.*

The TWGs form a strong part of the project’s sustainability plan as they will remain functional long after CUBS ends, and will continue to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are addressed at the state and LGA-level.

## 2.5 Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD)

One of CUBS' main goals was to partner with the FMWASD to support the implementation of the NPA and strengthen the weakened and fragmented social welfare system. With the FMWASD, the team focused mainly on strengthening coordination since the initial exploratory meeting showed that was the area with the most need. The four focus areas within coordination included:



### 2.5.1 Social Welfare Systems Strengthening

CUBS began its social welfare systems strengthening activities by mapping and reviewing existing training programs for social work in universities and other higher institutions in the south of Nigeria. This survey found that only a few universities offer a social welfare training program and that those programs were not adaptable to local government and community programming. Data from this activity, together with mapping of social welfare structures in LGA's has been used to propose and recommend a strategy and structure for Nigeria's social welfare approach to the FMWASD.

*Women like these are among the stakeholders working to improve the lives of vulnerable children.*

### 2.5.2 National Priority Agenda Development

CUBS, along with other development agencies, worked with FMWASD to update the NPA, which gives purpose and direction to efforts for vulnerable children in Nigeria. The revised agenda draws on the most current data, research, and best practices to guide advocacy efforts and service delivery for vulnerable children. It also links the NPA to the Nigeria Vision 20:2020, thus bringing vulnerable children into the mainstream of development planning. Representatives from federal ministries led the process while international organizations, USAID and other donor agencies, and implementing partners worked together to ensure the NPA was relevant and realistic. Though yet to be launched, the document has been endorsed and is being adapted by the different states to suit their local context. All stakeholders working in vulnerable children programming will benefit from its implementation.

### 2.5.3 Joint Supervisory visits

In support of the FMWASD's coordination role, CUBS conducted series of joint mentoring and supervisory visits with the FMWASD staff to all 11 project states and communities, which strengthened skills for service delivery at community level. These visits brought the different levels of government together to discuss issues from the community's point of view. Lessons learned from community stakeholders were used to improve the quality of program implementation, shared with other communities, and used to help advance policy.

#### 2.5.4 Linkages and Networking

CUBS facilitated several linkages, networks, and leveraging opportunities to support system strengthening and sustainability of project gains. In Bayelsa, Gombe, Taraba, Sokoto, Ekiti, Enugu, Imo, and Rivers States, CUBS worked with communities, the Federal Ministry of Health, SMWASD, the Ministry of Agriculture, FADAMA, the Lift Above Poverty Organization, media organizations, private philanthropists, and others to reduce child vulnerability. These partnerships increased community ownership of project activities and have yielded and continue to yield great dividends. Efforts supported included caregiver training and empowerment; the establishment of food banks for vulnerable children and their caregivers; the facilitation of HES trainings for caregivers at no cost to the project; and increased advocacy and awareness of child protection issues.

### C. Result 3: Community support for vulnerable children's care strengthened

#### 3.1 Strengthening Community Ownership and participation

One of the cardinal goals of the Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 is investing in people as the most essential asset of the nation, with the belief that investing in equitable human development will serve as the stimulus and catalyst for sustained economic and social growth. The NPA also recognizes the importance and supportive role that community plays in child development.

To this end, it is absolutely necessary to strengthen community structures. CUBS has lived up to this challenge by training more than 1,000 community leaders, volunteers, and religious leaders to advocate for greater care and financial support for vulnerable children in all project implementation states and LGAs. In Ekiti State, these advocacy efforts inspired the State Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Development, and Gender Empowerment (SMWASDGE) and community members in Ekiti East LGA to donate 500 bed nets to protect children from malaria and 420 sanitary pads for vulnerable adolescent girls. In addition, community leaders and volunteers in Ado and Ekiti West local government areas raised 98,000 naira (US \$600) to purchase education materials for more than 1,060 vulnerable children.

Two strategies which CUBS used to build community support for vulnerable children included the formation of child protection committees and the strengthening of civil society organizations.

##### 3.1.1 Child Protection Committees (CPCs)

To ensure that all vulnerable children have access to and benefit from comprehensive social protection services, are safe from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect, and have legal identity, CUBS project built community support networks in 11 project states, 36 LGAs and 116 communities. CUBS worked with 38 CSOs to form 116 CPCs, tasked with protecting and improving the

#### Sample Agenda of CPC workshop

- Roles of Stakeholders in OVC Programming
- Gombe SMWA's strategies for supporting Communities & CSOs initiatives
- Community Support and Strategies-UNICEF Approach
- Child Protection Network
- Relevance of Stakeholder Engagement for Child Protection & Community Development
- Advocacy & Steps in Advocacy Process
- Community Mobilization Strategies
- Resource Mobilization Strategies
- Steps to Problem Tree Analysis
- Activity: Use of the Problem Tree to Analyze Issues in Kaltungo
- Development of Advocacy Brief for LGA Chairman
- Group Activity: Role Plays

well-being of vulnerable children in their communities. Each CSO recruited 10 to 15 leaders from traditional ruling councils, land-lord associations, religious groups, and market associations to form their committees. CUBS then trained these leaders as champions for local vulnerable children and how to lead the community and advocate for efforts to support this group. The FMWASD, UNICEF and the Association of Vulnerable Children Networks in Nigeria (AONN) facilitated the training, each bring the different perspectives of the roles of community members in child protection. The CPC members appreciated the CUBS trainings and regarded them as a wakeup call to rise up and support vulnerable families.

CPCs are a major contributing factor to CUBS' success. A select list of CPC achievements include:

- Ensured vulnerable children were identified and provided with 6+1 services and monitored vulnerable children's well-being by conducting school and home visits
- Raised funds and donations for vulnerable children from community members
- Renovated homes for impoverished families without adequate shelter
- Organized vocational skills training programs for children
- Secured small business start-up grants to enhance the earning capacity of more than 15,000 caregivers and vulnerable adolescents
- Advocated for children's rights including successfully advocating for prevention of female genital mutilation
- Ensured perpetrators of child abuse are prosecuted (CPCs have prosecuted seven people for sexual abuse of vulnerable children and have also provided legal protection to vulnerable children suffering from sexual or physical abuse)
- Funded social gatherings for vulnerable children
- Helped more than 4,000 vulnerable children obtain school tuition waivers
- Advocated to health centers for health care service bill waivers for vulnerable children and helped 6,550 vulnerable children receive free clinic services

Many of the project-supported communities, led by their CPCs, were actively involved in mitigating vulnerable children-related problems using their own resources. The CPCs in Rivers State facilitated a N5,000,000.00 (\$31,250) donation from the Niger Delta Development Commission to Perpetual Succor for Women and Children (a former CSO partner in Rivers state) to send two children with heart defects to India for treatment. Both patients have returned from India and are fully recovered. Kan Development Foundation in Bayelsa received N 20,000 (\$125) from Otuoke CPC to support their work. The CPCs have achieved tremendous success in ensuring vulnerable children are protected in the communities and states.

*"The CUBS project was like a wake-up call to us. We now hold quarterly meetings to discuss the challenges of vulnerable children and how to tackle them. We take care of the vulnerable children when they are sick and buy medicine for them."*

- CPC secretary

In Gombe, the advocacy of the CPC members to the Chairman of Kaltungo LGA yielded positive results, leading to an instant donation of N400,000 naira (US \$2,500) by the chairman to the CPC and a call for other contributions. The chairman stated, "I am happy that a positive thing is happening in my LGA and am willing to support this process with the sum of N400,000 (US \$2,500) and the local education authority should also contribute N300,000 (US \$1,875) to this process. Please feel free to come to me if you need any support to make your work successful."

### 3.1.2 Civil Society Organizations

CUBS considered the CSOs as the implementing arm of the project, because they were trusted by the communities and thus could easily reach community members to provide service. The project contracted 38 CSOs, selected through a rigorous competitive process. Through a series of workshops delivered in phases, we built their capacities to adequately respond to proposals, as well as in service delivery, data management, community and resource mobilization and organizational development.



*CUBS CSOs worked with families like this one.*

The initial CSO training exposed participants to the basics issues surrounding vulnerable children and the interventions needed to address their situations. The project then built on this training with service specific trainings and system strengthening trainings that supported the development of strong financial management systems that help organizations spend prudently and document appropriately thus making their financial transactions transparent and the organizations accountable for project funds and results. A list of trainings is provided in the box below.

CUBS' CSO partners delivered on their assigned targets and demonstrated capacities to do even more. The CSOs trained and deployed community volunteers to provide vulnerable children's services from door to door at the community level. The volunteers mentored and coached caregivers to provide nutritious food to the youth in their care, check their school work, and take them to the hospitals when they were ill or to receive necessary immunizations. To ensure that children continued to receive services in the home, the volunteers cascaded trainings to the caregivers. They mobilized community members to form CPCs that have become the fulcrum of vulnerable children's service delivery. The volunteers have painstakingly collected data on all vulnerable children enrolled in CUBS programs and ensured reporting to the LGA, SMWASD, and the FMWASD. Due to enhanced capacities, the CSOs were able to attract further funding from other implementing partners which provide supplementary services to CUBS interventions, thereby enhancing the well-being of vulnerable children and their households. All CSOs have received funding from a variety of sources, including

#### **Trainings in Service Delivery**

- VC comprehensive training
- Psychosocial Support training
- Health and Nutrition training
- HES training
- Youth peer education training
- Reproductive health training
- Basic health care kit
- Child protection and legal support training

#### **Trainings in System Strengthening**

- Basic M&E training
- Organizational capacity development
- Training in the effective management and coordination of VC programming
- NOMIS trainings.

World Bank HIV and AIDS Fund (HAF) , PACT, CIHP, Centre for Clinical Research Nigeria (CCRN), International Centre for AIDS Treatment Program (ICAP), PATH 2, Global Fund, Health Alive Foundation, Voices for Change, USAID, ENCAP, and from community members.

The words of Uduak Umoh, Executive Director of WOCLIF, a CUBS-supported CSO, summarize the support his organization found through CUBS. He noted, “[Before CUBS] there was no documentation [at our organization] because of the belief that God does not record what He does for us and so we should not record our interventions for others. But in 2010, the story, mentality and indeed everything about WOCLIF changed. What happened? It was the coming of CUBS, our very first project and donor. Through CUBS, we are now able to document, monitor, report our activities, and even write winning proposals... We now receive funding from the International Centre for AIDS Treatment Programs (ICAP), the Centre for Integrated Health Programs (CIHP), Health Alive Foundation (HAF), and the Global Fund.”

#### **D. Result 4: Vulnerability status of girl child and women reduced**

In Nigeria, women and girls are not only caregivers for their husbands, children and siblings, but also for orphans, the elderly, and the ill in their communities. The burden of caretaker tasks often require girls and young women to forgo an education, thus leaving them unable to earn an income and vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. Reducing vulnerability of families is therefore closely tied to empowering women and girl children. The CUBS project focused its empowerment interventions on women and girl children. Specifically, the project team sensitized families and communities on the benefits of educating the girl child, removed barriers to girl children’s education, and advocated for the enrollment of children in school. The project supported CSOs to establish girl groups that provided safe spaces for girls to discuss their challenges and receive counseling. The HES intervention targeted female heads of household as well as female adolescents. By the end of the project, we had reduced the vulnerability status of 64 percent of families reached.



*Nigerian women bear the caregiving burden.*

#### 4.1 Household Economic Strengthening

The Household Economic Strengthening (HES) initiative focused on economically empowering female heads of vulnerable children's households (caregivers), primarily through agro-based income generating activities (IGAs) to increase their financial decision-making power. The HES activities aimed to strengthen the household economy thereby mitigating the burden of care for vulnerable children placed on female caregivers. In turn, this would help reduce the vulnerability of wards in their care as the caregivers were now empowered to support them.

CUBS expanded the reach of HES with trainings on micro-enterprise fundamentals (an integration of income generation, homestead farming and household nutrition) to 593 female caregivers in nine states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Enugu, Taraba, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Ekiti. All trained beneficiaries were supported to develop simple business plans which were assessed for viability. Of the number



*CUBS' training on micro-enterprise fundamentals reached 593 female caregivers in nine states.*

trained, 326 qualified to receive seed grants of up to a maximum of \$64.52 each to start or expand a small business. In all 11 states, about 1,300 female caregivers received business training, which facilitated the increase in access to income and productive resources.

Exchange visits were conducted in Delta, Gombe, and Akwa Ibom as a peer review mechanism for seed grant beneficiaries to facilitate experience sharing and exhibitions of products between and within HES beneficiary communities.

Additionally, HES beneficiaries received step down training from project partners on how to start and conduct Voluntary Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). They were also encouraged to form cooperatives around the production of crops relevant to the economy of their respective states. Hence,

##### **An HES Cooperative Success Story**

One success story from CUBS' household economic strengthening efforts comes from the cooperative Abasiekeme MPCs, located in the Adang Itam community in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom State. Members raised start-up capital of NN 3,500 (\$22.58) to purchase a quantity of palm fruit and rent an existing community mill to begin oil production. Eventually, the group secured a loan of NN 450,000 (\$2,903.23) to build a mini palm oil mill. With the much needed capital infusion for oil production, profits rose to NN 60, 000 (\$387.10), enabling cooperative members to earn an average weekly income of NN 6,000 (\$38.71) from palm oil sales. Currently, the cooperative has 23 members and supports 46 vulnerable children.

by pooling resources together, beneficiaries would be able to boost production capacity and make adequate profit from sale of products already in demand in their states. To date, 92 VSLAs or cooperatives have been established that employ a total of 2,467 members (both women and men) and support over 6,000 vulnerable children. The majority of the cooperatives formed engage in farming and petty trading as well as cassava and oil processing.

## 4.2 Gender and Legal Protection

### 4.2.1 Workshop Training

Lending support to the campaign to safeguard the rights of women and girls in Nigerian society, CUBS conducted a three-day training workshop on “Gender Strategy: Incorporating Legal Protection Issues for Women and Girls” in each of the 11 CUBS states. The workshop aimed to increase awareness of gender-related issues in vulnerable children’s programming at the institutional, household, and project levels, while providing participants with a platform for networking and referrals to available legal offices for reporting and prosecuting cases such as sexual abuse, disinheritance and child custody.

A total of 260 participants attended the workshop, comprising law enforcement agents, workers from the ministries of women’s affairs, education, justice, and related agencies including the state universal basic education boards, prisons, immigration, the civil defense corps as well as CSOs working with CUBS. Technical support came from the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA). Duty bearers (mostly the 38 CSO project partners) and their households were sensitized and their capacity built to respond to issues on the human rights of women and girls.

#### Workshop Objectives:

- To increase participants understanding of the concept of gender and the link between gender disparities and health outcomes for vulnerable people, especially women and girls.
- To acquaint participants with the framework for integrating gender considerations into the 7 thematic areas for OVC programming in the CUBS project as a focused example of how gender considerations can be integrated into programs at all levels of implementation.
- To acquaint participants with women and girls’ protection issues and where and how to help, when the rights are violated.
- To facilitate understanding of gender-sensitive reporting.

Other activities included CUBS’ collaboration with various states and national offices of the National Population Council to facilitate the registration of vulnerable children’s births and issuance of birth certificates to registered children who did not have them. In most cases, these documents were issued at no cost to families. In addition, the gender-related issues of child marriage, sexual harassment, and girl child education have formed the basis for public rallies on International Women’s Day organized by project partners and beneficiaries.



*Women advocating for their rights in Delta State.*

#### 4.2.2 Case Study: Girl Groups Initiative

In 2012, Girl Group Meetings were piloted in three project states – Bayelsa, Ekiti, and Gombe – with



*Friendships are formed in girl groups.*

In addition, the girls were taught life skills such as goal setting, decision making, negotiation assertiveness, values and value clarification, developing self-esteem and others related to gender issues existing in their communities. Girls in need of special protection due to extreme circumstances, such as abuse, rape, or trafficking were referred into the custody of the CSOs who, working with the CPCs, referred them to FIDA and other agencies that could assess their individual cases.

Following the pilot, the meetings were scaled up to cover 10 project states with meetings continuing in the pilot states as well. These meetings reached 6,712 girls across Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Sokoto, Kebbi, Gombe, Taraba, Ekiti, Delta, Bayelsa, and Imo states. So far, more than 38 girl groups have been established across the project states, where older girls meet monthly to network and further build life skills, and are responsible for stepping down the knowledge they receive at the meetings to their peers in their communities.

the aim of promoting networking among the girls and teaching them to step down knowledge and information acquired during these meetings to others through peer education. By providing safe spaces for interaction, the meetings also served as a platform for improving self-esteem, developing life skills and motivating the girls to aspire to attain their full potential.

Sixty-five girls across the three host states attended the meetings which brought them together with professionals (lawyers, gender experts, nurses, and academicians) that were invited to talk to the girls on career choices and other subjects. Topics discussed included forced marriage, rape, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, human trafficking, child labor, and adolescent reproductive health issues.

##### **Educational Excursions to Gombe**

In Gombe State, 30 girls went on an excursion to the Federal College of Education where they were received by the Coordinator, Guidance and counselling. During this visit, the girls were given career guidance by the Dean of the School of Vocational Education, Mrs. Amina Abdul. In a talk with the girls, she encouraged them to be self-reliant, skillful, productive and creative on things they can do such as dress making, poultry farming, catering, hair styling or event management.

##### **Peer Education in Girl Group Meetings**

Sheba Joshua, a female adolescent, caregiver, role model and an orphan told her story at a Girl Group meeting. Sheba lost her parents 15 years ago, and was left with six siblings and a blind, aged grandmother. Sheba survived through the years with her business (selling fried yam and eggs) which she uses to support her siblings. Even though she did not go to school she is satisfied because her siblings are in school and two are through with their secondary education. Sheba makes NN2000 (\$12.90) worth of profit every day and has used her savings to build two rooms for her siblings and purchase two bulls, which she uses for tilling to earn more income for her family.

### Comments from Girl Group Participants

"I never thought I could speak up in public... Imagine the Dean of the School of Science listening to me speak and answering me. I want to be like her, she has really made me happy. We need such opportunities where we can feel free to express ourselves and are being listened to. Thank you very much CUBS for this opportunity. I never thought I could see myself in the walls of a higher institution, but now I know I can get there and study"

*-Rejoice Samson, after the excursion to Gombe*

"Our visit to the Federal College of Education really opened my eyes to a lot of opportunities that I never thought existed for people like us. I will go and share it with my mother so that she can be encouraged to, now I know that my dream of becoming a nurse is possible. I made up my mind am going to be a nurse to help my mother out and reduce her work load. I have finished my secondary school and my results are good, I want to apply for school of nursing and midwifery in Gombe. I need your support to see me through it"

*-Rabi Faizu*

"I have been having challenges in school, as one of my teachers has been asking me to have an intimate relationship with him, but I have saying no to him. He will call me to his office, offer me money and buy things for me but I'll reject his offers; he threatened to fail me in my examinations if I refuse him next time. I didn't know who to talk to but thanks to the refusal skills I learned during life skills training, I now know how to address the issue and I know I can report him to the school authority"

*-A participant*

"I thank God for this project, I feel happy anytime my mother discusses sex education with me, this started after she had received trainings from CUBS project" I was also told that I can still have children if I marry as a virgin contrary to what some of my friends tell me"

*-Style Jennifer*

"When you drop out of school and you are hawking on the streets and you see your classmate who completed her education and is working in National Assembly in Abuja, you will be ashamed to go to her or even let her see you; this is what unplanned pregnancy does to girls"

*-A participant from Taraba*

"After our meeting at Yenagoa [in Bayelsa state], I was thinking on how to pass this message across to others, but I have done it and I will keep educating my peers to ensure we achieve our goals in life and fight against anything that will stand as an obstacle"

*-Oduali Lillian*

### 4.3 Communication for Better Reproductive Health

Equally important to the gender empowerment drive is educating young adolescent girls on issues regarding their sexual and reproductive health. As stated earlier, female adolescents are particularly vulnerable and more likely to engage in risky sexual practices if not nurtured in a supportive environment and provided with correct knowledge about protecting themselves.

CUBS used an indirect approach to reach the girls through their trusted caregivers to impart vital reproductive health (RH) information. CUBS ensured that caregivers in project states received step-down training to enable them better communicate with their wards (especially female adolescents) regarding appropriate RH information and services related to HIV, AIDS, STI prevention, teenage pregnancy, safe motherhood, and culturally appropriate family planning.

*Mrs. Janet Darlington, a participant in the RH training, expressed joy at the adolescent RH education she received from CUBS. Prior to her training, she thought that children of this age were prone to satanic attacks which explained their queer behavior. "But now," she says, "I understand that it is a stage of growing up and a period when they have special needs that are not only physical. Indeed, I have made up my mind to stand by them, show them love and patience, follow up with them, and provide their basic needs as best I can."*

These trainings were facilitated by partner CSOs, junior community health extension workers (JCHEWS), and community health extension workers (CHEWS) who participated in the RH Training of Trainers (TOTs) workshops hosted by the CUBS team in all project states, to strengthen their delivery of RH support to caregivers within their communities. In addition, the workshops fostered mutual trust and confidence between the trainees (caregivers) and their trainers (the CSO representatives, JCHEWs and CHEWs). Between 2011 and 2012, a total of 215 CSO staff benefitted from RH TOTs and an additional 2,850 CSO staff with previous training received PSS/RH refresher training. An additional 3,735 caregivers of vulnerable children were reached with received step-down training.

## E. Result 5: Systems for disseminating evidence-based best practices strengthened

### 5.1 Strengthening capacity to implement the national M&E plan

In support of the implementation of the National Vulnerable Children M&E plan, CUBS participated in the National Vulnerable Children Management Information System (NOMIS) TOT workshop for implementers from the southern and northern regions. NOMIS is an electronic national database for capturing program outcomes, innovations, opportunities and approaches for scaling up, and strategies to address challenges and critical gaps. The database documentation facilitates the evidence of the factors that are required to ensure effective interventions. The project conducted step-down training on NOMIS for 54 state and LGA stakeholders in the 11 supported states. All of the CUBS data has been uploaded on NOMIS and shared with the state and federal government.

### 5.2 Strengthening partner organizations' development for sustainability

One of the pillars of the CUBS sustainability plan was to build the capacity of all partner CSOs to receive funding from other donors. The project contracted 38 CSOs in phases and built their capacities in service delivery, data management, and organizational development. The capacity building process started with CSOs at the project's beginning with the assessment to determine their strength and gaps. Using results from the baseline assessment, CUBS categorized the CSOs into three types – emerging, intermediate,

and established (see description in box at right). More than 70 percent of the CUBS CSOs were categorized as in the intermediate type.

CUBS developed specific action plans for each type of CSO, implemented activities to address their identified gaps, and worked with the CSOs to develop organizational strategic plans to guide their operations. The CSOs also developed their policies through structured guidance; these policies were reviewed, and approved for adoption and use by the CSO boards. The existence and application of appropriate policies and strategic plans signify strong, functional, and sustainable organizations. CSO staff also went through training in all the vulnerable children service areas and in program and small grants management. CUBS also trained them in resource mobilization, creating networks, and building and strengthening linkages and collaboration with other IPs and donors. Routine monitoring and supervision activities were carried out across the CSOs using existing databases such as NOMIS to strengthen documentation, data collection, and data quality for improved decision making.

CUBS trained CSO governing boards to improve their impact and facilitated their registration as legal entities by the SMWASD and with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). The project trained CSO board members from all 38 CSOs on resource mobilization, transparency, accountability, and advocacy to empower them to provide appropriate oversight of the CSOs. The members of CSO boards, who were hitherto unaware of their role in the organizations, were enthusiastic about the trainings. As one board member from the Centre for Community Health & Development (CHAD) in Gombe exclaimed, “We now have a better understanding of the role of a board of trustees, 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 fulfill its goal.”

In an endline assessment in 2013, the project determined the improvement of the CSOs across key organizational development indices when compared to their baseline (see Table 2 on the following page). The findings showed that the CSOs delivered on their assigned targets and demonstrated capacities to do even more. Due to enhanced capacities, the CSOs were able to attract additional funding from other implementing partners and used these funds for activities that supplemented CUBS interventions, thereby further enhancing the well-being of vulnerable children and their households.

### **CSO Categories**

**Emerging:** Organizations have minimal staff; are loosely organized around a particular issue (i.e., vulnerable children); have high levels of commitment and innovation, but may not have organizational requirements (office, registration, operating budget).

**Intermediate:** Organizations have an office; are registered; have a small operating budget; and are funding existing staff serving multiple functions

**Established:** Organization have a strong board; diverse funding portfolio; are able to demonstrate results; organizational infrastructure is in place; HR policies and operating procedures that govern work exist; and the organization can mentor other organizations.

**Table 2. Improvements in key organizational development indices by CUBS CSOs**

Domain	Maximum Score	Median Score	
		Baseline	End line
Governance	36	12.5	24.0
Experience, knowledge, and skills	16	5.0	12.0
Networking and referral systems	32	10.0	21.0
Resource mobilization	20	5.5	13.0
Human resource management	20	5.0	13.0
Service delivery	36	11.0	25.0
Procurement and financial management system	16	4.0	11.0
Gender management system	12	2.0	7.0
Monitoring and evaluation	12	2.5	8.0

### 5.3 CSO review meetings/technical sessions

CUBS used the bi-annual CSO review meeting as a platform for partner CSOs to showcase their achievements, and share challenges and the strategies used to address them. The first review meeting was held in 2010 and was attended by the 16 first year selected CSOs. Subsequently, all 38 CSOs participated between 2011 and 2014; a total of eight more review meetings were held twice every year to not only discuss achievements and strategies but also to plan for the coming year. These technical sessions served as a platform to share the program targets across the CSOs and to develop CSOs' scopes of work to ensure that program implementation was achieved and financial commitments were honored. Across the project's five years, CUBS witnessed the drop-out of two CSOs as partners due to financial, personal, and technical perception disparities. These CSOs were Perpetual Succor for Women and Children (PESWAC) in Rivers State and EWAYI in Imo state.

At these meetings, CSOs presented posters on their achievements, lessons learned, and planned for the remaining life of the project. The poster presentations, which were directed at prospective donor audiences, provided a good platform and opportunity for the CSOs to highlight their work with great zeal, passion, creativity, and enthusiasm. The presentations showcased CSO sustainability strategies that aligned with the CUBS project exit plans. Much effort was directed at networking and collaboration, all with the aim to identify and mobilize resources to sustain the gains of the CUBS project. A high point of one of these review meetings was the award ceremony held in PY4, during which CUBS' high performing CSOs from 11 states got awards and certificates of partnership in recognition of their excellent work.

The award criteria included innovation and creativity, empowerment of vulnerable children's households, organizational capacity enhancement and sustainability, and active stakeholder engagement.



*Participants in a group activity during a CSO review meeting.*

#### **5.4 Data monitoring, mentoring, and supervision/DHIS Upload**

The CUBS project relied heavily on accurate data management for evidence of how it was impacting child vulnerability. The project team regularly and painstakingly conducted data monitoring visits to CSOs and the Ministries of Social welfare staff in all the states. For the first four project years, these visits were monthly. By the project's last year, visits were reduced to quarterly due to better capacity level of the CSOs and the vulnerable children desk officers. The monitoring and supervisory visits were used to strengthen M&E systems at the state and CSO levels and served as a venue to teach staff to collect, collate, and verify data before reporting it through the appropriate channels to USAID and MSH home office, as well as relevant stakeholders such as the SMWASD and the FMWASD. Verified data was also uploaded into the MSH and USG District Health Information System (DHIS) managed by NMEMS II.

#### **5.5 Data Quality Assurance (DQA):**

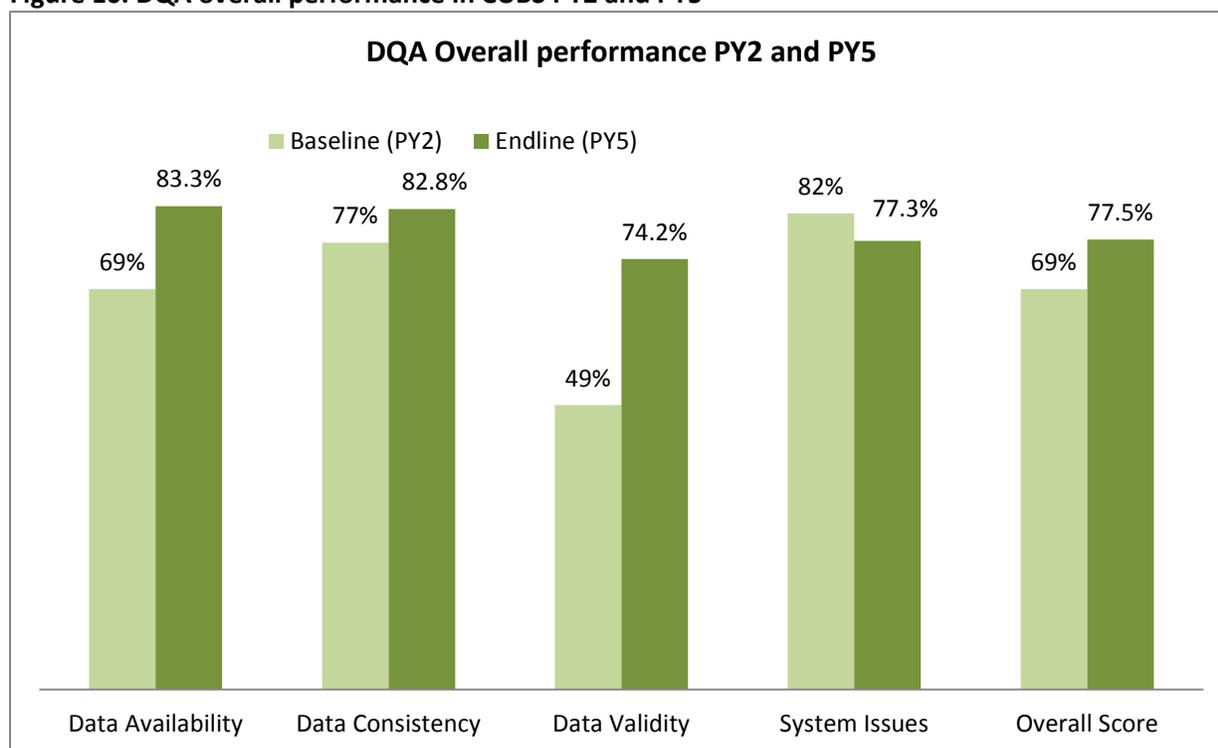
CUBS' staff were committed to ensuring the quality of program data reported by the CSO implementing partners. The annual DQA exercise organized by CUBS was held to validate and authenticate the accuracy and quality of periodic data generated at the CSO level and reported to key stakeholders, and aligned to the guidelines of PEPFAR/USAID for quality data management. Staff from one zone traveled to another zone (in an effort to reduce all forms of bias) in collaboration with the vulnerable children's desk officers of the SMWASD to visit the sites of all the CSOs implementing partners to carry out data quality checks. DQA visits conducted by CUBS assessed 16 CSOs in PY2, a number which increased to 37 CSOs in PY5. Apart from the DQA organized by CUBS annually, there were also two main external DQAs conducted by USAID through the Nigeria Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services (NMEMS II).

The DQA exercise covered five thematic areas: (1) Data availability, which refers to gaps in data; (2) Data consistency, which detects errors in the transfer of data from one collection tool to another; (3) Data

validity, which checks errors in aggregation; (4) Systems assessment, which looks at the functionality and gaps of the service delivery point M&E system with a bid to generate relevant information on areas in need of strengthening for an efficient data collection, collation, and data reporting system; and (5) Field visits, which have to do with the logistics of finding selected clients and visiting them to verify their existence and services received. DQA exercises are conducted using a structured checklist to review the CSI and OVC Vulnerability Index (OVI) forms, all registers and selected client folders. Information from client visits is triangulated with information on the CSI forms and registers to verify the documented information about vulnerable children and their caregivers.

Results below show a comparative increase in percentage level of data management improvement between the overall baseline and end line DQA assessment of the CUBS project from 69% in PY2 to 77.5% in PY5. Note that there was a slight decrease in systems strengthening issues, most likely due to staff attrition across CSOs. The highest significant change in positive data management was in data validity which improved from 49% in PY2 to 74.2% in PY5.

**Figure 10. DQA overall performance in CUBS PY2 and PY5**



### 5.6 Vulnerable children survey report

CUBS supported the government in Ekiti State in the third and fourth quarter of PY4 (2013) to plan, conduct, and disseminate a state-wide survey on vulnerable children to analyze their situations across all LGAs. The project also provided technical support during similar survey exercises in Rivers State and Taraba State, which were conducted in one LGA (Gokana LGA and Zing LGA, respectively). The Gombe State Agency for the Control of AIDS (GOMSACA) also solicited for and received USAID CUBS project support in conducting the vulnerable children survey in the state. The findings from each of these surveys now provide an evidence base for planning and advocacy for appropriation for vulnerable children’s programming in the states.

## 5.7 Home office consultation/exchange visits

Home office visits by field staff and STTA from the home office to the field are opportunities for learning, skills building, and strengthening capacity. The CUBS' COP and the M&E Associate Director traveled to MSH's home offices in Arlington, VA and Cambridge, MA to be trained data presentation techniques and to disseminate project achievements. The CUBS project has received STTA in the areas of M&E, project management, vulnerable children's services and for the Mid Term review.

MSH's Gadue-Niebling-Urdaneta (GNU) fellowship is a yearly fellowship awarded to two MSH staff (one from the home office and one from any field office) that have shown a long-term commitment to the field of public health. The fellowship was created as a memorial for three MSH staff that died in a plane crash outside Afghanistan. Chinelo Odiakosa-Mmakwe, a CUBS M&E Specialist was awarded the 2011 GNU fellowship to serve with the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity (BLC) for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa HIV in Pretoria, South Africa, also implemented by MSH. Chinelo and her South African peers exchanged best practice models from CUBS and from BLC, and looked at BLC's capacity building practices. Other key activities included knowledge exchange on vulnerable children data management, a review of the Enhanced Gender Focus Strategy, developing a literature review on migrant populations' vulnerability to HIV, developing qualitative research assessment tools as well as going on a field visit to a refugee settlement in Johannesburg.

## 5.8 Conferences

Increasing country presence and international impact is largely dependent on conducting and disseminating research as well as conference presentations to showcase how USAID and CUBS implementing partners – MSH and Africare – are improving the health and lives of Nigeria's vulnerable populations. During the project's lifespan, CUBS had eight abstracts accepted for presentation in international conferences, as either oral or poster presentations. Below is a list of these abstracts:

- O. Onoh, A. Badiora, Z. Kpamor, P. Obo-Effanga, U. Ofole, S. Bitrus, N. Persaud, A. Chike-Charles, G. Ojiakor & S. Onifade: *Using Organizational Capacity Building to Ensure the Sustainability of Community-Based Interventions for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the CUBS project in Nigeria*; Presented at IAS 2014 in Melbourne, Australia.
- O. Onoh, Z. Kpamor, K. Tokara, A. Badiora, A. Okoh, C. Okoye, C. Odiakosa, C. Nze, D. Brendan, O. Oyenusi & S. Onifade: *Mobile Technology Equips Community-Based Volunteers to Record and Report High-Quality, Timely Data on Service Delivery to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria*; Presented at IAS 2014 in Melbourne, Australia.
- S. Amahson, O. Onoh & U. Adaji (2013): *Economic Strengthening for Female Household Heads: An Integrated Approach to Improving VC Care and Well-being in Nigeria*. Presented at the 7th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 30 - July 3, 2013. A poster presentation.
- S. Amahson, O. Onoh & U. Adaji (2013): *Bridging the Resources Gap for sustainable VC response in Nigeria: Result of Collaborative Efforts*. Presented at the 7th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 30 - July 3, 2013. A poster presentation.
- C. Odiakosa; L. Audu & O. Onoh (2011): *Child Status Index: A Key Monitoring Tool in Tracking the Well-being of Most Vulnerable Children and Enhancing Service Delivery in two states of Southern Nigeria*. Oral presentation at the American Public Health Association, Washington, DC (November 2011)
- C. Odiakosa; L. Audu & O. Onoh (2011): *Results from Systematic Monitoring and Evaluation of Community-based VC Programs in Nigeria: The CUBS experience*. Oral presentation at the

International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 4-8, 2011.

- C. Odiakosa; S. Amahson & O. Onoh (2011): *Where are the Girls? How Female Vulnerable Children Can Count in the Face of Vulnerability: The CUBS Approach in two States of Southern Nigeria*. Presented at the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 4-8, 2011. A poster presentation.
- C. Odiakosa; U. Adaji & O. Onoh (2011): *The Child Status Index: A Strategic Monitoring Tool in Linking Most Vulnerable Children to Health Services in two States of Southern Nigeria*. Oral presentation at the 18th Union Conference on TB/HIV/AIDS and other Lung Diseases in Abuja, Nigeria, March 2-5, 2011

### **5.9 CUBS dissemination meeting:**

To commemorate the close-out of the CUBS project, a dissemination ceremony that signaled the end of the project was held on Monday, July 14, 2014. The meeting attracted several people including representatives from USAID, the 38 CSO partners, vulnerable children from CUBS communities, CPC chairmen, officials from the Ministries of Women Affairs, implementing partners, private sector executives and the media, to mention a few. The ceremony showcased CUBS' achievements over the past five years as shown through testimonies from vulnerable children, caregivers, CPCs, CSO and SMWASD representatives, as well as to garner continued support for the care of vulnerable children.

### **5.10 HES community of practice (HESCoP):**

CUBS joined with Save the Children, PACT, and Africare to host the first ever forum on Lessons Learned and Experience Sharing on Promising Practices in HES in June 2012. The forum was driven by implementing partners' desires to reflect on workable models of HES for vulnerable children and to share lessons learned. The forum had a dynamic membership that included representatives from USAID, National Women Development Centre (NWDC), the Livelihood & Food Security Technical Assistance (LIFT) project, PACT, Partners for Development (PFD), Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI), Save the Children, Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria (IHVN), and MSH. The forum critically examined the various methods and approaches adopted to strengthen poor households. The success of this forum was that it established a foundational agenda for interaction on HES, provided a unique opportunity to discuss existing HES theoretical and pragmatic approaches, and envisioned novel approaches to encourage sustained critical reflection. CUBS hosted the secretariat for a year, coordinated the activities of the forum, formed four technical subcommittees on small grants, capacity building, system strengthening, and agricultural livelihoods and worked with LIFT to establish a Google group discussion page.

CUBS also oversaw the forum's metamorphosis to the Household Economic Strengthening Community of Practices (HESCoP) in February 2013. HESCoP now has over 100 members drawn from government agencies, the private sector and IPs; they participate actively in on-line discussions, share lessons learned, identify HES programming gaps and develop processes to address the gaps. HESCoP has become a veritable advocacy platform. Its members have explored and documented best and promising HES practices so that they can be shared by utilizing existing and creating new modes of information/knowledge exchange. In addition, HESCoP has nurtured sustained strategic alliances among stakeholders to foster cooperation and the generation of ideas.

### 5.11 Operations research

CUBS commissioned an operations research (OR) study to answer two questions: (1) *Have education, income generating activities, and RH interventions implemented during the CUBS project led to any changes in the lives of female vulnerable children (FVC)?* (2) *Which of the interventions led to the greatest reduction in the risk taking behavior of FVC?*

The OR was conducted between January 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014 in Akwa Ibom and Gombe States. In the short-run, the OR study was geared to fine-tune CUBS' project programming for more impact on FVC and their caregivers, and the long-term objective was to provide empirical bases for future programming on FVC and their caregivers in Nigeria.

Participatory approach was the main underlining principle of the OR, which employed a quasi-experimental case-control design in CUBS intervention communities and adjacent non-intervention communities. A multi-stage sampling design was used to select participating CSOs, communities, and beneficiaries. The study had a qualitative component, which included consultations with key stakeholders at the community, state, and national levels of project implementation. Using structured tools, data were collected at baseline, during a rapid appraisal, and at endline. The baseline and endline employed similar designs, and the rapid appraisal was a small scale version of both. A total of 54 communities were systematically selected and visited in Akwa Ibom and Gombe States, and 1,615 FVC were sampled with probability proportion to size (PPS), and interviewed. Similarly, a total of 1,181 caregivers were sampled with PPS and interviewed. All respondents in the qualitative data collection process were purposively selected at the community, CSOs, and ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs)/implementing partner's levels to reflect that those knowledgeable about the CUBS project had similar background characteristics as those of the intervention communities. Qualitative data collection employed focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KII), and group interviews. A total of 33 FGDs were conducted at the community level, nine group interviews conducted among CSOs staff, and five KII among MDAs/CUBS regional staff.

**Findings:** Key factors influencing FVC vulnerability include poverty, desire or pressure to meet-up with peers, ignorance/lack of information about HIV and AIDS, and early exposure to sexual activity. Lack of parental care, lack of self-esteem, poor awareness and information about HIV and AIDS, culture of polygamy, and illiteracy were additional influencers.

Evidence at the community level corroborating quantitative findings suggest that FVC and their caregivers in the intervention received information on the importance of education, and some were provided with schooling materials including uniforms, textbooks, and school bags at the beginning of the program. Also, beneficiaries reported that the CUBS project (at the later part) supported schools with furniture and other items to enable FVC attend school.

In the area of reproductive health, beneficiaries reported that HIV and AIDS awareness, and knowledge of ways of preventing the disease including modes of transmission helped FVC to avoid risky behaviors. Other vital information which helped FVC to change attitudes and behavior related to sanitation and personal hygiene, self-confidence, goal setting, and negative effects of drug abuse among others.

On IGA, beneficiaries reported that they were trained on how to engage in a business venture such as farming and petty trading, and were helped with how to obtain loans to strengthen their business.

**Conclusion and recommendation:** On the whole, the research found that three areas of intervention – education, reproductive health, and IGA – had substantial impact on FVC lives in the intervention communities. Most impactful was the effect of the reproductive health strategies which had more immediate and short-term effects on the FVC. The OR provided platforms for integrating evidence-based information into the programming process which resulted in changes and fine-tuning of project work plans and activities.

Future FVC programming should incorporate the three strategies while more focus should be given to reproductive health to enable the FVC focus on their education and other future goals without disruptions. OR should be embedded into all future projects to serve as insurance against failures, inept programming, and to increase desired impact on target population and communities.

## VI. Sustaining and Expanding the Project Impact

CUBS' exit strategy was focused on sustained implementation of vulnerable children's programming/activities beyond the life of the project. This was based on effective and integrated systems, improved strategies, improved mechanisms of implementation, and capacity built at various levels (national, state and local agencies; communities; community-based organizations; and providers), in support of the NPA. Capacity building and other elements ensuring sustainability of the project started from the first year of program implementation and continued through the life of the project, enabling the stakeholders to carry out activities within the project framework and sustain them beyond the end of the project. With increasing transition of responsibilities to the key state/local stakeholders, the project ensured that by CUBS' conclusion, the project team had transferred all required skills, as well as responsibilities for continuing vulnerable children-related activities to committed individuals and organizations at the state and local levels. Specifically, the CUBS project:

- **Institutionalized effective systems and improved mechanisms to support project implementation at the state and local levels.** By the end of the project, CUBS transferred the responsibility for its various activities that are aimed at supporting and strengthening the implementation of the NPA for vulnerable children to the State Ministries of Women Affairs in 11 CUBS-supported states. A phased-in approach was developed and implemented to ensure transition of responsibilities to SMWASD. CUBS held a series of meetings with the SMWA and other key stakeholders to develop a plan for transferring the responsibilities for various interventions, to ensure sustained vulnerable children program implementation in the states. CUBS also worked with the state agencies on incorporating these activities in the SPAs.
- **Facilitated the formation and institutionalization of TWGs.** The capacity of key stakeholders that was built at the national/state and local agency levels enabled the formation of TWGs that direct and guide the state and local agencies to provide more effective management of various aspects of vulnerable children programming beyond the life of the project. The TWGs have facilitated the adaptation of the NPA into SPAs, guided the implementation of improved policies and procedures for vulnerable children's program implementation, effective coordination of services, improved monitoring and evaluation of vulnerable children activities, development and implementation of effective referrals systems. By the end of the project, through the TWGs, the state and local agencies had the capacity to lead and manage programs, provide effective supervision, work with communities to mobilize support for vulnerable children activities and provide integrated response to their needs, and developing state-level forums to advocate for vulnerable children issues

- **Built capacity of CSOs in program management.** By the end of the program, the 38 CSOs and provider organizations had skills to manage their programs effectively and use/apply MSH tools to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of their programs. The project also built their skills in grant management that will allow for management of other grants beyond the life of CUBS. The small grants program helped these organizations to strengthen their systems and foster innovative approaches that were used within the framework of the project and beyond. Through the life of project, CUBS encouraged and mentored CSOs and other community based structures to write proposals and look for additional funding opportunities, as well as obtain increased support from the state and national governments. In the end, all 38 CSOs had two grants or more, additional to the CUBS small grant.
- **Built capacity of service providers to deliver quality services.** At the end of the project, CUBS left behind a cadre of 15,000 trained caregivers in clinical and social support programs.
- **Built community responsibility for vulnerable children and ownership of the programs that address their issues.** Capacity building efforts (education programs, developing advocacy/communication skills, ongoing technical support) improved communities' understanding of vulnerable children's issues, enabled communities and the children themselves to advocate for their needs, addressed stigma and gender issues, and helped communities manage their resources more effectively. These skills enabled communities to develop an effective response to vulnerable children's issues within the framework of the CUBS project, as well as beyond the project completion. CUBS also helped communities and governments to introduce CPCs, structures that facilitated support for vulnerable children.

## VII. Challenges, Lessons Learned, Conclusion and Recommendations

### Challenges

During the five years of project implementation, CUBS witnessed some low moments for vulnerable children and duty bearers in the sector, specifically, the floods of July and August 2012 that submerged several communities in some states, including Bayelsa and Rivers. The floods displaced some communities and made several others inaccessible. This affected community level activities and retention rates due to displacement of families and children. These unfortunate incidents provided platforms for collaboration between partners in the affected states. For example, UNICEF/Child Protection Network (CPN) and the Bayelsa state TWG conducted a rapid assessment of the flooded areas, especially the status of children in affected communities across the state. The assessment team included members from two of CUBS' CSO partners, Kan Development Foundation and Girl Child Empowerment and Reproductive Health Initiative (GREP), who conducted the exercise in two CUBS focal communities. The assessment report was shared with Bayelsa State government and UNICEF/CPN. The findings indicated that all farmlands and crops were destroyed, and that there was an outbreak of water borne diseases in the most of the affected communities, as both children and adults drank from polluted water. A number of deaths were recorded among children as the number of medical personnel in the few available health centers was inadequate. Government and donor partners used the report to guide emergency response in the flooded communities.

Community and government ownership are the cornerstone of project sustainability. While the project had high acceptance and buy in at the community level, this was not the case at the state level. This was usually demonstrated as change in the leadership and incessant transfers of focal persons who had been trained at the SMWASD. Inadequate political will and bureaucracy by most states for vulnerable children's programming slowed down project interventions and thus limited their effect. However, CUBS

continued to educate and advocate at the state level on the need for states to assume the leadership of vulnerable children's program coordination, as well as empowered them to do so. The project also shared documents and information with groups as a whole, rather than to individuals. This was so that when a member of the group was moved, other group members who are in the know can continue with the activity.

Security was an issue in many communities, mostly in the northern part of the country but in some of the southern parts as well. One example was the political crisis in the Isialla Mbano LGA in Imo state that made it difficult to form the LGA TWG. The whole country came to a standstill in January 2012 during the fuel subsidy civil strife. The Boko Haram insurgencies disrupted activities in Gombe and Taraba states. MSH had to shut down the office in Ekiti during the 2011 and 2014 elections. These crises and insecurities often slowed down and disrupted work and made monitoring and supervision difficult. However, CUBS found creative ways to ensure quality service delivery. Apart from working with community-based CSOs and volunteers, CUBS also used mobile phones to provide needed support to service providers and CPCs in these communities. Through frontline sms, the project team continued to provide information to vulnerable children, caregivers, CPC members, CSOs, and SMWASD staff.

A major strategy that the CUBS project used to address vulnerability in families was HES. There was an overwhelming demand for HES support from vulnerable children's caregivers in all of the project-supported states. CUBS recognized that a key sustainability strategy for children's support hinged on providing this service. Because resources for HES were limited, this situation provided an opportunity for CUBS to exercise creative problem-solving to bridge the resource gap. CUBS conducted a needs assessment prior to initiating the HES intervention, which helped to prioritize beneficiaries based on pre-established criteria. Only the most vulnerable families received HES support. Additionally, CUBS leveraged and linked local resources for HES training, microcredit, and grants.

CUBS' success in improving the quality of life of its beneficiaries ended up creating high expectations from community leaders and caregivers in the project focus states, resulting in demands for CUBS to enroll more children into the program and empower more caregivers with skill acquisition and income generating materials. However, the project's support to the caregivers, CPCs, TWGs and the block grants was designed to ensure that more vulnerable families will continue to be reached long after the end of the project.

### **Lessons Learned**

**Investing in community-centered infrastructure while expanding government services at the community level ensures sustainable care and support for vulnerable children:** CUBS worked through 38 CSOs and formed 116 child protection committees in the communities of project coverage. Following training in leadership and management as well as in resource mobilization which incorporated real-world experiences, the CPCs owned the project and became the eyes, ears, and legs of the project in the community. They used those skills to mobilize community level support, advocate for provision of services and resources at the community level from local governments and partners, integrate vulnerable children resources, and ensure services were provided to these children. This approach was sustainable since the CSOs lived with these children in their communities. CUBS' project staff have learned that working through existing and acceptable community structures is key to sustainability.

**Building government capacity:** Strengthening the government structure for leadership and coordination is vital to continuity. Eleven (11) desk officers from all states were trained by CUBS to develop capacities in vulnerable children coordination, M&E, and other areas, and as a result, these desk offers are now

coordinating and managing their own state programs. With minimal support, they have adapted their state priority agenda on vulnerable children and some states now have a budget line for vulnerable children which will assure the continued implementation of the NPA.

The government can be slow, and may not always understand what's required of them; however, when development practitioners patiently work with government and respect its policies and procedures, it leads to state and eventually country ownership of and institutionalization of the program.

**Institutionalized documentation at all levels:** Agreeing with an M&E slogan which says that what is not documented is not done, CUBS instituted documentation as an integral part of the project from the beginning and now all 38 CSOs have proper records in various technical areas such as vulnerable children's programming, as well as in M&E, finance, and HR. In addition, the SMWASD now reports more frequently to FMWASD following documentation support from CUBS. The project also has a huge repository of data for further analysis that can inform future implementation approaches for stakeholders.

**Performance based management of the grantees was very crucial for improved systems recorded by CUBS:** CUBS was the first MSH project in Nigeria to implement a small grants program. The project learned that using a performance based management approach for CSOs, particularly of the small grants program, is efficient and effective. This approach triggered warning signs when corrective action was necessary. It compared actual performance to desired performance (targets assigned) and identified gaps or root causes of non-performance, which helped CUBS plan CSOs and responsible persons accountable for their performance and deliverables of agreed upon-bench marks.

**Promoted transparency and accountability as key to healthy partnerships among stakeholders which harnessed great success:** The project reached out to diversify stakeholders and obtain technical assistance which yielded positive results. Through quarterly coordination meetings, USAID and CUBS ensured that all parties knew what was expected of them, worked with various stakeholders to identify gaps, what worked well, and areas that needed improvement. This ensured efficient use of resources, eliminated duplication of efforts, and largely bridged gaps of uncoordinated intervention in CUBS' focus states among its many partners. Additionally, CUBS developed a networking register that has been made available to all stakeholders with list of available community resources and contact information for services. CUBS organized quarterly coordination meetings which later became the responsibility of the local CSOs.

## **Conclusion**

The bottom-up approach to programming for OVC is an approach that works. In implementing the CUBS project, the team found that community-led and community-centered mobilization better meets the direct, short-term needs of vulnerable children, while also laying the foundation for long-term sustainability of the response. Fusing the implementing partners' planning, logistical, and monitoring/evaluation systems with successful community-grown OVC initiatives led by women, men, and children enabled CUBS to reach a greater number of vulnerable households with services. The project team actively aligned itself and partnered with community-based leadership and learned first-hand that the extensive needs of vulnerable children are best met by reinforcing, supporting, and expanding existing community structures and using community-based workers to coordinate support and services to households, caregivers, orphans, and other children most in need.

## **Recommendations**

Interventions dedicated to improving the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children require relatively long periods of time to produce significant and stable results. Therefore continued strategic investments by community members and the government in programs for vulnerable children, as well as assistance from donor partners, are necessary to achieve positive changes.

CUBS supported the implementation of the National M&E plan by ensuring that the national data collection tools were used at all levels and supported the decentralization of NOMIS. However, staff and volunteers reported that the forms were too many and not user friendly. There is a need to consolidate and harmonize forms and make them electronic to better enable them to feed directly into the DHIS, which is the nationally accepted database.

Compensating family and community volunteer caregivers is one way of securing the growth of programs and guaranteeing vulnerable children's access to basic essential services such as food, healthcare, and education. Job creation through financial compensation for currently unpaid female heads of household and volunteer labor at the community level is essential to building a sustainable vulnerable children's response.

The HES initiative focused on economically empowering female heads of vulnerable children's households (caregivers) to increase their financial decision-making power. CUBS found that strengthening the household economy mitigated the burden of care for vulnerable children placed on female caregivers, increased their status in the community, and improved the self-esteem of the children and reduced their vulnerability. In line with national international guidelines, CUBS recommends this family-centered HES approach be implemented for holistic OVC programs right from the start of projects.

The key to sustainability is working with existing and acceptable community structures. The project recommends the continuing engagement of strengthened CSOs, TWGs, and child protection committees to advocate for and provide life-saving services and support to vulnerable families in CUBS states including Kebbi, Gombe, Taraba, Ekiti, Enugu, Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom, where the Local OVC Partner Initiative in Nigeria will not have coverage.

## VIII. Annexes

### Annex 1: Core Project Indicators and Results

Annual Data Achievement on Intermediate Results									
Indicator	Indicator Description	Life of Project Target	Project Year 1	Project Year 2	Project Year 3	Project Year 4	Project Year 5	Total achieved over life of Project	% of Target achieved
<b>Results #1: Increased Access to 6+1 Services for OVC and Caregivers</b>									
	% of children with improved well-being using the child status index (CSI)	90%				64%	64%	64%	
1.1	# of eligible clients (OVC) provided with a minimum of one care	50,000	11,554	20,856	38,587	48,521	53,111	53,111	106%
	Newly enrolled		11,554	11,089	18,689	11,074	4,518	56,906	
	Number Dropped/Graduated/died?		2	425	820	3354	4013	4013	
	Education		889	2648	5724	10,658	8,082	28,001	
	Health		1528	10192	12916	27309	30923	30,923	
	Psychosocial support		11554	20856	36770	42,944	49,628	49,628	
	Shelter		340	2486	2438	1836	2,851	9,951	
	Protection		197	1980	10252	4,499	4,795	21,723	

	Nutrition		67	1110	3782	16,354	18,610	39,924	
	Economic Strengthening		2	5	506	230	274	1,017	
1.3	# of caregivers trained in caring for OVC	12,500	2640	4441	3971	5832	202	17086	140%
1.4	# of OVC referred for clinical services			511	286	1316	441	2,554	

**Result #2: Strengthened Capacities of National and State Governments for Coordination**

2.1	# of AIDSTAR states with comprehensive OVC plans	11	0	2	2	2	10	10	91%
2.2	# of technical working groups coordinating the delivery of social services for vulnerable children at the state and LGA levels <sup>2</sup>	11 states/(33LGAs)	0	3/11 LGAs	3/11 LGAs	11/36 LGAs	10/36 LGAs	10/36 LGAs	91%
2.3	# of AIDSTAR states with existing, functional OVC referral systems	11	0	9	9	9	10	10/36 LGAs	91%
2.4	# of persons from state ministries and LGAs trained in leadership and management	30	0	32	67	131	39	170	

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

2.5	# of persons who successfully completed an in-service training in strategic information including data collection, collation, analysis, and use			108	85	54	75	129	
<b>Results #3: Strengthened Capacity of Communities to Better Protect and Care for OVC</b>									
3.1	# of child protection committees (CPCs) coordinating the protection of vulnerable children at the community level		0	16	38	116	116	116	
3.2	# of CSOs that refer OVC using the existing, functional state referral systems		0	9	9	38	38	38	
<b>Results #4: Reduced Vulnerability status of girl child and women</b>									
4	% of households with reduced vulnerability of female OVC and female heads of households		0			0	64%	64%	

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	6,000	0	1730	5676	6790	6,384	20,580	
4.2	# of female child-headed household supported by the OVC program		0	72	20	20	20	132	
4.3	# of programs that address protection issues for female OVC and caregivers		0	16	38	38	38	100%	
<b>Result #5: Strengthened systems for documenting &amp; disseminating evidence best practice</b>									
5.1	# of persons trained in the use of the CSI		0	105	142	54	75	376	
5.2	# of service sites/delivery points that received a data quality assurance (DQA) visit		0	39	38	37	38	38	
5.3	# of CSOs that provided data that was complete, on a time, and based on the national		0	39	38	38	38	38	

	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan for OVCs								
5.4	% of service sites/delivery points that received a quality assurance (QA) visit		0	100	100	100	100	100%	

## Annex 2: List of Project Materials Developed

Type of Material	Title
<b>PROGRESS REPORTS</b>	
Quarterly Reports	Quarterly Report , 2010 Quarter 1
	Quarterly Report , 2010 Quarter 2
	Quarterly Report , 2010 Quarter 3
	Quarterly Report , 2010 Quarter 4
	Quarterly Report , 2011 Quarter 1
	Quarterly Report , 2011 Quarter 2
	Quarterly Report , 2011 Quarter 3
	Quarterly Report , 2011 Quarter 4
	Quarterly Report , 2012 Quarter 1
	Quarterly Report , 2012 Quarter 2
	Quarterly Report , 2012 Quarter 3
	Quarterly Report , 2012 Quarter 4
	Quarterly Report , 2013 Quarter 1
	Quarterly Report , 2013 Quarter 2
	Quarterly Report , 2013 Quarter 3
	Quarterly Report , 2013 Quarter 4
	Quarterly Report , 2014 Quarter 1
	Quarterly Report , 2014 Quarter 2
	Quarterly Report , 2014 Quarter 3
Annual Reports	Annual Report, Project Year 1, 2010
	Annual Report, Project Year 2, 2011
	Annual Report, Project Year 3, 2012
	Annual Report, Project Year 4, 2013
	Annual Report, Project Year 5, 2014
End of Project Report	End of Project Report, 2010-2014
Evaluation	Mid-term Evaluation of Community-Based Support for OVC in Nigeria (CUBS) (2012)
<b>TECHNICAL REPORTS</b>	
Abstracts	Economic Strengthening for Female Household Heads: An Integrated Approach to Improving OVC Care and Well-being in Nigeria (2011)
	Using Organizational Capacity Building to Ensure the Sustainability of Community-based Interventions for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the CUBS project in Nigeria (2014)
	Mobile Technology Equips Community-based Volunteers to Record and Report High-Quality, Timely Data on Service Delivery to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (2014)
	Excel-Based Data Collection Tools Inform OVC Programming in Nigeria (2014)
Posters	Using Organizational Capacity Building to Ensure the Sustainability of

	Community-Based Interventions for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Lessons from the CUBS project in Nigeria (2014)
	Mobile Technology Equips Community-Based Volunteers to Record and Report High-Quality, Timely Data on Service Delivery to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (2014)
Briefs	Household Economic Strengthening: Sustainable Solutions for Vulnerable Children (2014)
	It Takes a Village: Mobilizing Communities to Support Nigeria's Most Vulnerable Children (2014)
	Improving Care for Thousands of Vulnerable Children in Ekiti State, Nigeria (2014)
	Grassroots to Government: Gender-based Solutions for Nigerian Women (2014)
	Organizational Development: Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations to Provide Care for Vulnerable Children (2014)
	Supporting Nigerian Children: Community-Based Solutions Bring Hope (2014)
	Social Welfare System Strengthening: Improving OVC Support Systems in Nigeria (2014)
Reports	Developing a Sustainable Educational Strategy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (2011)
	Developing a Program Framework, Approach and Activities to Address the Vulnerability of Girls, Young Women, and Female-Headed Households within the Context of OVC Service Delivery and HIV Risk Reduction (2010)
	Assessment of the Organizational Development Interventions Implemented by the Community-Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (CUBS) Project (2014)
	CUBS Project Response to Shrine Enslavement in Uhunowerre Community (2014)
Workplans	Year 1 Workplan
	Year 2 Workplan
	Year 3 Workplan
	Year 4 Workplan
	Year 5 Workplan
Performance Monitoring Plan	Draft and Final PMP
Videos	CUBS 3-Minute Video (2014)
	CUBS 8-Minute Video (2014)