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USAID
ASSIST PROJECT
*Applying Science to Strengthen
and Improve Systems*

USAID ASSIST Project

Nigeria Country Report FY14

Cooperative Agreement Number:

AID-OAA-A-12-00101

Performance Period:

October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014

DECEMBER 2014

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DISCLAIMER

This country report was authored by University Research Co., LLC (URC). The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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For more information on the work of the USAID ASSIST Project, please visit www.usaidassist.org or write assist-info@urc-chs.com.

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ASSIST	USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems Project
CBO	Community-based organization
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FMWASD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
FY	Fiscal year
HCI	USAID Health Care Improvement Project
IP	Implementing partners
LGA	Local government authority
MOU	Memoranda of understanding
MWASD	Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
QI	Quality improvement
SCI	Save the Children International
SMILE	Sustainable Mechanisms for Improving Livelihoods and Household Empowerment
STEER	Systems Transformed for Empowered Action and Enabling Responses for Vulnerable Children and Families
UGM	Umbrella Grants Mechanism
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

1 Introduction

Since 2009, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) in coordination with the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Nigeria, has been working to improve the quality of vulnerable children services by developing the national vulnerable children service standards. Since Fiscal Year 2011 (FY11), the USAID Health Care Improvement Project (HCI) has worked in Nigeria to support the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development at the federal, state, and local government levels to develop and pilot standards for vulnerable children services using quality improvement methodologies. In FY12, the draft standards were reviewed by various stakeholders and a final draft was developed. HCI facilitated the “training of coaches” to support piloting the standards. In FY13, the USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project piloted the final draft vulnerable children service standards using improvement science in 10 states, 27 local government areas, and 31 communities with 4,572 vulnerable children. This resulted in the adoption of the national service standards and improvement methodologies as the nationally accepted sustainable approach for vulnerable children’s programming in Nigeria. The standards provide a uniform, evidence-based and results-oriented approach for service providers in Nigeria to ensure that all children reach their full developmental potential through the provision of quality care and support services. Desired outcomes of services in the seven core areas are defined within the standards, and indicators to measure outcomes are recommended. They also provide a basis for training and supervising service providers.

In FY14, ASSIST developed memoranda of understanding (MOU) with USAID Nigeria’s main implementing partners (IPs), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Save the Children International (SCI), to build their capacity to ensure high-quality delivery of the standards in 10 states of Nigeria. CRS is implementing the Sustainable Mechanisms for Improving Livelihoods and Household Empowerment (SMILE) Project, and SCI is implementing the Systems Transformed for Empowered Action and Enabling Responses for Vulnerable Children and Families (STEER) Project, both in close cooperation with the FMWASD. ASSIST trained management staff from both organizations and inaugurated 10 state improvement teams to use the national standards.

In August 2014, ASSIST officially handed over the national standards to the FMWASD. With the completion of the standards’ development, the ASSIST Nigeria office closed on August 31, 2014. FMWASD will now lead the process of standards implementation and quality improvement. USAID umbrella projects STEER and SMILE are assumed to have the capacity for continuing quality improvement (QI) activities.

Scale of USAID ASSIST’s work in Nigeria



FMWASD, 2 IPs



100 communities



200,000 out of 2.5 million vulnerable children

 **HIV/AIDS (including vulnerable children)**

2 Program Overview

Activities	What are we trying to accomplish?	At what scale?	Improvement Activity	Activity
1. Improve the quality of vulnerable children services in Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve health, education, psychosocial support, child protection, nutrition and food security and economic strengthening services for vulnerable children and their caregivers in 10 states in Nigeria by September 2014 	<p><u>States:</u> 10 out of 36 states: Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, Edo, Kogi, Benue, and Nasawara</p> <p><u>Implementing partners:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Save the Children/STEER Project - Catholic Relief Services/SMILE Project <p><u>Local government area:</u> 28 out of 208 LGAs</p> <p><u>Communities:</u> 100 civil society organizations</p> <p><u>Target population</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 200,000 vulnerable children - 9 State MWASD 		X

3 Key Activities and Accomplishments

Activity 1. Improve the quality of vulnerable children services in Nigeria

BACKGROUND

The USAID ASSIST Project began implementing activities in Nigeria in October 2012, building on the activities carried out under HCI since 2011. ASSIST provided technical assistance to develop the capacity of civil society, local governments, and state governments under the Umbrella Grants Mechanism (UGM). The UGM is a USAID-funded mechanism being implemented by Catholic Relief Services' SMILE Project, Save the Children International's STEER project, FMWASD, and local implementing partners to improve the quality of care and support services for vulnerable children and their caregivers in 10 states (Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, Edo, Kogi, Benue, Federal Capital Territory, and Nasawara).

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Trained 15 management staff of the CRS SMILE project team and 18 management staff of the SCI STEER project team on improvement science and its application on program implementation for vulnerable children in Nigeria (Q1).** The three-day training covered improvement methodology, the plan-do-study-act cycle, learning sessions, and monitoring progress.
- **Drafted Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children International for partnership in the SMILE and STEER projects (Q1).** The MOUs define the roles that each partner will play in building the capacity of UGM sub-grantees, who are community-based organizations (CBOs) selected by SCI and CRS.
- **Trained state technical working groups on vulnerable children on improvement methodology and how to use the national vulnerable children standards (Q2).** Participants were trained on the four major steps of improvement methodology through participatory training among three teams. At the end of each exercise, teams made presentations on what they planned to work on. The team also elected their officials and agreed on the composition of the local government authority (LGA) improvement team, the community improvement team, and learning session invitees.
- **Trained and inaugurated state improvement teams** in Edo, Benue, Nasarawa, Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Plateau. Forty-seven CBO staff (22 supported by SMILE and 25 supported by STEER) and 29 LGA staff of Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau, and Sokoto states were trained on improvement science and how to use the final draft of the national service standards for vulnerable children (Q1-2).
- **Finalized knowledge products:** In July 2014, ASSIST finalized a number of products to support

improvement teams and communities to use the standards at their level, based on the piloting experience.

- **The National Standards for Improving the Lives of Vulnerable Children in Nigeria, developed by the FMWASD and implementing partners in Nigeria, with technical assistance from ASSIST, were officially handed over in a ceremony on August 27, 2014.** FMWASD's Permanent Secretary, Dr. Habiba Mudu Lawal, and the Director of Child Development, Mrs. Rabi Galadima, were joined by representatives from USAID, including Susan Coleman, Director of HIV and AIDS; Division Leader for Community Programs Joanna Nwosu; Vulnerable Children team leader Doreen Magajid; and Pamela Gado, the Agreement Officer's Technical Representative. The National Standards identify seven core areas that must be included in the comprehensive care and support of vulnerable children: health, food security and nutrition, education, legal protection, psychosocial support, shelter and care, and household economic strengthening. The standards provide a uniform, evidence-based and results-oriented approach for service providers in Nigeria to ensure that all children reach their full developmental potential through the provision of quality care and support services. Desired outcomes of services in the seven core areas are defined within the standards, and indicators to measure outcomes are recommended. They also provide a basis for training and supervising service providers.
- **The ASSIST Nigeria office was closed as of August 31, 2014, and all staff released from duty.** Conversations with Nigeria are ongoing to provide technical assistance to three new Local Partner Initiatives in 2015.

SPREAD OF IMPROVEMENT

- Community QI teams shared results, lessons learned, and best practices from the pilot with other IP supported by the United States Government (USG), CBOs, and communities that did not pilot the standards in all the 36 states and FCT.
- The endorsed service standards are being disseminated to all State Ministries of Women Affairs and USG-funded implementing partners in 36 states and Abuja.

4 Sustainability and Institutionalization

The National Standards have been adopted as a government document to be used by all vulnerable children service providers in the country. The project's major achievements in sustainability and institutionalization were:

- **The establishment of quality improvement teams at the community and state levels within piloting communities and their respective states.** These QI teams provided the structure to sustain and institutionalize the use of a standards-based improvement approach.
- **The establishment of a six-person improvement team at the FMWASD.** The role of this team is to ensure that all community-based organizations in Nigeria use the National Standards for Improving the Quality of Vulnerable Children Services in the provision of services to vulnerable children.
- **The formation of a National Quality Improvement Task Force for Vulnerable Children composed of all the implementing partners that participated in the pilot.** The role of the task force is to lead, coordinate, and guide policy makers and implementing partners in improving quality of programs tailored to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on children and families by developing a strategic implementation plan for ongoing improvement.
- **Establishment of state improvement units.** At the state level, ASSIST facilitated the establishment of improvement units in all 10 assisted states.

5 Knowledge Management Products and Activities

A number of knowledge products were produced this year and distributed locally, including:

- **National Standards for Improving the Quality of Life of Vulnerable Children in Nigeria** in two versions: one complete with photos and one simplified version for easy printing. <https://usaidassist.org/resources/national-standards-improving-quality-life-vulnerable-children-nigeria>
- **Two cartoons that illustrate the improvement process at the community level:** Applying a standards-based improvement approach to vulnerable children programming in Nigeria: Jane's story

and Yaro's story. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/applying-standards-based-improvement-approach-vulnerable-children-programming-nigeria-jane>

- **Nigeria Community Booklet National Standards for Improving the Quality of Life of Vulnerable Children in Nigeria**, an illustrated booklet that asks questions of community members to aid in identifying children's needs, available in English and four local languages: Hausa, Pidgin, Yoruba, and Igbo. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/national-standards-improving-quality-life-vulnerable-children-nigeria-community-job-aid>
- **Guide for Applying Improvement Methods to Implement the National Standards for Improving the Quality of Life of Vulnerable Children in Nigeria** to assist improvement teams. <https://usaidassist.org/resources/community-improvement-guide-and-team-journal>
- **Community Improvement Team Journal** for improvement teams' use in planning and testing changes. <https://usaidassist.org/resources/community-improvement-guide-and-team-journal>
- **National Standards for Improving the Quality of Life of Vulnerable Children in Nigeria: Community Job Aid**. This document contains the seven service areas and is in simplified English for use at the community level. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/national-standards-improving-quality-life-vulnerable-children-nigeria-community-job-aid>

6 Research and Evaluation Activities

In FY13, the ASSIST headquarters research team worked with the Nigeria team to develop an improvement measurement plan. During FY14, headquarters staff provided input on the plan and recommended it be field tested. The nature of the work in Nigeria changed during the year, however, and the site-level improvement activities were not implemented; thus the testing of the measurement plan was canceled.

7 Directions for FY15

The ASSIST/Nigeria office was closed as of August 31, 2014, and all staff released from duty. Conversations with Nigeria USAID mission are ongoing to provide technical assistance to three new Local Partner Initiatives, beginning in 2015.

**USAID APPLYING SCIENCE TO STRENGTHEN
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