

Technical Brief

Nigeria CUBS

It Takes a Village: Mobilizing Communities to Support Nigeria's Most Vulnerable Children

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Nigeria Community-Based support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CUBS)
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TECHNICAL BRIEF: Community-Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CUBS)

It Takes a Village: Mobilizing Communities to Support Nigeria's Most Vulnerable Children

Launched in 2009, and funded by the President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Community-Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CUBS) project was designed to support the Government of Nigeria's National Priority Agenda for a coordinated approach to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Implemented by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in partnership with Africare, the five-year project worked in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) and its corresponding state ministries in 11 states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kebbi, Rivers, Sokoto, and Taraba.



Photo by Jessica Charles

This technical brief explores how CUBS supported the creation of child protection committees throughout the 11 states to improve the well-being of vulnerable children in their local communities.

Waning Social Support Structures

Nigeria is home to more than 17.5 million orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) who struggle daily to access food, shelter, education, care, and support. In recent years, the community and family networks that traditionally support these children have been eroded by the nation's high HIV prevalence, widespread poverty, and destructive political conflict. Existing social support systems are severely limited by insufficient funding and resources as well as inadequate staff capacity. Without family, community, or government support, one million Nigerian children die each year before their fifth birthday. Those that survive often do so in dire conditions.

Recruiting and Training Community Leaders

To mobilize communities to support Nigeria's most vulnerable children, CUBS worked with 38 civil society organizations (CSOs) to form child protection committees (CPCs) throughout the 11 project states. Each CSO recruited 10 to 15 leaders from traditional ruling councils, landlord associations, religious groups, and market associations to form their committees.

"CUBS is really taking care of our children. They are placing the children in school, giving them educational materials, and providing free medical treatment. This should not stop."

~ Village chief

CUBS then trained these leaders in advocacy, leadership, community and resource mobilization, child protection, and OVC needs, working with the FMWASD, UNICEF, and the Association of Vulnerable Children Networks in Nigeria (AONN). Within a few weeks of their first meetings, the CPC members began:

- Identifying vulnerable children in their communities
- Conducting home visits to assess the children's well-being
- Raising funds and donations for OVC from community members
- Referring cases of child abuse to social workers and legal authorities
- Facilitating home renovations for impoverished families without adequate shelter

CPCs in Action

In just five years, CUBS and the CSOs established 116 CPCs. These committees have raised funds to pay school tuition for OVC and advocated for health centers to waive service fees for vulnerable children. The committees have also facilitated and organized vocational skills training programs and secured small business start-up grants to enhance the earning capacity of more than 16,000 OVC caregivers and adolescent OVC.

Led by their CPCs, many communities have become more involved in mitigating child-related problems using their own resources. The CPCs in Rivers State facilitated a donation of 5,000,000 naira (\$31,250) from the Niger Delta Development Commission to Perpetual Succor for Women and Children, a former CSO partner, to send two children with heart defects to India for treatment. Both children have returned from India and are fully recovered.

“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

Child Protection Committee Provides Children with Food, Education, Clothing, and Medicine



Photo by Jessica Charles

Dumbi community in Sokoto State, Nigeria is home to thousands of AIDS orphans and vulnerable children who struggle to access food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. In recent years, a growing number of children from Dumbi have started begging for money along the roadside, desperate to earn a small income.

In 2012, CUBS began working in Dumbi to mobilize support for OVC. The team educated the community about vulnerable children's needs and brainstormed ways to support them. CUBS also visited state and community leaders to create awareness about OVC's needs, risks, and ways to reduce those risks. These efforts inspired community members to form a CPC. This committee now works with local leaders to address the needs of vulnerable children. In December 2012, the CPC established a community food bank for these children and the village chief began setting aside a portion of the community's produce for OVC after every harvest.

More recently, the CPC solicited donations from wealthy community members and used these funds to purchase school materials and medicine for 150 vulnerable children. At the CPC's request, the Zonal Education Office and the State Ministry of Education waived school fees for the children.

"Before the CUBS intervention, we found it difficult to feed [the children and], at times, [they] went to bed without eating. But since the intervention, they have been giving us food and distributing clothes to the children during celebrations. They even bought medicine for my child when he was sick and check up on us all the time," said a caregiver in Dumbi.



Child Abuse Solutions

In partnership with UNICEF and Nigeria's Child Protection Network, CUBS trained CPC members, CSO staff, law enforcement personnel, and judiciary members to identify and address cases of physical and sexual abuse against children. Trainees learned how to provide timely support, make service referrals, and deal with cases in a manner that does not further victimize the child. All 116 CPCs now have partnerships with community-based law enforcement agents and are actively engaged in the early detection and mitigation of child abuse cases.

CPC Members as Community Role Models

In Rivers, Bayelsa, Imo, and Gombe states, CPC members became role models for their communities by opening their homes to families with OVC that had been evicted from their residences or displaced due to floods in 2012. These acts of charity have increased community awareness about the needs of vulnerable children and their families and inspired other community members to participate in CPC activities.

Select Achievements of Child Protection Committees

- Helped more than 4,000 OVC obtain school tuition waivers
- Helped OVC receive free clinic services
- Prosecuted six people for sexual abuse of OVC
- Paid school examination fees
- Provided legal protection to OVC suffering from sexual or physical abuse
- Funded social gatherings for OVC
- Raised in-kind donations, such as clothes and educational materials
- Intervened in cases of child abuse and child labor
- Monitored OVC well-being by conducting school and home visits
- Provided nutritional support to OVC
- Successfully advocated for prevention of female genital mutilation
- Helped teachers form an OVC support committee, whose members make contributions to fund school materials for OVC



Photo by Jessica Charles

Benefits of the CPC Model

Over the project lifetime, CUBS and the CSOs established 116 CPCs in 11 states (see Table 1 on the following page for an overview of the distribution of these committees). The CPC is a scalable, replicable model as it can easily be supported by local CSOs that are already in place within communities. In addition, the support of traditional leaders, community officials, religious leaders, and elders within the communities helps to build trust in these structures and furthers community engagement on a wider scale. By engaging the community on so many different levels, CPCs are able to have a true impact on the well-being of vulnerable children.

Table 1: Distribution of CPCs created during the CUBS project

State	No. of CPC	No. of CUBS-supported OVC
Akwa Ibom	10	6,383
Bayelsa	27	6,690
Delta	13	5,633
Ekiti	9	3,818
Enugu	9	4,874
Gombe	6	4,462
Imo	11	3,917
Kebbi	8	3,803
Rivers	11	4,854
Sokoto	1	1,351
Taraba	11	5,417
TOTAL	116	51,202

Maintaining Momentum

Although CUBS is closing in 2014, the project will leave behind 38 CSOs, 116 child protection committees, and thousands of community members who are equipped and inspired to care for OVC. These leaders now know how to identify OVC, refer them for care, address cases of abuse, and increase the economic capacity of their caregivers. Community-based stakeholders also now have the motivation and skills needed to advocate for OVC support from state agents, corporate institutions, and philanthropists. In years to come, the CPCs will increase their membership and resources and refine their strategies so they are able to reach more children with live-saving services and support.

Irene Abdou Photography



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