

Community Orientation Session in Nigeria Leads to Families Seeking Tuberculosis Treatment

Living in Angwan Wuje-lele—a suburban community in Lafia Local Government Area (LGA) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria—should have been an advantage to Alhassan Jubril, a local businessperson, because the community has a dedicated tuberculosis (TB) Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) treatment center. However, like most of the residents of the community, the father of three children was unaware of TB—one of the top 10 leading causes of death in low-income countries¹—or the appropriate healthcare-seeking behavior needed to prevent or treat it. This lack of awareness is not particular to Angwan Wuje-lele or Lafia; the knowledge of TB transmission, symptoms, and prevention is quite low across the country.² As such, the nation is among the top 14 countries with the highest TB burden of the disease.



Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria LGA Supervisor left, and Alhaji Alhassan Jubril, right, father to the three children who tested positive for TB. Photo credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

“The TB situation in Lafia LGA is fluctuating because most people are still in denial and will not want to come out for testing or treatment until the cough or sickness is very severe.”
— Maurazu Mohamed, Lafia LGA Tuberculosis and Leprosy Supervisor

Beginning in late 2019, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Breakthrough ACTION project began implementing a suite of intensive social and behavior change interventions in collaboration with service delivery partners and the National and State Tuberculosis, Leprosy, and Buruli Ulcer Control Programmes (N/STBLCPs) in Nigeria. These interventions included engaging audiences about TB through existing health programs and public service announcements across mass media, promoting the national hotline for TB and using social media to build awareness of the presence of DOT centers and highlight healthy TB-prevention and care-seeking behaviors. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria also carried out intensive community engagement activities, which

¹ World Health Organization. (2020, December 9). *The top 10 causes of death*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>

² World Health Organization. (2017). *Global tuberculosis report 2017*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565516>



Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria LGA Supervisor and Sample collector at Angwan Wuje-lele during Community Sensitization. Credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

includes community orientation sessions and motorized campaigns (moving vehicles spreading key messages at TB hot spots), including in Angwan Wuje-lele.

Alhassan attended one of the community orientation sessions in Angwan Wuje-lele in June 2022 and it dawned on him that his three children (aged between three and six years) might have been battling with TB for the past four months. According to Alhassan, apart from coughing, the family had been experiencing fever and body weakness, which they had tried to treat through various native medicines and concoctions that never really helped. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria community volunteers referred the family to the facility for TB tests, where they were all confirmed to be positive and since commenced treatment at the DOT center.

Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria reached over 100 persons like Alhassan during the community orientation session it held in Angwan Wuje-lele, which resulted in 54 persons receiving referrals for testing. Nine TB cases were confirmed, including Alhassan's three children. All the nine cases are currently being treated at the DOT center.

From October 2019 to the time of this writing, the project has directly reached over 1.7 million Nigerians through community engagement and supported the N/STBLCPs in detecting over 82,000 TB cases. This suite of interventions, including the direct community engagement activities, continue to promote key behavioral messages and contribute to case detection to reduce the number of avoidable deaths due to TB in Nigeria.

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