

Radio Campaign Leads to Nigerian Grandmother's Recovery from Tuberculosis

Iyiola Janet, a 62-year-old grandmother and school teacher, was forced to retire early because she could not walk. After many hospital visits and medical tests without a diagnosis, she gave up on medical treatment and concluded it was a spiritual problem. Her health continued to deteriorate until she could only move about with the aid of a wheelchair. One day, she turned on her battery-powered radio to Jamz FM, and the topic of discussion caught her interest. The speaker talked about different types of tuberculosis (TB) and its various symptoms. She realized some of the symptoms described were like what she was experiencing.

TB is a major public health problem in Nigeria. According to the 2022 World Health Organization (WHO) Global TB Report, Nigeria is ranked sixth globally and first in Africa for number of TB cases, with an estimated 467,000 cases in 2021.¹ One reason for this high number is people do not know about TB and/or what to do when they have TB. This is coupled with high levels of TB-related stigma and discrimination.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funds Breakthrough ACTION, a social and behavior change (SBC) project, to work in Nigeria to strengthen health producers' ability to develop human-angle health content, using SBC strategies to dispel myths and misconceptions about TB and address stigma and discrimination. The project also sponsors the airing of interactive programs on TB in the media, given the media's potential to reach many people with correct information and spark life-saving conversations. To do this, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria works with national and state TB programs to feature subject matter experts on various radio and television programs, like the one Mrs. Iyiola listened



Iyiola Janet, grandmother and teacher, now, recovering from TB of the spine. Photo credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

¹ World Health Organization. (2022). *Global tuberculosis report 2020*. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240013131>

to. The guest, Mrs. Oluyinka Ajayi, TB Local Government Supervisor collaborating with Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria, talked about different types of TB on Jamz FM in Oyo State. After listening to the program, Mrs. Iyiola requested that her family take her to Adaramagbo Primary Healthcare Center and ask to see Mrs. Ajayi. After a proper review and X-ray, Mrs. Iyiola was diagnosed with TB of the spine and commenced treatment. She is now able to stand and take a few steps.



Mrs. Oluyinka at the Jamz FM radio station. Photo credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

Mrs. Iyiola is grateful and hopes for an improved quality of life after her treatment. She says, “My health has improved since I started the medication. My advice to those not yet tested is to not play with their health and get tested as soon as possible.”

This approach is effective because community members trust the media to disseminate accurate health information. It also helps that they repeat messages and invite experts to break down topics. As such, media stations cover more ground and get the word out to audiences beyond Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria’s usual reach through its community engagement efforts.

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