



The German Leprosy and TB Relief Association, a GHAIN Partner Takes on the Main Killer of PLHAs in Sub-Saharan Africa

The German Leprosy and TB Relief Association is a humanitarian, non-governmental organization supporting the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme in Nigeria with drugs and equipment in 15 States of the Federation. In four of these states, GLRA is collaborating with GHAIN.

At the 2004 International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Nelson Mandela said “We can’t fight AIDS unless we do much more to fight tuberculosis, and it is time to match these words with urgent action in Africa on the two epidemics together.”

The Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) is heeding Nelson Mandela’s call to action. Funded

by the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the U.S. Agency for International Development, GHAIN is working through its partner the German Leprosy and TB Relief Association (GLRA) to spearhead Nigeria’s first national integrated treatment program for tuberculosis (TB) and HIV.

The number of Nigerians living with both TB and HIV is on the rise. According to the 2001 Sentinel Survey Report, HIV prevalence among TB patients rose from 2.2 percent in 1991 to 19.1 percent in 2000. Tuberculosis is the single greatest killer of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) in sub-Saharan Africa, making quality TB services critical. Because tuberculosis is highly contagious,



GLRA staff supervise the delivery of TB medicines and motorbikes at a GHAIN-supported facility



A patient receives DOTS at a GHAIN-supported site

successfully treating people with TB is important both to the individual and the community at large.

Tuberculosis is curable with treatment. However, if the disease is not treated properly, patients can develop drug-resistant TB. To prevent drug resistance in Nigeria, GLRA uses DOTS, which stands for directly observed treatment, short-course. Under DOTS, a health worker or other appropriately trained person supports a patient to complete his/her TB treatment. From August 2004 to July 2005, GHAIN's programs diagnosed and provided DOTS to 4,977 people with active TB in Cross River, Edo and Lagos states.

In Lagos, GLRA worked with the state Ministry of Health to integrate TB and HIV services by establishing a DOTS centre at the National Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), a well known HIV/AIDS treatment facility. Providing both TB and HIV services at NIMR allows PLHAs who are co-infected with TB to be identified and treated. Likewise, people who come to NIMR for TB treatment are provided access to HIV counselling, testing and treatment services. In Cross River and Edo, referral mechanisms are put in place to facilitate TB/HIV collaborative activities.



A Doctor facilitating a session during GLRA Induction Workshop in Cross River State

GLRA is working to phase in community-level DOTS, starting with a collaboration with a PLHA support group in Ogoja, Cross River. Training community members who are not medical personnel to administer DOTS is expected to improve patient retention and the demand for services and to generally strengthen the continuum of care for people in the project area.

“We have stepped up and mobilized both domestic and external resources for the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as malaria and TB. We have one of the most ambitious HIV/AIDS treatment strategies in the African continent.”

*— Olusegun Obasanjo,
President, Federal Republic of Nigeria*

To ensure coordination of activities, GLRA is also facilitating the formation of state TB/HIV coordinating bodies to define stakeholders' primary roles and monitor activities.

