

## LCI Health Fairs: Empowering Health Facilities to Showcase and Improve Services Uptake in the Communities

### Introduction

By the year 2014, many health facilities in the South West Region suffered from very low utilization of health services by the inhabitants of communities in which the health facilities operated. This was because; many inhabitants of the community were ignorant of the various health services their health center was offering. The results of such ignorance have been disastrous as many died from infectious diseases that could easily be treated at their health facility. The ideology for deserting health center



*Pregnant woman taking test in Wabane Health Fare*

services was a reality in the Ekondo Titi, Konye, Wabane, Bangem and Eyumojock Health Districts. Moreover, some of these ignorance about health services offered existed due to the community's lack of ownership of the health facility. This low participation has sometimes resulted in the abandonment of some health facilities. Good examples of such one-time abandoned health facilities are CMA Wabane, and Ajayukindip Integrated Health Center.

### LCI Intervention and the Concept of Health Fairs

With an in depth understanding of what the health facilities experienced as regards low services uptake and lack of ownership of the health facilities; the Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) Project conceived and instituted health fairs in their 5 implementing districts. A health fair is a large event during which health facilities showcase and sell their health services to the community in a bid to increase their services uptake subsequently at the health facility. To ensure sustainability of such events, the intention was for the LCI to organize and fund the activity for two years then hand it to the community who is going to continue implementing the activity with only technical assistance from the LCI whenever required. Below are some steps taken by the LCI to ensure the success of the health fairs.

- ◆ For a period of four years, the LCI Project intentionally empowered its five implementing health districts of the SWR technically and financially to organize health fairs so as to showcase or sell their services to the public for better utilization of their health facilities by the community. Through the financial empowerment, the health care providers now sensitized and mobilized their communities through their Dialogue Structures/Management Committees towards attending the health fairs which were organized at district levels.



*Visual Acuity Orientation during Health Fair*

◆ To ensure the attainment of objectives, the LCI purchased and made available some test kits to facilitate Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT). The test kits were used to conduct HIV test for all who were present at the fairs.

◆ The LCI also bought and made available for use during health fairs other health center equipment including scale, blood pressure machine, glucometer and other vital signs equipment.

On the part of the communities through their various councils, their job was to ensure the provision of canopies, chairs, and venues for health fairs while the district teams supported with all the health services providers needed for the success of the activity. During an ideal health fair, the communities benefit from free health services but for drugs where required. Activities during such events include general consultation, laboratory services, HIV testing and counseling, ANC services, family planning, and sometimes eye screening for all in need.

**Service Uptake by Community Members at Health Fair**

Since its implementation in 2015, service uptake by various communities in each of the five districts has consistently increased with very few exceptional cases. For instance, the table below shows health fair statistics for the years 2014 and 2015.

During 2015 and 2016 health fairs, a total of 4917 persons were screened for HIV infections with a total of 61 positive cases; all of which were immediately referred to some treatment centers located closer to them for linkage or initiation. Meanwhile, during general consultations, a total of about 1024 were screened for malaria with 62 cases diagnosed malaria positive and treatment proffered. For the year 2017 and 2018, there were about 17 HIV positive cases discovered in the communities within which the health fairs were carried out.

*2015-2017 Health Fair General Statistics*

District	2015 Sensitized	2015 Screened	2016 Sensitized	2016 Screened	2017 Sensitized	2017 Screened
Eyumojock	1800	312	2500	405	0	0

Ekondo Titi	2000	332	1000	90	1800	155
Wabane	700	430	2500	759	900	296
Bangem	1500	357	1500	681	1200	221
Konye	500	290	2500	793	1500	215
TOTAL	6,500	1721	10000	2728	5400	887

### **Conclusion**

From the recorded statistics at the various health fairs organized by the LCI Project, it is very glaring that health fairs are a great tool in causing community ownership of the health facility at their disposal. It has also proven to be the backbone to the effective sensitization of health care services offered in health facilities in their communities. Given the effective participation of the local stakeholders, it is ascertained that this practice will continue in the various districts beyond the LCI project.