

## **Community-Based Primary Health Care Now Implemented in Nigeria**

*By Dr. David Thompson; Published in the Minneapolis Area Synod InterActs, March 2011*

The Minneapolis Area Synod is pleased to announce the implementation of a Community-Based Primary Health Care (CBPHC) program in the state of Adamawa in Nigeria. This is where our companion synod, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), has its highest membership, likely 1.7 million members. Our Medical Team has worked for nearly five years with Global Health Ministries and the Health Board of the LCCN to the point of now launching the CBPHC pilot project. Minneapolis resident, David M. Thompson, M.D., MPH is serving as a program consultant to the LCCN Health Board in directing the establishment of this exciting public health endeavor. A group of eight Lutheran health professionals from Nigeria are currently in Jamkhed, India for a month of intensive CBPHC training.

### **What is a Community-Based Primary Health Care Program?**

When resources are limited it is important to choose an effective and sustainable method for improving the health of our communities. Research has shown that although hospitals and clinics provide critical and needed services and form the center of our health care systems, they alone have been very ineffective in changing the health behaviors that result in high rates of morbidity and mortality. Nigeria is a very good example of this; it has many fine institutions yet with mortality rates that are among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is now very solid research evidence that Community-Based Primary Health Care can be very effective in significantly lowering mortality rates, particularly for children under age five years and for women in the age of procreation. This is because CBPHC brings about key behavior changes which, in turn, save lives. The effect on mortality and morbidity is sustainable because it results from the combined will and activity of the people who live and die in their communities. They own the changes and the consequent health improvements.

CBPHC requires three partnerships to be successful: a community that takes ownership, outside experts that can bring new knowledge and resources, and a supportive government relationship. The model we have chosen is that of the Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP) in Jamkhed, Maharashtra State, India. This program, with close to a half a century of experience, is internationally recognized for its excellence and effectiveness. Christians, Muslims, and traditional religions working together in reaching shared goals

### **The Jamkhed model**

The CRHP Jamkhed first established a simple health center that had emergency medical and surgical capabilities. They quickly developed a mobile program reaching out of the health center into the community. Ultimately Men's and Women's Clubs were created to bring everyone in a village together (with the help of the CRHP staff) to analyze their problems and come up with solutions. Experienced women were chosen by the villagers who were then trained to be Community Health Workers. Communities were empowered and enabled to analyze and solve their own problems.

### **Pilot Projects**

In July 2010, the LCCN Health Board convened a meeting of representatives of all the LCCN organizations and institutions to discuss plans for a CBPHC program. It was decided to begin with two pilot projects at opposite ends of the state. The focus was to begin in two underserved areas and to not make the choice of sites on the basis of whether or not there was a local health facility (either LCCN or government). The program would liaison with the nearest health facility and work towards developing a stable and sustainable primary health care system over time. In other words, the priority was to develop a successful community-owned CBHC model as the foundation upon which a primary health care system could be built over time.

In a fully integrated CBPHC program, there are very diverse activities/approaches (curative and preventive health care, clean water and sanitation programs, food and animal production education, women's empowerment, etc.) all of which have a positive effect on health. Each requires specialized expertise, personnel and resources, some of which may be readily available and others which may not be. Some would be more expensive while others might produce quicker or more visible results.

We are praying that more Minneapolis Area Synod congregations will team up with LCCN in Nigeria to become "companion congregations." Support for health programs is needed for sanitary water wells (\$2,000-5,000) and also for the rehabbing of 12 dispensaries (\$5,000-18,000). If you would like to learn more about this exciting new development in the life of our companion synod partnership with the Lutheran Church of Christ of Nigeria or how you might be involved or support our efforts, please contact either Dr. David Thompson at [thomp060@umn.edu](mailto:thomp060@umn.edu) or the synod's Companion Synod Coordinator, Kris Perry, at [k.perry@mpls-synod.org](mailto:k.perry@mpls-synod.org).

## **ELCA Malaria Campaign Supports Work with LCCN**

The Rev. Tim Iverson, Executive Director of Global Health Ministries (<http://www.ghm.org/>), based in Fridley, MN, reports that a network partnership between the ELCA Malaria Campaign and Global Health Ministries has begun a five-year development program in Nigeria. This will involve a pilot villages initiative of the Community-Based Primary Health Care Program (CBPHC) with initial objectives developed in collaboration with the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria's (LCCN) Health Board. Plans are for implementation and testing of the model in 22 villages as a prelude to a church-wide initiative throughout Adamawa State in 2012 that emphasizes early response, treatment, and monitoring through action plans that are unique for each village. Malaria will be one of the most common health issues addressed by this pilot, which will involve education and development that begin where national initiatives leave off. Our Malaria Work donations, through the ELCA Malaria Campaign, will help in this exciting new lifesaving venture.

Dr. David Thompson\* is serving as the lead consultant on the CBPHC's lifesaving work. He reviewed the background of the program as well as the pilot projects in the Minneapolis Area Synod's March *InterActs* (please see reverse side of this handout). Dr. Thompson explains the work is still in the planning phase with the start of activities scheduled for next year. He notes that these activities will be coordinated through the LCCN Women's Fellowship.

Teresa Obwaya\* also is involved in the planning and coordination of the work to prevent and control malaria in Nigeria. As Health Management Consultant with LCCN and Global Health Ministries, Ms. Obwaya indicates that they have goals, strategies, objectives, and activities to bring health to people of all faiths in the Nigerian communities. During this month (September 2011), meetings will take place with the Bishops and church leaders to discuss the malaria prevention and control activities. The efforts will encourage and support with training women's groups who are doing this work in their communities as funds become available from partners.

**To donate specifically to Nigeria's Community Based Primary Health Care Program (CBPHC), a partnership between the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (our Companion Synod), Global Health Ministries, and the ELCA, please make your check out to the Minneapolis Area Synod and write "ELCA Malaria Campaign Nigeria" on the memo line. Checks may be mailed to the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA at 122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 600, Minneapolis, MN 55404-2474. Please give generously to save the lives of our sisters and brothers in Nigeria.**

***For more information about the ELCA Malaria Campaign, go to:***

***<http://www.elca.org/malaria> or <http://www.mpls-synod.org/programs/malaria>***

***Or, contact Mary Simonson Clark at:***

***[marysimonsonclark@gmail.com](mailto:marysimonsonclark@gmail.com), 612-636-5104, or 952-933-8836***

\* Dr. David Thompson and Ms. Teresa Obwaya are featured speakers during Global Health Ministries' Conference on Global Health Care, *Sustainability: Empowering Partners and Communities*, October 22, 2011 at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in White Bear Lake.

For more information, go to: <http://www.ghm.org/>