The Nigeria HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Group:
Facilitating community support for New HIV Prevention Technology Development in Nigeria

Activity report - May 2004 to April 2006
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The Nigeria HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Group is a coalition of all interest stakeholders - public and private - involved with New HIV Prevention Technology research and development in Nigeria. It mission is to halt the spread of HIV in Nigeria by fast tracking the development of safe, effective, acceptable and affordable New HIV Prevention Technologies and ensure its availability to all Nigerian.
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Introduction

As the HIV/AIDS pandemic enters its third decade, millions more people continue to be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Close to 42 million people worldwide live with HIV. Africa alone accounts for over two-thirds of the number.

Current treatment and behavioral prevention efforts - such as including condom education and promotion, peer counseling, needle exchange interventions, safe blood transfusion, and interventions to reduce mother-to-child transmission - have slowed the spread of HIV, but have not stopped it. While great strides have been made in the availability of cheaper treatment for people living with HIV, problems of adherence, drug resistance, side effects, poor medical infrastructures and associated huge cost outlay make access to treatment still difficult for many. Moreover, the best treatment available do not cure; at best, they merely slow the progression of the disease.

The best long-term hopes for controlling AIDS is the development and widespread distribution of a safe, effective and affordable vaccine, which prevents primary infections; and safe, effective and affordable microbicides which allow women – who most bear the brunt of the epidemic – power to protect themselves from infection.

Vaccines are one of the most powerful and cost effective health interventions available today. The successful eradication of smallpox and a drastic reduction in the prevalence of polio worldwide give credence to the efficacy and efficiency of vaccines in the control of transmissible diseases and its likely success with HIV. The development of a safe and effective vaccine involves many years of research and huge infusion of funds. However, when fully developed and available, an effective HIV vaccine can turn HIV/AIDS into a controllable epidemic, just like smallpox and polio.

Research and development of these critical HIV prevention technologies will entail a lot of human, financial and material resources. Significant time related success would depend on public engagement, which, so far is weak. Without real public urgency, vaccine and microbicide development would continue to be a plan for the future.

With over 120 million people, Nigeria’s is Africa’s most populous country – and one of the most affected in terms of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She also boasts the third highest HIV-positive population in the world, after South Africa and India. However, the country’s response to the global movement for vaccine and microbicide research and development has been, at best, tentative.

Unlike past national actions when the HIV/AIDS response has been reactive, for New HIV prevention technology, there is a need for the country to be reactive otherwise she would loss out on the long term benefit of accessing products that would, in the long term, change the face of the epidemic for good. HIV/AIDS response in the country had long been facilitated by Non governmental organisations. The same may therefore be needed for New HIV Prevention Technology research, development and access in Nigeria.
**Who is NHVMAG?**

In 2003, a group of committed advocates and scientists came together to form the Nigeria HIV Vaccine and Microbicides Advocacy Group (NHVMAG) as a civil society response to address these imperatives. NHVMAG was formed to ensure the proactive participation of Nigeria and Nigerians in global efforts for the development of HIV vaccine and microbicides. It also recognises that there is an ethical imperative to seek, as urgently as possible, effective and accessible vaccine and microbicide products to complement other existing prevention strategies. It is popularly owned non profit organization having on board advocates, NGOs, media professionals, scientists/researchers, people living with HIV, sexual diversity groups (SWs, MSM) and government partners.

The **mission** of NHVMAG is to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria by ensuring the availability of safe, effective, acceptable and affordable HIV vaccine and microbicide products for all Nigerians when developed.

Its **Objectives** are to:

1. Promote public understanding and support for the participation of Nigeria in the international HIV vaccine and microbicide development efforts
2. Promote early involvement of Nigeria in HIV vaccine and microbicide studies relevant to her HIV/AIDS control efforts
3. Mobilize active participation of Nigeria and her nationals in vaccine and microbicide research and development activities worldwide
4. Ensure access by all Nigerians to a safe, effective and affordable HIV vaccine and microbicides when developed
5. Collaborate with other institutions and organizations locally and internationally for the rapid development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine and microbicide for all humanity

NHVMAG works through four **Operational Strategies:**

1. **Public Communication and Enlightenment:** Through regular public communication programmes, NHVMAG promotes popular community support for the vaccine/microbicides development process. This may be through workshops and seminars, communication (press articles, TV/radio appearances, publications etc), advocacy visits, meetings, exhibitions, public speaking engagements etc.
2. **Policy Advocacy:** With HIV vaccine and microbicide research, the need to ensure political commitment is paramount. Through research and analyses, policy development, monitoring and implementation, we will ensure the creation and sustenance of a people-friendly policy environment for vaccine/microbicides research in Nigeria
3. **Capacity building:** Because vaccine/microbicides research and development are a highly intensive and high-capacity process, we will promote activities to build the capacity of Nigerian institutions and advocates, including facilitation of training opportunities, participation at international conferences and meetings, research assistance, sponsorship of scientific conferences and publication of scientific papers.
4. **International collaboration:** This involves building broad international support for the vaccine/microbicides development process in Nigeria and ensuring that our national interests are protected in vaccine/microbicides development worldwide.

NHVMAG is a popularly owned campaign, with its members, supporters and partners as the driving force. It works through five **Thematic Groups** (see below) with the following terms of reference:
Resource Mobilisation Committee

- Identify and harness human and material resources within and outside the country interested in funding and supporting HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development
- Engage in income generating activities to fund activities of the group and for the broader vaccine/microbicide development process in Nigeria

Scientific Committee

- Monitor and track issues related to HIV vaccine and microbicide development worldwide
- Create awareness on prospective research opportunities on HIV vaccine and microbicide research in the Nigerian scientific community
- Identify and support research and development activities by Nigerian institutions and nationals (locally or outside the country) on vaccine/microbicide development

Ethics, Law and Human Rights Committee

- Ensure that the process of HIV vaccine and Microbicide development conforms to national and international standards
- Keep scientists updated on various ethical issues related to HIV vaccine and microbicide research
- Liaise with and mobilise organisations working on ethical issues in the country to include HIV vaccine and microbicide as an issue in their agenda

Community Mobilisation Committee

- Ensure HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development is integrated into overall HIV prevention efforts
- Ensure popular community (CSO, CSO, private sector, media, religious sector etc) participation
- Ensure community preparedness for HIV vaccine and microbicide research and use

Public Communication Committee

- Ensure that all communities in Nigeria are brought on board and carried along in HIV vaccine and microbicide development
- Ensure public ownership, understanding and familiarity with HIV vaccine/microbicide issues
- Design and carry out a strategy for appropriate and accurate public communication of the vaccine/microbicide development process
- Liaise with media stakeholders and promote their full support and involvement in microbicide/HIV vaccine advocacy

Role of NHVMAG

NHVMAG brings together stakeholders involved with HIV prevention trials and ensures their active participation in all processes that would facilitate new HIV prevention technologies’ research and development in Nigeria. It acts as an interface between the research enterprise and civil society in Nigeria, regionally and internationally.

Locally, it works to balance the urgent need for research and the rights of the community. This entails advocating and facilitating community engagement in NPT clinical trials. At the same time it works to facilitate public and political support for NPT research and development process. Its existence has enhances the commencement of community sensitization on HIV vaccine and microbicide research thereby filling a vacuum otherwise left by the national government. New national documents now equally make reference to NPT research and development as an essential component of its comprehensive national HIV/AIDS response.

The organisation also facilitates the country’s involvement in global research and development drive for new HIV prevention technologies.
Overview of Activities

Building the capacity of IRBs to adequately review relevant research protocols: NHVMAG organized a National training workshop on ethical issues involved in HIV vaccine and microbicide research in Nigeria for chairpersons and key members of all identified institutional Ethics Review Committees in the Nigeria. The workshop discussed ethical considerations in new HIV prevention technology research and development, with relevance to existing national and international regulations. The workshop utilized a participatory approach.

Group work sessions were structured into the programme to enable participants brainstorm on peculiar issues related to HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development in Nigeria as well as identify ways to address them. The participatory sessions included case studies and round table discussions sessions on existing policy and guideline documents relevant to HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development in the country. These sessions facilitated comprehension of issues as well as enhanced contributions of participants to the development and future review of national documents relevant to ethics in clinical trials in the country. Finally, the group work together to map out areas of priority actions to ensure rigorous and ethically sound scientific process for reviewing HIV vaccine and microbicide research related proposals, which guarantees that the rights of participants are protected and that communities in which trials take place stands to gain from the process. These recommendations fed into the developed national guideline on the standard of care for NPT clinical trial participants in Nigeria.

Building the capacity of community advocates on the ethics of NPT research: NHVMAG organised an ethics training workshop for community activists on new prevention technologies in Nigeria. This training helped increased the knowledge of community activists on the ethics of ongoing NPT related clinical research. This should help ensure that these advocates are better informed on the research process. This should help further facilitate their advocacy efforts and community mobilisation efforts for NPT research and development process. Presently, one of the focus of the National Strategic Framework addressing the HIV epidemic in Nigeria over the next five years is to ensure research literacy for a large percentage of the population. This training should help facilitate this process.

Step down training for IRB members on the Ethics of NPT research: NHVMAG facilitates the training of IRB members in research institutions across the country. The training focuses on the ethics of NPT research. Through this process, NHVMAG facilitated seven step down trainings in the year 2005. There are have eight others been proposed for the year 2006 following positive responses received from the institutions. The organized step down trainings have reached out to over 220 persons in all. The process had also helped facilitate the inauguration of four new IRBs in the country. All the step down trainings were facilitated by NHVMAG members whose capacities were built through this ethics training as well as the community advocates training supported by this project.
Consultative workshop on defining the standard of care for trial participants in Nigeria: A National Consultation was convened by NHVMAG to define the standard of care for clinical trial participants when researches are to be conducted in Nigeria. Specifically, the consultative meeting focused on defining the standard of care trial participants participating in New HIV prevention technology researches. The national consultative meeting brought together national stakeholders from the Federal Ministry of Health, the National Ethics Review Board, the National Bioethics Initiative in Nigeria, Researchers, Community Advocates on New HIV prevention Technologies, government stakeholders, women, youths, the media, PLWHA and trained ethicists.

The national consultative meeting drew lessons from other international organizations which are also involved with defining standard of care for clinical trial participants such as WHO and UNAIDS. At the end of the meeting, a consensus document on the national standard of care for clinical trial participants, developed from four previous meeting, was ratified. The document went through three other internal and external review process before been published and circulated to all national and international stakeholders involved with NPT research. This document had been adopted by all stakeholders, published and would act as a national document to help guide researchers on the minimum standard of care for trial participants participating in in-country researches.

Building the capacity of NGOs to advocate for new prevention technologies and ensure community mobilization for the development process: These training workshops focus on discussions about the need for HIV vaccine and microbicide advocacy for the support of their development and uptake. The training workshop also focused on how to effectively impact skills for promoting advocacy efforts taking cognizance of peculiar regional and community needs and limited resources available for specific new HIV technology advocacy efforts. The training workshops address how NGOs will integrate information about new HIV prevention technology development into on-going AIDS information and education strategies, especially ensuring that communication about new HIV prevention technology research and development effort stresses the long-term nature of the effort, and is consistent with, and supportive of, communication about HIV prevention, treatment, and care; Identify the advocacy and lobbying strategies that are best for Nigeria to build political commitment at the highest national level to an AIDS control effort, including HIV vaccines and microbicides related issues; discuss how NGOs can work to improve communication and bridge communication gaps between researchers and communities, especially using existing researcher and community networks; discuss how Nigerian AIDS NGOs will develop ability to understand the complex issues of HIV vaccine and microbicide research, develop comprehensive advocacy strategies, and participate in Nigerian HIV vaccine and microbicide development as full partners in the process as well as how NGOs will increase overall community understanding of HIV...
vaccine and microbicide development, and help increase access of all stakeholders into the process amongst others

**Building the capacity of media men to report on NPT issues**: NHVMAG has since its inception directly organised three media focused roundtable discussion with the media in conjunction with JAAIDS and Internews. The roundtable discussion was to help the media to identify with reporting on NPT issues. NHVMAG has continued to collaborate with other organisations to facilitate media training on NPT reporting. There have been great positive outcomes from these trainings. These include the winning of media awards by two NHVMAG advocates based on their NPT related stories, as well as the report from a microbicide clinical research trial site that noted that a media report on microbicide helped expedite the NAFDAC approval process for the research protocol. A number of media men continue to participate in NHVMAG trainings with NHVMAG supporting their participation in conferences and programmes. A section of the NHVMAG developed training kits also focuses on media reporting on NPT. NHVMAG’s collaborative efforts with the media has therefore placed it in a good position to prevent any problems that are often attributed to media – misconstruing and sensationalizing issues – through media outreach and training.

**Facilitating information sharing between stakeholders**: All members of NHVMAG are encouraged to register on its discussion listserv. The listserv has been operational for over about one year. It has 149 enlisted members and organisations. The listserv address is (NHVMAG@yahoogroups.com). Through the listserv, members are updated on current debates and issues related to NPT in the country, region and internationally. Members also have access to information on NPT related conferences and programmes. The listserv has also helped facilitate member contribution to ongoing national regional and international discussions thereby ensuring that Nigeria is well represented in the regional and global NPT forum. One of such debate was that on the ethics of the phase 1ib tenofovir trial conducted and later terminated in Nigeria. The published report on that informed debate continues to serve as reference document for the international community on community views and perspectives on NPT research.

**Organisation of the first national advocates meeting**: In May 2004, NHVMAG organised its first national advocates meeting with funding support from the Global Campaign for Microbicide. The meeting brought together for the first time, a large number of NPT relevant stakeholders which had hitherto worked in isolated corners of the country. Researchers were able to share and discuss with other advocates about their ongoing research efforts. Policy makers and Government functionaries were also able to learn for the first time, about country relevant NPT efforts. This effort proved highly successful in catalysing a national stakeholder front for NPT research and development efforts. The outcome of this effort is reported in the publication titled ‘

**Organisation of national and regional NPT relevant conferences**: With the growing profile of the organisation and its recognition as a major player in facilitating the NPT research and development efforts, NHVMAG was supported by GCM as well as UNAIDS to facilitate a national and regional consultative meeting that discussed on creating effective partnership for HIV prevention trials. The conferences were organised in 2005 and they fed into the international UNAIDS coordinated meeting in the same year. The sixth publication of the 2006 edition of the AIDS journal published the outcome of the final outcomes of the international consultative process (UNAIDS. Creating effective partnership for prevention trials. AIDS. (6):W1 – W11).

**Organisation of zonal sensitisation programmes**: for many people and organisations, NPT is a new concept and so are issues related to its research and development. Over the last two years, NHVMAG has organised two regional sensitisation programme. The sensitisation programme helps to introduce NPT concepts for the first time to possible
Participants at the North Eastern zonal training

Publication of newsletter: In the last one year, NHVMAG has published 3 editions of the NHVMAG Echoes. The newsletter remains the only existing community oriented newsletter that discusses NPT issues in a way that the lay man can comprehend. The newsletter is presently widely distributed to over 4,000 subscribers using the existing JAAIDS newsletter distribution outlet. Publication of the newsletter was supported by DFID.

Publication of reports: NHVMAG has in its kitty, published report on the Nigeria situation of HIV Vaccine and Microbicide research and development efforts. It also has a publication on the outcome of the NHVMAG facilitated community-researchers engagement on the tenofovir prophylaxis trial in Nigeria. These publications have fed significantly into national, regional and international processes. The publication on the tenofovir controversy in Nigeria helped define processes for addressing the global crisis that arose in various countries with respect to the tenofovir prophylaxis trial. The report was especially most welcome by the international community. The publication on the Nigerian situation on HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Research and development efforts also feed into the National Government led process of reviewing gaps in past efforts and identifying ways forward during the process of developing the 2005 – 2009 National Strategic Framework.

Publication of NPT research literacy materials: NHVMAG has over the years, published over nine different research literacy materials which can help further facilitate the understanding of HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development efforts. These publications, especially the frequently asked questions, have been written in simple languages that can be easily comprehended. The materials have been widely disseminated.

Development of training kits and a training manual: NHVMAG developed two training kits –
Training kits developed

one on facilitating community mobilisation efforts for NPT research and development and the other on understanding the ethics of NPT research. The tools were developed so as to facilitate step down training processes by any interested party. It could also be used as a self-educative tool. The kits are available as CDs. The content of the CDs have been condensed into a training manual so as to ensure the possibility of use of the training tools were facilities for CDs do not exists.

Input into government programmes and policies: NHVMAG has increasingly become involved in the national government and donor policy and development programme efforts. In the last few years, key members of the organisation had been involved with the development of the 2005 – 2009 National Strategic Framework as well as the National HIV Vaccine Development Plan. In addition, its collaboration with the national government has resulted in enhanced regulatory capacity of NAFDAC to address monitoring and regulatory issues related to NPT research and development. Also, NHVMAG successfully canvassed the setting up of a research desk on NPT in NACA. In 2004, NHVMAG was invited by Nigeria’s health minister to facilitate development of a national microbicide development plan for Nigeria during a courtesy visit paid to the Minster of Health, Prof, Eyitayo Lambo.

Ensuring effective collaboration and partnership with organisations: NHVMAG has facilitated a number of its activities and efforts through effective collaboration with national, regional and international organisations. These include its present collaborative effort with the Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NEPWHAN) and the Interfaith organisation on HIV/AIDS on the ATPP project organised by AFRICASO in Nigeria. Also, its past collaborative effort with NABIN on the organisation of a national ethics training for IRB chairs. The organisation also has ongoing collaboration with the African Microbicide Advocacy Group (AMAG), the Global Campaign for Microbicide (GCM) and the American Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC). These regional and international collaborative efforts have enhanced the regional and international positioning of the organisation.

Participation in National, Regional and International Conferences: NHVMAG participated and facilitated skill building sessions at the 4th National Conference on HIV/AIDS in addition to its members playing key roles during the conference. Also NHVMAG, in collaboration its partners (AMAG, GCM, and AVAC) had participated effectively and visibly in a number of regional and international NPT related conferences. At the 14th International Conference on STI in Africa (ICASA), AMAG and NHVMAG facilitated two highly successful skill building sessions in addition to the hosting of two booths in collaboration with these same partners. In addition, it made two oral presentations at the conference in addition to that made by a number of other NHVMAG advocates on the outcome of their NPT related works in Nigeria. At the Microbicide 2006 conference which held in April 2006 NHVMAG facilitated a discussion session in collaboration with AMAG and GCM.
on the ‘unfinished story around Noxynonol 9’. It also presented two oral abstracts, two posters and a plenary session. Poster presentation by NHVMAG members for the TRACK D session at the conference made up 27% of all the posters presented.

Community monitoring of clinical trials: For the first time in the history of clinical trials in Nigeria, NHVMAG organised and facilitated a community aspect to the monitoring of the NPT clinical trial projects in Nigeria. The monitoring exercise is to ensure that community interest in clinical trial projects is pursued as well as to ensure that the interest and safety of trial participants are keenly pursued. The report of the monitoring exercise was presented at the M2006 conference. This has generated a lot of discussion and interest amongst researchers. The final compilation of this report shall be sent to all national, regional and international stakeholders. It remains a key project NHVMAG intends to pursue as its international, regional and national advocacy agenda.
Project Achievements
Integration of NPT advocacy issues into ongoing HIV/AIDS activities: Within the last three years of its operation, NHVMAG has partnered with over 50 organisations located within the six states geopolitical zones in Nigeria on facilitating community mobilisation for NPT research and development. Through these efforts, NHVMAG is fast facilitating a process of ensuring NPT literacy amongst the Nigerian community through HIV/AIDS programmes. It is also helping to ensure NPT advocacy is integrated into the national comprehensive HIV/AIDS response in a holistic manner thereby viewing NPT issues as part of the comprehensive response to the epidemic and not just an addendum.

Increased community awareness about NPT research and development efforts: Through the community mobilisation activities by collaborative organisations and individuals, NHVMAG is promoting support for NPT research efforts, facilitating volunteerism for research and increased prospect for future uptake as myths and misconceptions are been addressed. The use of various media by its various members as well as the organisations publication and distribution of its newsletters and literacy leaflets have helped in this respect.

Increased national visibility of NPT issues in national discussions and HIV/AIDS programming: Through its advocacy efforts, there is increasing visibility of NPT issues featuring in national discussions, documents, guidelines and policies. New HIV Prevention Technology issues are now defined within a broader perspective – more embracing than in the past when national policies and documents only referred to HIV vaccines.

Increasing research literacy amongst the Nigerian community: NHVMAG focuses on ensuring communities and individuals understand about research processes even while ensuring mobilisation for the support of NPT research and development. This understanding transients the present focus on NPT research and development. It helps to build the capacity of individuals to help ensure understood consent when participating in research. The present effort of NHVMAG with respect to NPT therefore helps to build the capacity of individuals for participation in various scientific processes.

Increased capacity of national IRBs and relevant authorities to review NPT protocols: The various ethics training in NPT for ethics committee members has helped increased awareness on the ethics of NPT research – both amongst IRB members as well as amongst critical persons in the community and within the drug and regulatory agency in Nigeria. The standard of care consensus document developed by relevant stakeholders would also help to facilitate identification and review of critical issues within relevant documents and protocols for NPT research.

Increased number of functional IRBs including the establishment of the NEB: Through the ethics step down training programme, NHVMAG was able to facilitate the reconstitution and constitution of four new IRBs within institutions that had the potentials to conduct NPT research. The continuous advocacy efforts by NHVMAG had also helped to ensure the inauguration of a National Ethics Board by the National Action Committee on AIDS as well as the revitalisation of the moribund board within the Federal Ministry of Health.

Increased media reporting on NPT: There has also been an increased informed reporting on NPT in the media. This includes reporting, debates and discussions on the print and electronic media. This has further helped to increase the visibility of NPT amongst the Nigerian community as well as facilitate better understanding of the issues.

Increased capacity of Nigerian NPT advocates and researchers. Through grant activities and other initiatives, NHVMAG has continued to build the capacity of local Nigerian institutions,
researchers and advocates on New Prevention Technologies research, development and advocacy. The meetings and training programmes convened under the DFID grant brought together – for the first time – the various researchers working at NPT trial sites in Nigeria. This has helped in sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices among NPT trials sites, and enhanced partnerships between scientists, government, civil society and PLWHA for the common prevention cause. For example, the community mobilisation training held in Abuja in June 2005 showcased the important work that NGOs such as WHED and the African Health Project (both based in Abuja) are doing in community preparedness.

**Strengthened collaboration with policymakers and increased focus on NPTs within the national strategic framework.** NHVMAG continued to engage with the National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) in strengthening country preparedness for NPTs and implementation of the provisions of the National Strategic Framework (NSF) as relates to new prevention technologies. During the community mobilisation training in June, NACA was represented by its Community Mobilisation Specialist, which also presented an illuminating session on the NSF provisions for NPTs in Nigeria. The National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) and the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) in Nigeria, are now regular and reliable partners and collaborators at NHVMAG’s programmes. Chairpersons of many national tertiary institutions are also willing resource persons and participants to NHVMAG’s programmes.

**Increased confidence of donors in NHVMAG activities:** with the operations, transparency, accountability and output of the organization, there has been increased confidence in NHVMAG. This in turn has facilitated increased support for NHVMAG and its activities over the last three years especially by Global Campaign for Microbicide and DFID.

**Increased collaboration with regional and international organizations:** AMAG, AVAC, GCM, IPM: NHVMAG is increasingly collaborating actively with regional bodies like the African Microbicide Advocacy Group as well as the American Vaccine Advocacy Coalition. In addition, there are increased collaborative activities with international organizations like the Global Campaign for Microbicide as well as the International Partnership for Microbicide. These collaborations are further strengthening the technical capacity of the organization to implement programmes and ensure substantive outcomes.

**Main Challenges**

**Publication and circulation of the NHVMAG newsletter:** One present challenge faced by NHVMAG is the possibility for continued production of its newsletter. With the expiration of the DFID funding support, the continued production of the newsletter would need to stop except alternative sources of funding is obtained.

**Funding for support of projects:** Presently, the organisation has no funding support. For the year 2006, there are plans to continue with the organisation of zonal based sensitisation programmes. These programmes are supported entirely by contributions from members of the Steering Committee. NHVMAG needs further funding support to address its programmatic agenda for the next three years.

**Lessons Learnt**

**Confidence-building** between scientists, advocates and regulators is crucial to achieve effective partnerships. For NHVMAG, this was, on one hand, facilitated through the good reputation and
integrity of its leadership - Its steering committee includes a journalist, a research professor, gender advocate, MD, clinicians etc. Its two co-coordinators are well-respected HIV/AIDS advocates. On the other hand, the organisation handled its affairs in a very transparent manner ensuring it was continuously accountable to its members on all actions taken on their behalf. Thirdly, decision making on all issues is participatory and often facilitated through the listserv.

**National coherence is important:** By working as a unique partnership involving country-based stakeholders, the coalition has emerged as reference point for national-level civil society-based advocacy for new prevention technologies. NHVMAG is an indigenous, country-led process. The passion for NHVMAG’s work is driven by a common sense of ownership and patriotism. Its formation was initiated by peers who met continually at NPT-related events who had the urge to ensure Nigeria's proactive involvement in NPT issues.

**Need to maintain a delicate balance between activism, consultation and capacity-building:** The organisation had come to learn the importance of maintaining this delicate balance in pushing through its national agenda. The scale of balance has had to tilt at various action taking points. The organisation makes it a point of priority to build the capacity of its members and other Nigerians to ensure their informed engagement in NPT advocacy and agenda setting. At all times, the organisations action is evidence based. This has helped it capture the attention of those that handle the affairs of the country and has thus, remained relevant as the reference point on NPT issues in the country.

**Ethical conduct of research:** NHVMAG’s success in mobilising national community in support of NPT development is evidence of the value of effective partnerships in ensuring ethical conduct and community acceptance of new prevention trials in Africa. Its actions take cognisance of the culture and norms of Nigerians and thus ensure culturally acceptable messaging and actions in its agenda.

**Challenges**

**The Working structure of the Organisation:** Presently, members of the Steering Committee are equally the heads and think tanks of the committees. It is important to create a new level of working structure within the organisation. The present structure can no longer serve the needs of the organisation. It would be necessary for the present members of the Steering Committee to focus on formulation the policies of the organisation while co-chairs elected by committee members work as the Management Team of the organisation. Presently the serves of members are entirely voluntary.

**Limited involvement of Organisations:** At present, the organisation has only been able to reach out to HIV/AIDS focused organisations. Yet the issues of NPT are much more diverse. This has limited the reach of the organisation and its network. There is a need to reach out to other organisations that focus on women, youths, children, reproductive health and human rights to be able to make more successes of its projects.

**Access to funds:** The limited access to funds has limited the activities of the organisation. Many of the efforts and achievements have been based on the sacrifices of individuals and members of the Steering Committee. Short term funding support has also been received from DFID and GCM. There are presently ongoing efforts to source for other funding support for its activities.

**Future direction**

**Establishment of a functional secretariat:** The organisation needs to think critically about the establishment of a functional secretariat. In the last three years of its operations, the organisation had
been housed and serviced by the Journalists against AIDS (JAAIDS). The scope of the organisation is getting larger and thus the need for a more functional secretariat with its own supporting staff. The organisation would therefore need its own accommodation, a Programme Manager who can double as an Administrative and Financial Manager, a book keeper and a programme officer for a start. As the projects of the organisation expand, these needs may grow.

**Facilitating community support for NPT (general and specific community support):** It is critical to engage various communities early in the NPT research and development process. NHVMAG identifies the need to design specific community focused messages for the various stakeholder communities in the country. This helps to ensure more effective engagement of these communities in the NPT advocacy efforts. Over the next three years, the organisation would like to reach out to communities of women, youths, PLWAs, sex workers, MSM, the media and health care providers with specific NPT messages and training that can increase their capacity and competence to engage in the NPT research and development process. While it focuses on specific communities, it would equally continue with its past relation with the general Nigerian population. This would help the organisation address the **objective 7.4.1** of the National Strategic Framework.

**Facilitating community advocates understanding of the ethics of NPT research and development:** NHVMAG past efforts had included increasing research literacy efforts amongst the general community through concerted efforts with its various partners. The organisation would want to continue in this respect. An understanding of ethical issues ensures informed advocacy efforts on the parts of engaged individuals and organisations. NHVMAG would like to build on its past efforts in this respect in partnership with other national and international organisations that can help provide technical support in this respect. This would facilitate the possibility of realising the **objective 7.1.1** of the National Strategic Framework. This is because there would be increased number of community persons who understand the ethics of NPT trials and thus can contribute meaningfully to Institutional Review Board processes as informed community members of the Board.

**Facilitating the incorporation of NPT training into the medical school curriculum:** Present efforts with respect to NPT have to do with the future. One of such future focuses is to ensure that developed NPT products would be demanded for while facilitating the development of future generations of products by building on the present understanding. It is important that medical students are equally brought on board early in the process. Their tutors need to be educated on the basic sciences of NPT which would equally translate to increased understanding of present and future medical students understanding of NPT research. This may spur interest of students in future research efforts while equally preparing them all for product use.

**Increase the publication and circulation of NPT literacy materials:** There is a need to scale up on the number of different literacy materials the organisation has. This is so as to ensure community focused messaging on the NPT issues. While increasing scope of the research literacy materials, there is equally a need to increase on the number is presently been produced. This can then enable collaborative organisations have resource materials for use during their programmes.

**Development of a wider range of culturally relevant promotional materials for NPT products:** Presently, there are very limited IEC materials on NPT issues in Nigeria. The few that are present were sourced from the Global Campaign for Microbicide. It is becoming critically important to develop culturally relevant IEC materials which could help drive home the NPT message appropriately. NHVMAG hopes to produce posters, stickers and a whole range of NPT promotional materials which also would help further create awareness about NPT development process.
Continued publication of the NHVMAG Echoes: The organisation’s quarterly publication known as the NHVMAG echoes had been a source of information and update on NPT issues. The newsletter was well received by the community of NPT stakeholders as it also served as a medium for sharing information and experiences. The publication of the newsletter was supported by funds from a DFID 6 months grant. With expiration of the grant support, the publication of the newsletter has had to discontinue. This in turn has created a gap in the organisations channel for information sharing. NHVMAG therefore seeks for support in this respect.

Increased national, regional and international collaborations: NHVMAG plans to expand and consolidate on its working networks within Nigeria, the West Africa/Africa subregion as well as around the globe. These collaborative efforts would help facilitate the ability of NHVMAG to make greater national, regional and international impact on NPT research and development efforts. Members of the developed partnership would be able to draw on each others strengths and resources to jointly address issues thereby making greater impact within a shorter time with less resources. Collaboration efforts would be other organisations with similar ideology and working within similar fields of interest. One of the main efforts of this collaborative effort would be towards driving the MTV (microbicid, treatment and vaccine) agenda.

Development of advocacy agenda: NHVMAG had directly been involved with advocacy efforts to ensure that NPT issues become positioned within the national HIV/AIDS comprehensive response over the last three years. However, during this period, the organisation had no defined strategic plan to develop its advocacy efforts. Over the next three years, NHVMAG shall strategically define an advocacy focus within defined zonal and national context. It shall equally work in partnership with strategically identified organisations in the country to ensure that planned outcomes are achieved within identified time frames.

Addressing the capacity needs of Nigerian researchers: a critical area that NHVMAG plans to focus future directions in include addressing the capacity of Nigerian researchers to conduct NPT trials as lead researchers. To this effect, NHVMAG shall be facilitating the constitution of a Microbicide and HIV Vaccine Trial Network for the country. Funding shall subsequently be sourced to build the human and infrastructural capacity of this network. Within that same process, the capacity of some potential Nigerians would be built as clinical trial monitors who can help ensure clinical and community monitoring of clinical trials conducted in the country.

Facilitating a Microbicide, HIV Treatment and HIV Vaccine Movement: Presently, NHVMAG is the only regional and international coalition that harnesses the strengths of stakeholders involved with microbicide and vaccine research and development. This has been a strong point for the organisation as it had used existing National structures in place for HIV Vaccine research and development to equally move the microbicide agenda. In an effort to further harness the strengths of activist, NHVMAG plans to establish a concrete working relationship with the Nigerian Treatment Activist Movement (TAM). In some ways, the existing working relationship with NEPWHAN on the ATPP project is paving ways for this.

Potentials of NHVMAG
NHVMAG is in a good position to prevent any problems that are often attributed to media – misconstruing and sensationalising issues – as the group has good media outreach and can conduct adequate training. They also have the opportunity to sensitiise researchers on the appropriate language to use when dealing with media and the public as there would be an increasing need for researchers to relate with the community in which they work. A cross-training between media and scientists, and the scientists and community workers would facilitate these processes so that “everyone can see everyone’s issues” and possibly address the identified gaps.
More about the Nigeria HIV vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Group

The Nigeria HIV Vaccine and microbicide Advocacy Group works through a small core of staff. The secretariat is housed within the Building of the Journalists against AIDS (JAAIDS) a national non-profit organisation which focuses on effectively mobilising the media to address the HIV epidemic in Nigeria.

JAAIDS run its major administrative cores using its instruments and helping to reduce the overhead cost that NHVMAG could otherwise incur. Within the secretariat, the day to day running of the organisation is effected through the organisation’s Coordinators and the Programme Officer.

Its activities are focused at coordinating the activities of its collaborative organisations and ensuring effective advocacy and community mobilisation efforts through the building of the capacity of its collaborative partners. Its facilitates the integration of NPT advocacy and community mobilisation efforts into ongoing organisational activities thereby reducing the funding needs for NPT community related activities.

The steering committee

The affair of the organisation is governed by the steering committee made up of leaders in the field of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The steering committee meets to defines the yearly focus of activity for the organisation. Each committee head then specifically work with their committee to implement specific committee related activities for the year. The secretariat however provides the overall support for the implementation of each committee’s activities. The members of the steering committee are:

Simon Agwale – Chairman, Scientific Committee, NHVMAG

Dr Simon Agwale is a highly revered virologist especially with respect to his work on HIV vaccine development. His vision and efforts towards driving the development and investigation of HIV vaccine constructs from prevalent Nigerian strains and relevant to the Nigerians has been globally recognised. He has over 10 years experience combining top-level scientific research with the operations of a private company and has been involved in academic research at various institutions in Nigeria, Brazil, Germany, the UK, and the United States. He has many publications in international journals of reputation to this effect. With He is the CEO and Managing Director of Innovative Biotech, Nassarawa. He had worked for several years at the institute of Human Virology, Baltimore, USA headed by Dr. Robert Gallo -co-discoverer of HIV. He is currently the West Africa’s representative on HIV/AIDS for Developing countries Coordinating Committee (DCCC) at European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Programme (EDCTP), where he is the focal person for capacity building for clinical trials in Africa. He also represents Nigeria and West Africa at the NEPAD Council. He played a key role in the development of the Nigerian HIV vaccine plan and the creation of the Nigerian AIDS Vaccine Programme (NAVAP). Furthermore, he was a participant in the development of guidelines for the use of Antiretroviral in Nigeria. He is a member of the Nigerian National Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) Programme and the Nigerian National Vaccine Plan (NNVC). In 2004 and 2005, Dr. Agwale served on the European Commission Framework Programme 6 (FP6) grant review committee and is currently a member of the European HIV Vaccine Special Working Group.
Bode-Law Faleyimu – Chairman, Ethics and Human Rights Committee, NHVMAG

Dr Bode-Law Faleyimu is an highly respected Medical Doctor and a history of over 15 years activism in HIV/AIDS and women’s reproductive health care. A trained Obstetrics and Gynaecology expert and a founder of the Microbicide Advocacy Network and Gender Concerns (MANAG), his great efforts with respect to ensure PLWHA care and support within the workplace and ensuring HIV/AIDS workplace prevention efforts have received world recognition and accolades. In recent years, Bode-Law has served in several capacities with respect to facilitating the global NPT agenda. This includes his service as a member of the drafting committee of the Nigeria HIV Vaccine Plan, member of the Steering Committee of the African Microbicide Advocacy Group and his recognised commitment to the Global Campaign for Microbicide. He is also involved in Research using Rapid Assessment Process at the Community level on NPT issues.

Prof Kayode Dada – Co-Chair, Ethics and Human Rights Committee, NHVMAG

Professor Kayode Dada is an academician who specialised in Reproductive Endocrinology. He is also a trained ethicists and a world recognised microbicide researcher. He was the first to conduct a Phase 1 microbicide research in Nigeria thereby placing Nigeria on the world map for microbicide research. His working relationship with WHO has helped enhance support for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support within Sagamu as well as in the College of Health Sciences and Teaching Hospital of Olabisi Onabanjo University. He is currently involved in a number of HIV prevention research projects in Sagamu with the Centre for Research in Reproductive Health, Sagamu – an organisation he founded.

Funmi Doherty – Chairperson, Community Mobilisation Committee, NHVMAG

Mrs Funmi Doherty is the current President of Society for Women and AIDS in Africa, Nigeria (SWAAN) and the Deputy Secretary General for the International body (SWAAN, International). Her efforts in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and Nigeria date back to over 20 years. She is well known for her efforts in pushing the agenda of HIV control amongst women, promotion of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) as well as care and support for PLWHA. A founding member of SWAAN and as the current President, her efforts in facilitating and positioning SWAAN as an embodying organisation for addressing HIV/AIDS in women is well recognised. She has equally served in regional and national bodies including the development of the National Counselling Training Manual and the 2005-2009 National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework, development of a community mobilisation strategy for microbicide by the Global Campaign for Microbicide amongst others. Her article on home based care (HBC) in the management of HIV/AIDS published in the Archives of Ibadan Medicine remains a reference article to date.
Ernest Ekong – Chairman, Resource Mobilisation Committee, NHVMAG

Dr Ernest Ekong is an AIDS/Infectious Diseases Specialist and Consultant Public Health Physician. He is well recognised nationally and internationally for his erstwhile role in advocating for ARV treatment as well as promoting the care and support of PLWHAs. He is internationally recognised as an AIDS treatment specialist and has made Nigeria’s case at international conferences. He holds an MD and an MPH degree, and a fellowship of the Royal Institute of Public Health, UK. He is a key official of the Nigeria HIV/AIDS Research Network (NARN), the Institute of Health Research and Development in Nigeria, and the Task Force on AIDS Control in Africa. He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Industry Liaison Forum (ILF) of the International AIDS Society (IAS), Member of the Steering committee of the Antiretroviral Treatment in Low-Income Countries Collaboration (ART-LINC). He has been involved in a number of collaborative investigations on antiretroviral drug. He is presently the National Clinical Coordinator of the Harvard School of Public Health US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) project, known as APIN Plus.

Dr Munirat Ogunlayi - Co-Chair, Resource Mobilisation Committee, NHVMAG

Munirat Ogunlayi is a trained Nurse midwife. She holds a BSc degree in Human Nutrition and Masters and PhD in Medical Sociology – all from University of Ibadan Nigeria.

She is currently the HIV/AIDS Programme Analyst in the United Nations Development Programme in Nigeria. Within her current responsibility, she has successfully managed the Interim Country Coordinating Committee and United Nations Country Implementation Support Team (CIST) in the restructuring of Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) saddled with the responsibility of providing oversight to Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). Also, she ensures mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into other programmes and across sectors to achieve the MDGs, facilitates the management of the Leadership Development Programme on HIV/AIDS and the management of Community Based HIV/AIDS Programme. She had worked with DFID as the Acting HIV/AIDS Adviser wherein she managed the re-engineering of National Action Committee on HIV/AIDS (NACA) for effective coordination of HIV/AIDS Programme in Nigeria, the Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Reduction (PSRHH) Programme, the Strengthening of Nigeria’s Response to HIV/AIDS, the Health Sector Plan Strategy Development to HIV/AIDS, the DFID Nigeria HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy/programme, the development of the Nigeria HIV/AIDS Multisectoral Programme amongst others.

She has a number of publications and awards to her credit including the NACA Commendation Letter on Successful Organization of the 2nd interfaith Forum on HIV/AIDS, DFID SAIC Executive Committee Award and the DFID Nigeria HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy Team Award.
Omololu Falobi – Co-Coordinator, NHVMAG

A journalist of over 15 years experience, Omololu Falobi, is Executive Director/Founder of Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS). He is an Ashoka Fellow and a recipient of the IAS Young Investigator's Award and the Highway Africa Award for Innovative Use of New Media. Between January 2003 and December 2005, he served as the African NGO Representative on the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS. Most recently, he helped to convene the African Civil Society Coalition on HIV and AIDS, which has become established as the main umbrella platform for regional and global HIV/AIDS advocacy for African civil society organisations.

Falobi has been a long-standing vaccine and microbicide advocate and was a member of the team that developed Nigeria's national HIV vaccine development plan. He has contributed to several publications on HIV/AIDS, including Communication Handbook on HIV Vaccine Trials in Developing Countries (UNAIDS, 2001), Media Handbook on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (JAAIDS/DevComs/UNIC, 2003), Scorecard: Media Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (JAAIDS, 2005), Beyond The Shadows: Unveiling HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Nigeria (JAAIDS, 2005) among others.

Morenike Ukpong – Coordinator, NHVMAG

Morenike Ukpong is a Paedodontist by training. She currently co-coordinates NHVMAG. She has been active in microbicides and HIV vaccine advocacy for the last seven years, and now focuses on coordinating the Nigerian network of researchers and community advocates; mainstreaming microbicides and HIV vaccine into the larger HIV/AIDS discussion; mapping HIV Vaccine and microbicides-related research & advocacy in the country; leading advocacy initiatives; mobilizing civil society groups on preparing for HIV vaccine and microbicides advocacy; and ensuring community has a role in providing ethical oversight for NPT researches conducted in the country. She was involved with the drafting of the 2005-2009 National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework. Her efforts and role as an adept NPT advocates has helped placed Nigeria and NHVMAG on the regional and international scene. She is an author of many technical reports and articles published in internationally reputable journals. She currently works as a senior lecturer with the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and as a consultant with its affiliated university.