



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

13 February 2007

NGA102418.E

Nigeria: Treatment of persons with HIV/AIDS by society; medical/health services available to persons with HIV/AIDS (2005 - 2007)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Treatment of persons living with HIV/AIDS by society

Human rights organizations and news sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that, in Nigeria, there is a "strong" stigma associated with HIV/AIDS (*The Guardian* 2 Jan. 2006; Living Hope Organization 26 Jan. 2007; *This Day* 21 Jan. 2007). According to AVERT, "an international HIV and AIDS charity ... with the aim of averting HIV and AIDS worldwide" (AVERT 26 Jan. 2007), the stigmatization and discrimination of people infected by the virus is "commonplace" in Nigeria, and "[b]oth Christians and Muslims see immoral behaviour as being the cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic" (4 Jan. 2007). Fear of stigmatization reportedly prevents many HIV/AIDS-infected persons from being open about their infection (*This Day* 21 Jan. 2007; Living Hope Organization 26 Jan. 2007); it is also believed to prevent infected persons from seeking medical care (ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 53; PHR 15 Aug. 2006, 3, 18).

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005 states that, in 2005, persons living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria experienced "widespread discrimination" and "often lost their jobs or were denied health care services" (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5; AVERT 4 Jan. 2007). EngenderHealth, an international non-governmental organization "committed to saving lives worldwide by ensuring safe, accessible, and sustainable health care" (EngenderHealth n.d.a), indicates that Nigeria's Ministry of Health has also reported that stigmatization and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS "are significant problems in health care facilities throughout the country" (n.d.b). Many persons infected with HIV/AIDS reportedly do not seek to access services in certain health centres as a result of the "discriminatory attitudes" of health care workers (ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 53).

A 2006 study conducted by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), an organization of health professionals that investigates and campaigns against human rights abuses (PHR n.d.), found that a "considerable minority" of health care professionals in Nigeria engaged in "discriminatory and/or unethical behaviour" when dealing with persons with HIV/AIDS (15 Aug. 2006, 7). This behaviour included denying medical care, refusing admittance to hospital, and testing for HIV and disclosing confidential medical data without patient consent (PHR 15 Aug. 2006, 7). The report on the study states that

[g]iven the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, ... attitudes and unethical behaviours by health care providers, including those who hold discriminatory attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS, likely have an enormous impact on an individual's life and his or her ability to survive (ibid., 3).

Medical/health services available

According to AVERT, "very few Nigerians have access to basic HIV/AIDS prevention, care, support or treatment services" (4 Jan. 2007). It is estimated that between 3.5 and 3.8 million people in Nigeria are living with HIV/AIDS (UN 1 Sept. 2006; Reuters 14 Mar. 2006; ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 49); however, according to a 13 December 2006 article in the Lagos-based newspaper *This Day*, only about 100,000 infected persons are currently using anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs.

In 2006, the government reportedly introduced free ante-natal care for all pregnant women who are HIV positive (*This Day* 11 Jan. 2007; see also Reuters 14 Mar. 2006). In the same year, the Nigerian government introduced free ARV treatment for persons living with HIV/AIDS (*This Day* 11 Jan. 2007; Reuters 14 Mar. 2006; Norway Aug. 2006, 27). It is estimated that ARV treatment is available at more than 100 centres in Nigeria (*ibid.*; *This Day* 13 Dec. 2006); however, a Doctors Without Borders (Médecins sans frontières, MSF) official, cited in a 26 August 2006 report by the broadcasting service Voice of America (VOA) (VOA n.d.), indicates that most people living in rural areas of Nigeria may not have access to these centres. The Official states that

[i]f you look at the amount of facilities available for patients who need treatment, it's very few for the number of people who need it. The treatment is a big issue. If you go outside the big cities, in some states there is nothing. (VOA 26 Aug. 2006; see also ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 50-51)

Sources consulted also indicate that many Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS cannot afford to pay for the medical tests required for the ARV drugs to be properly administered (Reuters 14 Mar. 2006; Living Hope Organization 26 Jan. 2007; Norway Aug. 2006, 28; ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 52). As well, many cannot afford to pay for the treatment of HIV/AIDS-related infections (*ibid.*; Reuters 14 Mar. 2006; MSF 5 Dec. 2005; PHR 15 Aug. 2006, 2). The costs associated with travelling to HIV/AIDS treatment centres are also cited as a barrier to HIV/AIDS-infected persons receiving treatment in Nigeria (ITPC 28 Nov. 2005, 51; Norway Aug. 2006, 28).

In a 5 December 2005 article, MSF states that "[m]ost of those in urgent need of treatment for AIDS or related illnesses [in Nigeria] have no way of getting it, because treatment is too expensive or otherwise unavailable." In the same vein, a 13 December 2006 article in *This Day* notes that, in the country, "[t]he [ARV] drugs are very expensive and where government interventions are made, they are still inadequate." According to the 2006 PHR study, many Nigerian health care workers have insufficient training on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and limited access to up-to-date information on the disease (15 Aug. 2006, 2).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

AVERT. 26 January 2007. "About AVERT, AVERTing AIDS and HIV." <<http://www.avert.org/about.htm>> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2007]

_____. 4 January 2007. Jane Pennington. "HIV & AIDS in Nigeria." <<http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm>> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2007]

EngenderHealth. N.d.a. "Our Work."
<<http://www.engenderhealth.org/about/ahww.html>> [Accessed 26 Jan. 2007]

_____. N.d.b. "Reducing Stigma and Discrimination Surrounding HIV and AIDS in Nigeria." <<http://www.engenderhealth.org/itf/nigeria-2.html>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

The Guardian [London]. 2 January 2006. Jonathan Steele. "Free Treatment Is the Key to Survival."
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/christmasappeal2005/story/0,,1676396,00.html>> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2007]

International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC). 28 November 2005. *Missing the Target: A Report on HIV/AIDS Treatment Access from the Frontlines*. (Journalists Against Aids Nigeria [JAAIDS] Web site) <http://www.nigeria-aids.org/documents/ITPC_TreatmentReportFinal.pdf> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

Living Hope Organization [Umu, Abia State, Nigeria]. 26 January 2007. Correspondence from a representative.

Médecins sans frontières (MSF). 5 December 2005. "Nigeria: Reducing the Burden Caused by Disease and Violence." <http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?objectid= F799DC80-E018-0C72-099BDBCCB1C3CEEC&component= toolkit.article&method=full_html> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2007]

Norway. August 2006. Geir Skogseth. *Fact-finding Trip to Nigeria (Abuja, Lagos and Benin City) 12-26 March 2006*. <http://www.landinfo.no/asset/491/1/491_1.pdf> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). 15 August 2006. *Nigeria: Access to Health Care for People Living with HIV and AIDS*. <<http://www.physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/documents/reports/nigeria-access.pdf>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

_____. N.d. "About PHR: Mission and History."
<<http://www.physiciansforhumanrights.org/about/mission.html>> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2007]

Reuters. 14 March 2006. "Nigeria Opens 41 New AIDS Treatment Centres."
<<http://www.aegis.org/news/re/2006/RE060316.html>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

This Day [Lagos]. 21 January 2007. Imam Imam. "Ignorance Impedes HIV/AIDS War." (AllAfrica Web site) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200701220913.html>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

_____. 11 January 2007. Chuka Odittah. "Free Treatment for HIV Pregnant Women Available." (AllAfrica Web site) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200701120100.html>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

_____. 13 December 2006. Godwin Haruna. "Confronting the HIV/AIDS Challenge..." (AllAfrica/Factiva)

United Nations (UN). 1 September 2006. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). "Nigeria: Oldest and Youngest Carry the AIDS Burden."
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=55374&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

United States (US). 8 March 2006. Department of State. "Nigeria." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61586.htm>> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2007]

Voice of America (VOA) [Washington]. 26 August 2006. Paul Okolo. "Nigerians Gain Access to New AIDS Drug." <<http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-08/2006-08-26-voa27.cfm?CFID=28930726&CFTOKEN=66015657>> [Accessed 30 Jan. 2007]

_____. N.d. "About VOA." <<http://www.voanews.com/english/about/index.cfm>> [Accessed 30 Jan. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Afrihealth information projects/Afrihealth Optonet Association [Oshodi, Lagos State, Nigeria] did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria, United Kingdom Home Office, United States Department of State.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.