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# NEWS ABOUT THE USAID'S INTEGRATED HEALTH SERVICES ACTIVITY

A newsletter for USAID's Integrated Health Services Activity, implemented by Management Sciences for Health, Dimagi, Inc., Association for Education, Sexuality and Health in Africa (APESSA), Centre for Research in Human Reproduction and Demography (CERRHUD), Centre for Reflection and Action for Integrated Development and Solidarity (CeRADIS), The Organization for Sustainable Development, Strengthening and Self-Promotion of Community Structures (DEDRAS)

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## Discussing past achievements to better prepare for the future

Dear Readers,

As we prepare for the end of our project, I wanted to begin by reflecting on the work of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Integrated Health Services Activity (IHSA). For more than four years, IHSA contributed to improving the quality of health care alongside Benin's leaders, health workers, and people.

In the past months, we were able to reflect strategically on the work achieved. In particular, the critical workshop that brought together representatives of the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance (MASM), prefects, mayors, departmental directors of health, health zone coordinating doctors, and USAID members served as a forum for reflection on achievements after four years of implementation and, more importantly, on steps stakeholders can commit to in the last year of Activity to ensure sustainability of gains beyond the life of the project.

The work that came from the workshop continued in each department to discuss actions at the local level and to examine

challenges and bottlenecks in the focus areas. It is critical that these important achievements for maternal, child, and adolescent health and the entire population can continue after the end of IHSA. IHSA is also working closely with authorities at the central level, particularly the MOH and MASM, to institutionalize good practices in alignment with their strategic goals.

From strong community engagement and lessons learned from the pandemic to the shared achievement toward more resilient and efficient systems, we thank participants for the recommendations provided. We are proud to share with you the important news of our project.

Happy reading to all,

Dr. Floride Niyuhire  
Director of USAID's Integrated  
Health Services Activity



## Successful collaboration with the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to combat malaria

The rainy season is one of the most dangerous times for children under five in northern Benin, who are at high risk of malaria. Since 2019 and with funding from USAID, IHSA has supported the NMCP to implement an annual seasonal malaria prevention chemoprevention campaign that aims to provide preventive treatment to children in the Alibori and Atacora departments.

As a result of the successes from the first year of implementation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria—one of the major players in the fight against malaria in the country—agreed to join the initiative through support to the MOH, making it possible to cover the entire territory in the two departments.

This collaboration has yielded considerable results through campaign cost-sharing, such as improved planning, training of community health workers, and purchasing of needed equipment, to serve more members of the community. In 2022, more than 400,000 children received treatment, representing 96.2% of eligible children in Atacora and 91.2% in Alibori. [For more information, visit PMI's website.](#)



A father administering preventive antimalarial treatment to his child in Alibori under the supervision of a community health worker. Photo credit: Dr. Jocelyn Akakpo/MSH

## Positive effects of coaching sessions on health workers in health facilities

To strengthen the quality of maternal, neonatal, and child health care in Benin, IHSA adopted a coaching technique using the onsite Training Supportive Supervision (OTSS) tool, designed to be used by health zones and validated by the MOH. The OTSS tool's approach enables health management teams to train clinical providers on national protocols and standards and provide ongoing mentoring to health workers. Thanks to the work carried out, health teams can identify challenges and develop and implement action plans to address these problems with oversight from quality improvement teams.

In 2022, 301 health facilities in all 11 Activity-supported health zones benefited from coaching visits, particularly with regard to malaria, family planning, and maternal and child health care. This work has strengthened the skills of 1,937 specialized and non-specialized health workers. Each OTSS visit starts with a thorough analysis of a facility's performance indicators to better target underperforming services. This practice improves health workers' capacity to use data for decision making related to the organization, quality of care, and service delivery.



A midwife conducts direct observation of a pregnant woman for intermittent malaria treatment during pregnancy at the area hospital (Banikoara). Photo credit: Christelle Azanhoué

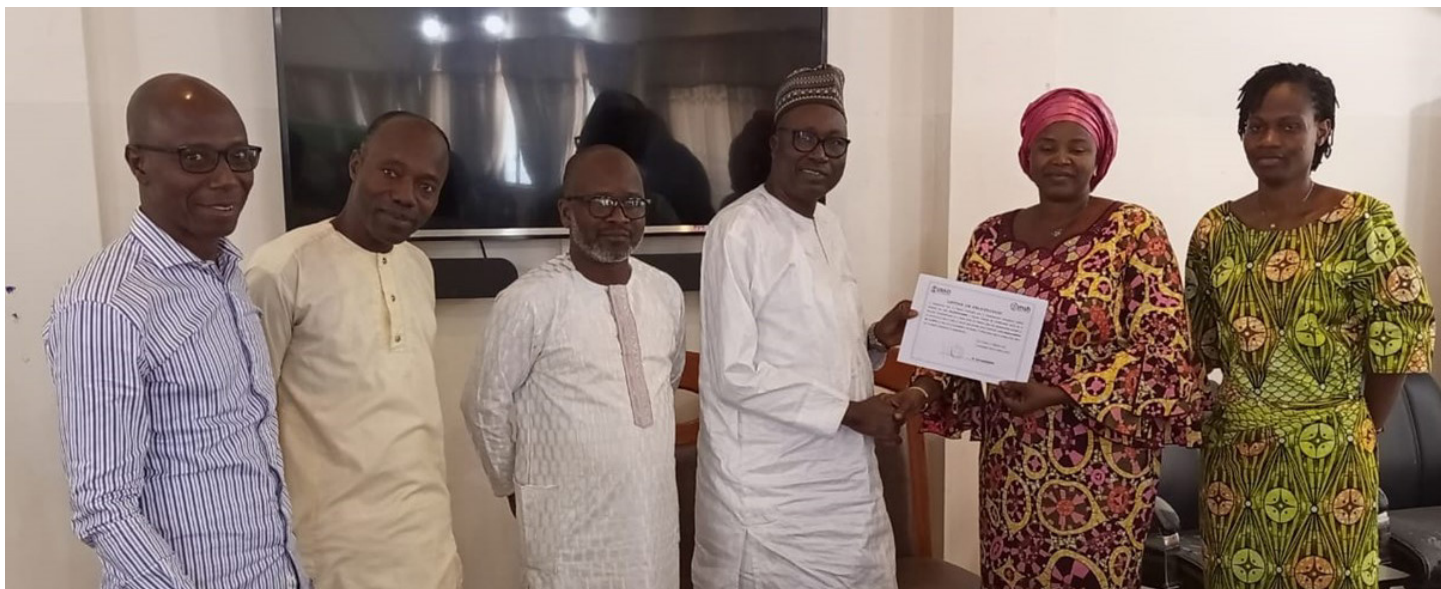


This work has already contributed to some important health improvements. Between the first year of the project (October 2018–September 2019) and the fourth year (October 2021–September 2022) in the supported departments, the rate of pregnant women who received three or more doses of intermittent preventive antimalarial treatment during pregnancy increased from 26% to 47%. In the same period, the coverage rate for four standard antenatal consultations (ANC4) increased from

26% to 36%. The percentage of facilities meeting the minimum standard of malaria clinical care performance increased by 49% during both the third and fourth years of the project.

Finally, the National Council for Primary Health Care and the *Agence Nationale des Soins de Santé Primaires* are reviewing the OTSS tool and considering how it can inform the ongoing revision of strategic documents and tools aimed to guide supervision and monitoring of health services.

## An innovative approach to help reduce maternal mortality in the Atacora department



Presentation of certificates to members of the quality improvement committee of the Atacora DDS by the Secretary General, Dr. Ali Imorou Bah Chabi (middle) in the presence of Mr. Serge Zountcheme, IHSA M&E Director (left). Photo credit: Dr. Odjè Adeichan

Prenatal care is essential to ensure a mother and her child's good health. According to the World Health Organization, four visits are required for good antenatal care (ANC). Unfortunately, the rate of the fourth ANC visit (ANC4)—29.4% in 2021—remains low in Atacora.

Several factors contribute to this ongoing challenge, including insufficient monitoring and logistical means to regularly organize visits in rural areas covered by the health zones and low involvement of the community when staff come to the communities.

IHSA supported the Government of Benin using the Leadership Development Program (LDP+), an approach designed to analyze a situation that individuals are facing and identify challenges to be solved to achieve measurable results defined as a team by developing practical solutions.

Between May and October 2022, IHSA worked with teams from the Departmental Directorate of Health and health

zones to increase the number of women attending ANC4. The Departmental Directorate for Health developed harmonized tools for implementation and monitoring of ANC4 visits by team members while emphasizing the need to share vehicles.

To address the challenge of improving ANC4 attendance, health zone teams set up an ANC appointment reminder system with community health workers and created a group on social media to remind patients about their visits on a weekly basis.

In December 2022, quality improvement teams presented the results of LDP+. Thanks to their work, the department saw an increase of 11 percentage points in ANC4 attendance, which reached 39.32% in October 2022.

Satisfied with the results obtained thanks to LDP+, the Secretary General of the MOH urged the various teams of the health zones in Atacora to keep up efforts to continue improving this indicator.

## Enable better care for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV is a human rights violation; a public health challenge; and a significant barrier to the civic, social, and economic participation of girls and women in Benin. To provide the best support to GBV survivors, IHSA supports the implementation of an innovative and comprehensive approach to ensure easy access to health, social welfare, and judicial assistance for GBV survivors and provides support on their path to financial sustainability. These are practical and essential steps for integrated care of GBV survivors. In December 2022, IHSA supported the Government of Benin in the validation of updated standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure institutionalization of best practices.

SOPs are important documents that aim to allow for coordinated multisectoral action among parties and provide clear guidelines for

caregivers providing care to a GBV survivor. The SOPs were published in 2014, and a revision was overdue as the institutional and legal context for preventing and responding to GBV has evolved in Benin.

IHSA has provided technical and financial support to validate these new SOPs, which culminated in a validation workshop on December 28, 2022, in Cotonou. This workshop brought together 41 participants from the MOH, Ministry of Justice, MASM, Ministry of the Interior, National Institute for Women, and technical and financial partner organizations. These revised SOPs are key in providing medical, psychosocial, social, legal, and judicial assistance. As a next step, the validated document will be printed and disseminated nationally to improve the integrated care of GBV victims nationwide.



Learn more about the project

- Strengthening the quality of maternal, newborn and child health care in Benin
- Reducing malaria-related morbidity and mortality
- The approach to leadership, management and governance
- The fight against gender-based violence
- Increased capacity of the health system and communities to prevent and control COVID-19

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