Nigeria Refocuses Efforts on Universal Access to HIV Treatment, Care

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On a joint visit in Nigeria this week, UNAIDS executive director Michael Sidibé and Ambassador Eric Goosby, who serves at the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, are collaborating with Nigeria's acting president to help the country reach its goal for universal access to HIV care.

Nigeria has the second highest number of people living with the virus on the continent. (South Africa has the highest.)

Earlier this week, Sidibé and Goosby urged Nigeria to eliminate mother-to-child transmission by 2015 and suggested new strategic thinking on how to move ahead. Sidibé also said the country should explore alternate ways to promote sustainable universal access. In addition, UNAIDS has called on nongovernmental organizations, faith-based institutions and the private sector to help combat HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.

Despite having only 30 percent of the resources necessary to meet its goals, Nigeria has created a new nationwide strategy to reach universal access targets. The National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) is coordinating funds to make sure resources get to the people who need it the most.

"The economic meltdown is not a reason for reducing investments that save babies and keep mothers alive," Sidibé said. "We cannot afford to let down the 4 million [Nigerians] living on treatment and the millions who are waiting for it."

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