



**United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria, Public Affairs Section
Plot 1075, Diplomatic Drive, Central Business District, Abuja
Telephone: 09-461-4000. Website at <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>**

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Nigeria's Food and Drug Administration Laboratory Achieves Key International Accreditation through USAID's Support

Abuja, Nigeria – A report from the International Policy Network documents an alarming number of people killed worldwide every day by fake medicines, especially in developing countries. The report estimates that fake tuberculosis and malaria drugs alone kill 700,000 people a year, including in Nigeria. Tackling the scourge of illegal medicines in Nigeria is a daunting task. But for anyone who has lost a loved one because of poor quality medicine, the stakes could not be higher.

The good news is that Nigeria is taking concrete steps to turn back the tide. Nigeria is not just improving the quality of medicines it produces, but is also testing to make sure imported medicines are in fact what they say they are. Nigeria is doing this in accordance with internationally accepted certifications so that this supervision is credible to Nigerians as well as the outside world. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is a partner in this critical effort.

USAID's Director in Nigeria, Michael T. Harvey, today presented the International Organization for Standardization quality certificate to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) Central Drug Control Laboratory in Yaba, Lagos. This is the latest example of USAID's ongoing effort to contribute to the quality of medicines in Nigeria and the West Africa sub-region. Nigeria is one of over 50 countries receiving technical and financial assistance through USAID's \$110 million "Promoting the Quality of Medicines" program, implemented by the U.S. Pharmacopeial (USP) Convention. The program works with regulatory authorities in developing countries around the world to safeguard the quality of medicines, with a particular focus on priority medicines for treating malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis.

"Obtaining this world-class accreditation is a laborious process that demonstrates a strong commitment to excellence at every level of the laboratory," said USAID/Nigeria's Mission Director Harvey. "The NAFDAC Central Drug Control Laboratory's dedication to continuous improvement will put it in a position to contribute to improving access to good quality medicines, especially antimalarials."

The American National Standards Institute-American Society of Quality National Accreditation Board based in Washington, D.C. awarded accreditation to the NAFDAC laboratory. "We want to express our congratulations to NAFDAC," said Dr. Bill Hirt, Director of Accreditation for the board. "We found excellent facilities and document systems, and highly proficient and

professional staff. It was heartening to see the effective partnership of the US Pharmacopeia program plus the generous financial backing and oversight of the USAID. In the eyes of the global technical community, NAFDAC can rightfully consider themselves 'world class'."

“Pharmaceutical service is one of the pillars of the health care industry in Nigeria,” noted Dr. Paul Orhii, Director General of NAFDAC. “The accreditation will support not only Nigeria’s own pharmaceutical industry, 80 percent of which is located in or around the commercial capital Lagos, it will also help monitor the quality of imported products and help ensure that only safe, quality medicines are distributed to its nearly 170 million citizens. Plus, as an internationally accredited quality lab, NAFDAC laboratory can contribute to the quality of medicines in the entire region by serving as a reference for pharmaceutical manufacturers seeking World Health Organization product prequalification.”

“Much of the laboratory work essential to quality testing medicines entails complex methods and procedures that must be followed meticulously to ensure accurate results. The importance of this accuracy cannot be understated,” said Patrick Lukulay, Ph.D, Director of the program. “With this accreditation, the NAFDAC laboratory demonstrates that its technical operations and administrative systems are functioning at the highest quality levels by international standards, producing accurate, valid results that can be trusted by the international community.”

The accreditation of the laboratory in Nigeria is particularly important, because Lagos is a primary port of entry for medicines, not just for Nigeria, but also for all of West Africa. Over 60 percent of the medicines in Nigeria are tested at the laboratory.

The laboratory accreditation is just one of many ways USAID is building technical capacity in an effort to improve the quality of medicines on the continent. To promote sustainability and strengthen pharmaceutical testing capabilities the program trains hundreds of regulatory and pharmaceutical industry professionals in Africa.

USAID invests in programs that promote agricultural productivity, combat maternal and child mortality, reduce the prevalence of infectious diseases, foster private sector development and sustainable economic growth, help communities adapt to a changing environment, and elevate the role of women and girls.

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