

# Solina

MONITOR

## Tenth Edition

JULY 2023



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**7+ YEARS OF IMPACT ON  
NNRISP PROJECT**

## Project update

### **04 MASS DRUG ADMINISTRATION (MDA) OF AZITHROMYCIN SCALE UP WORKSHOP**

In May 2023, the Federal Ministry of Health collaborated with the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research to convene a 2-day workshop to gain a shared understanding of the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) Azithromycin intervention and its potential impact.

### **06 I3'S FIRST INVESTMENT PITCH EVENT**

In June 2023, in collaboration with our esteemed partners, SouthBridge A&I, and Salient Advisory, we successfully hosted the inaugural investment pitch event during the Africa CEO Forum annual summit in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire.

## Highlights



### **FEATURED ARTICLE ON World Immunisation Week 2023**

The NPHCDA reported that routine immunization coverage in Nigeria dropped from 69% in January 2020 to 53% in May 2020. This represents a 23% decline in coverage in just five months. Without the big catch-up, Nigeria is at risk of seeing a resurgence of deadly diseases like polio or worse still, a disease outbreak in children. Read more on Page 14.



### **MEET OUR FELLOWS**

In June 2023, SCIDaR welcomed international graduate students for their summer internship program. The fellowship program fosters technical cross-learning between SCIDaR staff and graduate interns while enhancing a positive work culture. Meet our premier cohort on pages 8 and 9.



### **A QUICK SURVEY**

Feedback is crucial and we will like you to fill out this survey and let us know the kind of content you would like to see on subsequent editions. [Please click here](#)

# Principal's Note



**Dr. Uchenna Igbokwe**  
Principal, SCIDaR

Dear reader,

I am delighted to present the tenth edition of the Solina Monitor newsletter!

Our hope is that this newsletter not only keeps you informed about the important and impactful work that Solina is doing but also shares our valuable experiences and lessons learned along the way.

In this edition, we spotlight the Lagos Telehealth implementation research, the MDA Azithromycin intervention workshop, the i3 project's Investment Pitch event in Abidjan, the Top Team Effectiveness retreat and the Smiles for Mothers National Scale-Up Event. We are also excited to introduce you to several new projects.

In addition, we are thrilled to announce the arrival of four Principals, highlighting our tremendous growth over the last few years, driven by the incredible people of Solina. We spotlight SCIDaR summer fellows from esteemed international universities who are furthering our mission to make a lasting impact in healthcare.

We highly value your feedback. Kindly take a moment to fill out **this survey**, enabling us to deliver even more engaging content in the future.

Enjoy!



## Telehealth Kickoff Meeting for the Implementation Research to test equitable digital-first care in Lagos



On June 7, 2023, our team in collaboration with VillageReach supported the Lagos State Health Management Agency to host the official kickoff meeting for the implementation research aimed at testing equitable digital-first healthcare in Lagos State.

The meeting was convened to establish a mutual understanding of the implementation research's goal to test equitable digital-first care in Lagos State, obtain the buy-in of relevant stakeholders to support the implementation research and inaugurate members of the Implementation Research Steering Committee.

At the close of the meeting, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Dr. Olusegun Ogboye inaugurated a 10-member Committee to oversee the first Implementation Research to Test Equitable Digital-First care and explore telehealth potentials. The committee will be led by Dr. Emmanuella Zamba, General Manager of LASHMA, with other members including Dr. Dayo Olajide, Mr. Olukunle Daramola, Mr. Obinna Ukachukwu, Prof. Kikelomo Ololade Wright, Mr. Mobolaji Onimole, Mr. Peter Olowu, Mr. Oluwaleke Jegede, Mr. Olaitan Oyedun and Miss Abiodun Abubakar.

The kickoff meeting was attended by fifty-two (52) participants representing diverse sectors, including healthcare, finance, media, and government agencies, emphasising the significance and urgency of the kickoff meeting's agenda



# National Scale-Up Event To Disseminate Integrated PPH Response Best Practices From Kano, Lagos And Niger States, Nigeria



Cross-section of some participants at the event



Panel session with the program states during the event

The Smiles for Mothers consortium in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) conducted a dissemination event in February 2023, with the theme “National Scale-up Event to Disseminate Integrated PPH Response Best Practices from Kano, Lagos and Niger States, Nigeria”. The event which was attended by representatives from BMGF, 37 State Government, USAID, TA Connect and other partners was geared at sharing the efforts made by the FMoH and Smiles for Mothers program to reduce maternal mortality as a result of postpartum haemorrhage, disseminating lessons from the program implementation in Kano, Lagos, and Niger and facilitate scale-up of these interventions to other states in Nigeria.

The event was also used to introduce the Smiles for Mothers playbook and opportunities for scale-up of SfM innovations and present a roadmap for the adoption of the WHO recommendations, including the introduction of heat-stable Carbetocin to other states in Nigeria. Read the full report on our [website](#).

## Introducing the Smiles for Mothers Playbook

The playbook provides guidance on the adoption and rollout of the WHO recommendations on uterotonics for the prevention of PPH, including the introduction of heat-stable Carbetocin.

It serves as a valuable reference tool for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in maternal health initiatives to navigate the implementation process more effectively.

[Download the playbook](#)



# Mass Drug Administration (MDA) of Azithromycin Scale Up Workshop



On the 18th and 19th of May, 2023, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH), in collaboration with the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), convened a 2-day workshop to gain a shared understanding of the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) Azithromycin intervention and its potential impact, initiate scale-up planning and establish modalities for ongoing stakeholder engagement on scale-up.

During this meeting, our team presented a scale-up model for MDA Azithromycin, addressing key questions related to state prioritization, intervention duration, projected impact, and resource requirements for scale-up.

At the end of the workshop, participants agreed to conduct research in two to three states to assess the intervention's impact on mortality in the 1-59 months age group, adopt World Health Organization recommendation of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) (>60/1000 live births) and/or Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) (>80/1000 live births) as the criteria for determining states eligible for scale-up of MDA Azithromycin, and conduct a readiness assessment to prioritize eligible states.

Participants included representatives from the FMoH, NIMR, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Sightsavers, Solina Centre for International Development and Research (SCIDaR), Corona Management Systems (CMS) and eHealth Africa.



# Top Team Effectiveness Retreat



On the 12th and 13th of January 2023, the Solina Group supported the Nigeria Health Leaders retreat convened by Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat' and Nigeria Health Commissioners' Forum.

The retreat was geared towards enhancing the effectiveness of the state health leadership teams across the thirty-six (36) states and the FCT. Several sessions were focused on strengthening health systems and collaborations in the country.

This retreat was attended by Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu, WHO Assistant Director-General for Surveillance and Health Emergency Intelligence, Dr Oyebanji Filani, Chairman of the Nigeria Health Commissioners' Forum (NHCF) and Health Commissioner for Ekiti State, Dr Hadiza Balarabe, Deputy Governor of Kaduna state, Dr Joe Abah, Country Director DAI, Dr Annas Kolo, Director Hospital Services FMoH, and the heads of state health MDAs.

At the end of the retreat, participants made commitments to continue expanding engagements on Top Team Effectiveness with all leaders of state health MDAs and engage with other top health sector leaders in the represented states on the workshop output and identified interventions.



## i3 inaugural investment pitch event in Abidjan

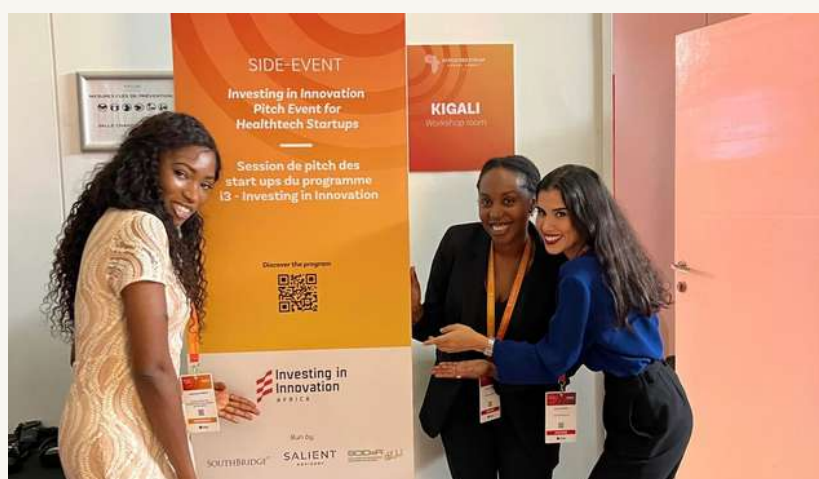


On June 6, 2023, in collaboration with our esteemed partners SouthBridge A&I and Salient Advisory, we successfully hosted the inaugural investment pitch event for the Investing In Innovation (i3) Africa program which took place during the Africa CEO Forum annual summit in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire.

The objective of the event was to foster meaningful connections between participating startups and investors, raise funds from investors with a gender lens to support women-led innovators and enhance the visibility and recognition of the startups through press coverage and social networks.

A total of eight (including three women-led) startups within the cohort of thirty-one (31) had the opportunity to pitch their ideas to more than twenty (20) investors, including prominent organisations such as Africa50 Infrastructure Investment Platform, Novartis, DFC, IFC - International Finance Corporation, Roche, and AXA Assurance Maroc, among others.

Following the investment pitch event, seven innovators had the privilege of engaging with key government leaders in Cote D'Ivoire, including the Ivorian Ministry of Health, Technical Advisory to the Minister of Innovation, and the Director-General of AIRP (AIRP - Autorité Ivoirienne de Regulation Pharmaceutique), the Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency.







# ACCELERATING NUTRITION RESULT IN NIGERIA OYO STATE.

The Oyo team held a Review Meeting/Award Ceremony with Community Volunteers and LGA Teams (Nutrition Focal Persons, Health Educators, etc.) on January 19, 2023, at the Ibadan Northeast LGA Secretariat Main Hall, Iwo-road, Ibadan

The objectives of the meeting were to provide implementation feedback to the Community Volunteers and LGA Team for the work done in the year 2022, recognize and celebrate the efforts of the Team Leads and Community Volunteers via award and gift presentations, flag off the ANRiN Field Jacket for project visibility and discuss the implementation plan for the year 2023 and how to achieve the targets before the due date.

Participants at the meeting included the Oyo State Project Implementation Unit Team, Nutrition Focal Persons, Health Educators, Team Leads, Community Volunteers from eight direct implementation LGAs, and Executive Directors of the three Community-based Organizations engaged in the program also joined the meeting.

Key highlights of the meeting included the presentation of awards to the Team Leads and Community Volunteers across eight (8) LGAs, the flagship of the ANRiN Field jacket and discussions.

Watch the highlight on our [YouTube page](#).

## New Project Update

### Antenatal Risk Stratification (ARS) Project

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Solina has teamed up with Helium Health for this exciting Gates Challenge grant to deploy an antenatal risk stratification (ARS) tool in Lagos, Kano, and Akwa Ibom States in Nigeria. The project's objective is to enhance knowledge about individualised pregnancy risk levels and facilitate early decision-making concerning the need for appropriate care and the ideal location to receive healthcare, thereby addressing the first and second phases of delays.

Helium Health and Solina will adapt an existing solution to support ARS by combining patient demographic, behavioural, and obstetric clinical information to predict and communicate antenatal risk levels to pregnant women via HeliumDoc and HeliumEMR platforms. The key intervention areas of the project include access to pregnant women, risk stratification and awareness of risk levels, linkage to health facilities, and the elimination of financial barriers.

Read more on the [website](#).

### Team Members



*Uchenna Igbokwe*



*Eba Ajima*



*Eric Aigbogun*



*Valentine Amasiatu*



*Ashiat Bakare*

## New Project Update

### FOR M(om) Project

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The FOR M(om) initiative aims to enhance maternal healthcare and reduce maternal mortality rates in 250 public and private healthcare facilities across Delta, Lagos, and Kano states in Nigeria. The initiative is being led by MSD for Mothers, which has partnered with a consortium comprising Helium Health, SCIDaR, and AFRIDA.

The consortium will work to improve the quality of maternal care by enabling public and private healthcare facilities to access financing to enhance their maternal services. Additionally, they will implement systems-strengthening interventions that include capacity building of healthcare workers, digitisation of patient health records, and community engagement to amplify and sustain the impact of the health facility financing. The FOR M(om) project has a duration of three (3) years, during which time it is expected to significantly improve maternal health outcomes and strengthen systems for safer childbirth in the three target states.

### Team Members



*Uchenna Igbokwe*



*Efosa Omoregie*



*Aseeyah Umar*



*Thelma Oriade*



*Oghenekaro Udhawu*



*Blessing Ajie*

## New Project Update

### Expanded Special Project for Elimination of NTD (ESPEN)

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ESPEN is a BMGF-funded project implemented with eHealth Africa created through a joint venture by BMGF and the WHO regional office for Africa (WHO AFRO) to accelerate the control and elimination of the five most prevalent NTDs to ensure the availability of quality data for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) surveillance, management, and control. The ESPEN portal was the first of its kind to publicly share sub-national data on NTDs consistently for all 48 countries in the AFRO region and has proven resourceful in the strategic NTDs elimination efforts.

Despite the obvious value-add that the ESPEN portal brings to the management of the NTDs, the national NTD programs have not optimally utilized the portal to facilitate decision-making. Hence, To improve the uptake and utilization of the ESPEN portal platform by National NTD programs, the project seeks to evaluate the platform to holistically understand the weaknesses with its technical integrity and end-user experience. This will guide recommendations to strengthen the platform and potentially guide expansion to other diseases.

The specific objectives of the six months project include reviewing the integrity of the ESPEN portal and the comparability with data from other sources, assessing how well the portal is meeting the needs of its end-users and exploring the potential for expansion to new diseases and capturing the vision and support needed for the portal in the following strategic phase of ESPEN (through 2025)

#### Team Members



*Oluwaleke Jegede*



*Kunle Oreagba*



*Sodiq Yusuff*



*Olufemi Peters*



*Muyiwa Akinpelu*



*Sarah Edet*

# Congratulations

## Meet SCIDaR's new Principals



***Chukwunonso Nwaokorie***



***Raihanah Ibrahim***



***Babafemi Aina***



***Oluwaleke Jegede***

## **Chit-Chat with a new Principal on the block**



**Mr Femi Aina**

- **Can you tell us about your journey at SCIDaR?** *My journey with Solina Group started in May 2012, as a Senior Associate. Over the years, I worked on multiple functions, including finance, admin, and programs.*
- **How do you feel about your promotion to a Principal's level?** *I am excited to be a principal. It is a reward for years of hard work and resilience. The accompanying responsibilities are also exciting.*
- **Is this a fulfilled aspiration for you?** *May be not necessarily where I saw myself a couple of years back, but it is evidence of steady growth.*
- **Knowing there are "shege days", what keeps you going/motivated at work?** *A constant reminder that if the rain will stop, and the night will end, the "shege days" will not last forever. I am also propelled by the people I inspire at work.*
- **If we can go back in time, what advice will you give your intern/analyst self?** *Work smart, and not necessarily too hard and make more time for family and friends. No lost moment can be perfectly recreated*

# Chit-Chat with a new Principal on the block



**Raihanah Ibrahim**

- **Can you tell us about your journey at SCIDaR?** I joined in May 2017 as an Analyst 2 and was staffed on the ActionPlusUp project (which morphed into ACHIEVE and now, ASPIRE). Since then, I've worked in different capacities on about 10-12 projects
- **How do you feel about your promotion to a Principal's level?** I feel great. It's fulfilling to hit a milestone and it validates the work I've put in and what I know is possible. It's also a great calling to be a trailblazer and an only - and it fuels me to make it possible for the many amazing female talents in the organisation. I consider it a win and a challenge
- **Is this a fulfilled aspiration for you?** Yes
- **Knowing there are "shege days", what keeps you going/motivated at work?** The Good big picture days - the days when the impact from all the rigorous hard work is finally apparent. It's the one extra child we get vaccinated or the initiative we get adopted as national policy or a facility we transform, or a person we capacitate to do excellent work.

These are the days that carry me on the work side. Even more so, the people make it all worth it. One of my favourite things is knowing I'm walking into a building of super smart people who consistently challenge me to think and to do. It's inspiring. I'm especially excited about the growth curves of our people too - there's something motivating about seeing a person you mentor evolve through their journey from intern to Manager, and go out there to do great things after. Both of these make all the pain worth it.

- **If we can go back in time, what advice will you give your intern/analyst self?**

**You have the equipment, you just need to read the manual and tinker with it a bit.** It's okay to not have it figured out in the first instance - the work is to trust that you have what it takes to be here and the resources to figure it out. You also don't have to do so alone - Draw on the people and the products we have already. And remember that a lot of your anxiety is imagined.

**Take stock and smell the roses.** The work we do is so fast-paced, and excellent that the small wins are sometimes not appreciated. Step back often, audit your achievements, smell the roses, and use that to fuel yourself. I learned along the way to keep a simple weekly journal of my highlights, lowlights and challenges for the next week. On my weekly flights back from the state, I would write bullets in my notes app - celebrating everything from as little as speaking up in a meeting or successfully writing a document that didn't need edits. Those little things add up and make a huge difference.

**Nurture your relationships.** We spend a lot of time with our heads buried in our laptops. Talk to people, pick up the calls, and have lunches. Develop even tighter relationships with your colleagues and friends. They will take you through the hard days.

**Be deliberate about your health** - Take the "silly" mental health walks, invest in better ergonomics, and find the right psychosocial support.

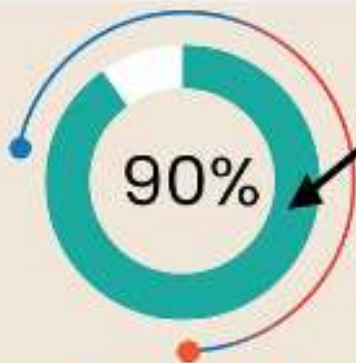
**Close mouths don't get fed.** Speak up and own your journey. work smart, and not necessarily too hard and make more time for family and friends. No lost moment can be perfectly recreated



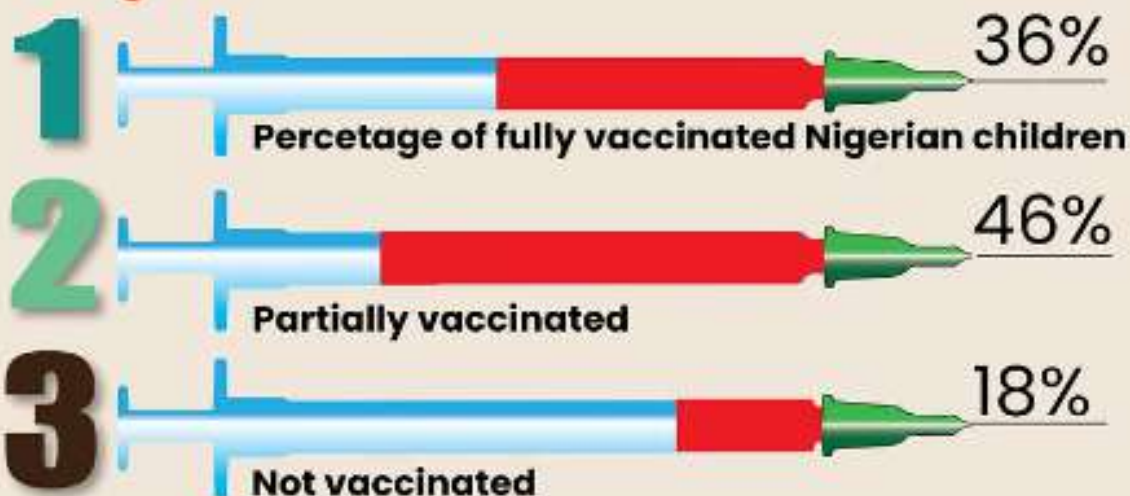
# Why does Nigeria need to catch up ?



The National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) reported that routine immunisation coverage in Nigeria dropped from 69% in January 2020 to 53% in May 2020. This represents a 23% decline in coverage in just five months. Without the big catch-up, Nigeria is at risk of seeing a resurgence of deadly diseases like polio or worse still, a disease outbreak in children.



The Immunisation Agenda 2030 has set a global target of 90% national immunisation coverage, however, according to the 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey/National Immunisation Coverage Survey (MICS/NICS), 36% of Nigerian children are fully vaccinated, 46% are partially vaccinated, and 18% are not vaccinated.





## Meet our fellows at SCIDaR



**Madison Danoff**

- **Institution:** *Harvard Business School*
- **Course of Study/Area of Specialization -** *MBA in General Management*
- **SCIDaR Program(s):** *Smiles for Mothers*

- **Institution:** *Ecole des Haute Etudes en Sante Publique (EHESP), Paris*
- **Course of Study/Area of Specialization:** *Master's in public health (Health Policy and Management)*
- **SCIDaR Program(s):** *Investing in Innovation (i3) project*



**Ayodeji Ibraheem**

## Meet our fellows at SCIDaR



**Olamide Akintibubo**

- **Institution:** *Harvard Medical School*
- **Course of Study/Area of Specialization:** *Global Health Delivery (MMSc)*
- **SCIDaR Program(s):** *Care PPMV project*

- **Institution:** *Harvard School of Public Health*
- **Course of Study/Area of Specialization:** *Maternal and Child Health*
- **SCIDaR Program(s):** *ANRiN program*

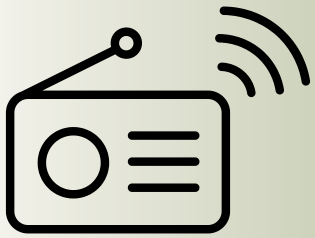


**Sofia Leonardo**

# Photo Dump from NNRISP Close out event



Watch our impact story on [YouTube](#) and read our [knowledge products](#)



[How Gates, Dangote's friendship has helped Nigerians](#)

[CRoWN initiative: Enhancing immunization uptake for zero-dose children in Bauchi State](#)

[Focus On: Investing in Innovation Programme](#)

[Bauchi, Borno and others laud impact of routine immunization strengthening project on healthcare services](#)

[Child Immunization: Govt. cannot do this alone, NPHCDA calls for support](#)

[ADF and Gates Foundation to support Northern states on routine childhood immunization](#)

[Nigeria: Crown Initiative - Enhancing Immunisation Uptake for Zero-Dose Children in Bauchi State](#)



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# **SPECIAL THANKS**

## to the contributors

**Ayomide Fasan**  
(Editor)

**Victor Adetimilehin and Oluwabukola Shaba**  
(Co-editors)

**Mubarakat Awosanya**  
(ANRiN project update)

**Aseeyah Umar**  
(FOR M(o)m project update)

**Anjola Ayodele**  
(i3 project update)

**Uloma Ngwoke**  
(Telehealth project update)

**Onyinye Ogini and Eba Ajima**  
(ARS Project update)

**Bukola Shaba & Hauwa Ahmed**  
(Smiles for Mothers project update)

**Osezefe Ehimen and Adebisi Adeyoyin**  
(TTE project update)

**Daniel Akko**  
(MDA Azithromycin intervention update)

**Amina Abdulkarim & Sarah Edet**  
(ESPEN program update)

***See previous editions***

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