

## **Charting a Course for Lassa Fever Vaccine Development: Early Lessons from Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Lassa fever is a persistent threat to public health in West Africa, where Nigeria accounts for most confirmed cases and deaths annually. Without a licensed vaccine and very limited medical countermeasures, case fatality rates remain unacceptably high. In response to this urgent gap, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health established the Task Team on Effective Vaccines for Lassa Fever in Nigeria in 2023 with the mandate of devising a structured approach to guide the national effort. This study presents early insights from its first year of operations and lessons learned from implementing a country-led coordination mechanism for Lassa fever vaccine development.

### **Methods**

A descriptive analysis of the task force implementation process was conducted using internal records, progress reports, and strategic planning documents. Supplementary semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders representing regulatory bodies, research institutions, public health agencies, and global partners.

### **Results**

Within its first year, the task force developed a work plan, mapped research institutions and laboratories for clinical trial readiness, initiated regulatory consultations, and established partnerships with global actors such as CEPI and IAVI. Its progress has been aided by high-level political commitment, inclusive representation, and strategic alignment with national health security goals.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria's experience demonstrates the value of institutionalized national coordination mechanisms in advancing vaccine R&D for epidemic-prone diseases. The Task Team on Effective Vaccine for Lassa Fever in Nigeria has successfully established foundational structures for Lassa fever vaccine development and offers a replicable governance model for other endemic countries.