

## **From lessons to action: Stakeholders' insights from past interventions in Lassa Fever outbreak in Ebonyi State, Nigeria for improved public health outcomes**

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### **Introduction**

Lassa fever remains a significant public health concern, especially in West Africa, where it is endemic. Nigeria continues to experience recurrent outbreaks, resulting in high morbidity and mortality. Evaluating past outbreaks is crucial to identify effective intervention strategies and existing gaps. This study assessed the effectiveness of previous interventions, community awareness, and engagement in infection prevention and control during the most recent Lassa fever outbreak in Ebonyi State

### **Methods**

This descriptive cross-sectional study involved 305 stakeholders across 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Ebonyi State, using a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through interviewer-administered questionnaires and key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 23, while thematic content analysis was applied to qualitative data. Means and standard deviations summarized continuous variables, and frequencies and proportions described categorical

variables. Associations between variables were tested using Chi-square, with statistical significance set at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

### **Results**

Most stakeholders were aware of Lassa fever symptoms, primarily through media sources. Notably, 61.3% participated in Lassa fever prevention programs, supported by qualitative findings which identified community health education and vector control as the most effective strategies. About 34.1% considered the outbreak's impact to be very serious, while 58.0% expressed low confidence in the health system's response capacity. Among healthcare providers, 11.5% cited a low index of suspicion as a gap in case management. Additionally, 33.8% emphasized the role of health education in community engagement and raising awareness.

### **Conclusion**

Although stakeholders are aware of effective intervention strategies, a lack of confidence in the health system's preparedness could undermine

future responses. Strengthening health education, environmental sanitation, and healthcare capacity is essential to improve outbreak preparedness and response.