

## **Lessons learnt from the 2023 Lassa fever outbreak in an endemic Nigerian State: A World Health Organisation-guided after-action review process**

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### **Introduction**

Recurrent Lassa fever outbreaks persist in Nigeria, particularly in endemic states. In the aftermath of the response to the 2023 Lassa fever outbreak in Edo State, a multi-agency After-Action Review (AAR) was conducted to assess response activities, identify gaps, best practices, and strengthen future outbreak preparedness. The study's objective was to document lessons learnt from the 2023 Lassa fever outbreak response in Edo State, Nigeria

### **Methods**

A descriptive qualitative design was employed for this study. It involved a one-day AAR workshop held in June 2023 in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Eighty participants were purposively selected. They included Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) from Local Government Areas (LGAs), public health professionals from the state and national levels, and partner organisations. Seven response pillars participated in group discussions and plenary sessions while RRTs from high-burden LGAs

presented their response activities. All sessions were guided by the World Health Organisation AAR debrief approach. Real time data was collected, followed by thematic analysis and stakeholder validation. Since the AAR was a standard practice in public health, ethical approval was not needed.

### **Results**

The AAR showed strengths in prompt activation and coordination of the Public Health Emergency Operation Centre, and partner engagement. A significant best practice was the strategic empowerment and deployment of the LGA RRTs in high-burden areas, which enhanced rapid case detection, decentralised contact tracing, and improved response time to evacuate cases for isolation and treatment. Gaps comprised inadequate IPC supplies at peripheral facilities and issues with risk communication in rural areas.

## **Conclusion**

The study underscores the role of LGA RRT in containing the 2023 Lassa fever outbreak in Edo State. Further strengthening of these teams can help preparedness and response of future outbreaks.