



Art project by CADEC as part of CoMo competition to mark launch of WHO's Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis.

## Raising awareness about meningitis in Nigeria

Care and Development Centre, Nigeria, is raising awareness about meningitis and advocating for better care and support for survivors

Care and Development Centre (CADEC) is a non-governmental organisation based in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It works on a range of women's health and development issues and is particularly noted for awareness raising around cancer and meningitis.

"Meningitis may not immediately seem like a women's health issue," explains CADEC Director, Mrs Omorodion Rhoda Omoile. "But women's roles as caregivers means they are often responsible for family health matters such as organising vaccinations or looking after sick children. Women also often have the main burden of care for family members with meningitis-related impairments, which can bring stigma and adversely impact their own well-being and opportunities."

CADEC organises numerous activities to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and encourage vaccine uptake. Outreach events at local markets are an opportunity to talk to mothers buying or selling food stuffs, who might not otherwise have access to health information. Outreach sessions are organised in local languages and a variety of locations – particularly rural areas – to ensure that 'hard to reach' women are included.

CADEC also take their messages into schools, community meetings, health centres, and other public forums through a variety of mediums including discussion groups and drama. Since COVID, the organisation has been able to do less public work but has continued to post

### Organisation:

Care and Development Centre (CADEC)

### Location:

Nigeria

### Background:

CADEC has five paid staff and is supported by volunteers

### Contact:

Director, Omorodion Rhoda Omoile

### Change objective:

To help prevent meningitis through awareness raising and to advocate for better support for those affected

“I have met with some families and individuals suffering the after effects of meningitis, which has made me determined to help defeat meningitis through media campaigns and social mobilization; helping people with meningitis to get the rapid care they need and educating mothers to vaccinate their babies from nine months to fifteen months with Men A vaccine.”

- Rhoda Omoile Omorodion  
Care and Development Centre, Nigeria



awareness and prevention messages on their social media channels and use radio and other media to raise the profile of the disease. Highlights include a radio debate on Nig. Info 92.3 F.M (which attracts more than 20 million listeners) to mark World Meningitis Day. Here Rhoda talked about the symptoms of the disease and its devastating impact and answered questions from the public. Many listeners called in to share their own experience of meningitis and welcomed the fact that this disease, which is little understood in Nigeria, was being talked about in this forum. Listen to the [debate](#).

CADEC have also raised the importance of meningitis awareness interventions with local health authorities. “Health ministries and Primary Health Care Management Boards with limited resources don’t see meningitis as a priority in the same way as HIV or malaria at the moment,” says Rhoda. “We try to sensitise them to the swift and devastating effect of the disease – and the long-term social and economic impact on survivors and their families.”

## Results and impact

In 2019, Rhoda was invited to address MenAfriNet (a consortium of organisations working to combat meningitis in Sub-Saharan Africa) and presented evidence on the need for better after-care for survivors. “Interventions can be just simple things like hearing or mobility aids, to help survivors achieve what they want in life,” she says.

Rhoda has also been invited to join WHO’s Africa Region Technical Working Group for the Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis. Here she draws on CADEC’s wide experience of the impact of meningitis, particularly on women, and feels passionately that she and other civil society organisations have an important role to play in bridging discussions with communities, government and international agencies.

*“I visited a mother caring full-time for her adolescent daughter, who was bedridden and incontinent after contracting meningitis at six months old. Effective implementation of the Roadmap will mean others do not have to suffer the impact of preventable meningitis”*  
Omorodion Rhoda Omoile

Rhoda is positive about the opportunity represented by the Roadmap and encourages other patient groups to use it as an entry point for advocacy. “The Roadmap has five pillars covering prevention, diagnosis, surveillance and care – but groups can focus attention where they have capacity and expertise,” she says. “We’re concentrating on ‘raising awareness’ and on ‘better support and care’ because that’s where our experience lies.”

## Key learnings

- **Think about how to best reach people.** Don’t expect people to find their way to your information. Sometimes you need to go to where they are and communicate your messages in the way that is most accessible to them (think about language, format, location etc).
- **Work with other groups in your context.** Other diseases such as HIV and malaria have powerful civil society networks advocating on their issues. Make links with other health and development groups to achieve a stronger voice.
- **Respond to opportunities.** Respond to opportunities to talk at events and forums. This will help build your profile and reputation and may lead to other invitations and opportunities.

## Further resources:

- Care and Development Centre [Facebook](#) page
- The Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis [Four page summary](#)
- Information from CADEC about [Vaccine Uptake](#)

## Advocacy tip

### Get involved in the Roadmap.

The Roadmap needs civil society voices. Think about your group’s capacity, and its unique experience or expertise, and work on that issue. You don’t need to worry about the whole Roadmap.

## Contact details:

Meningitis Research Foundation  
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