

NIGERIA VACCINE SAFETY PROJECT

NEWSLETTER
September – December
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About Us

The Nigeria Vaccine Safety Project is a national initiative aimed at strengthening the country's capacity to monitor Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) and improve the response to Vaccine-Related Events (VREs). With technical and financial support from the U.S. CDC, AFENET works with the Government of Nigeria to implement the project under the NSTOP platform.

The Project focuses on improving vaccine pharmacovigilance, strengthening response systems, and building public confidence—especially as new vaccines are introduced and efforts increase to reach zero-dose and under-immunized children nationwide.

Welcome to Our E-Newsletter!

Welcome to the first edition of the Vaccine Safety Project e-Newsletter, highlighting key milestones from September to December 2025.

During this period, the Project, through strong multi-agency collaboration, convened the inaugural AEFI TWG Meeting with FMOH&SW, NPHCDA, NCDC, NAFDAC, state health agencies, AFENET, and the U.S. CDC, strengthening coordination, surveillance, and readiness for AEFI and VRE monitoring.

This quarter also marked the finalization of the National VRE Response Plan, the development of one-page job aids for health workers and caregivers, and other achievements including the Data Harmonization Meeting and the Causality Assessment Workshop.

We hope you find this edition informative and reflective of our shared commitment to improving vaccine safety in Nigeria.



VACCINE SAFETY SPOTLIGHT: INAUGURATION OF THE AEFI TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP — STRENGTHENING READINESS AND COORDINATION

The first-ever AEFI Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting was convened on 22nd–23rd September 2025 in Abuja. The meeting aimed to enhance AEFI surveillance systems through strengthening coordination and defining roles and responsibilities that will ensure Nigeria's readiness for all immunization activities including introduction measles rubella vaccine in Nigeria by bringing national agencies and implementing partners together.

Participants included representatives from the FMoH & SW, NPHCDA, NAFDAC, NCDC, World Health Organization (WHO), US CDC, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and other partners.



The meeting underscored the critical importance of a robust Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) surveillance system in safeguarding public confidence and ensuring the success of vaccination campaigns, which represent substantial public health and financial investments.



- Enhancing AEFI response, including the provision of AEFI kits, clear case investigation protocols, and designated clinicians for serious case management.



Key discussions highlighted the need for:

- Strengthening AEFI surveillance systems through harmonization of AEFI reporting tools, improved data quality, and integration with existing disease surveillance structures.
- Improving capacity building and mentorship for healthcare workers, supervisors, and sub-national staff to address knowledge gaps and staff turnover.



- Resource mobilization and sustainability, with calls for dedicated budget lines, state-level commitments, and stronger multi-sectoral collaboration.
- Advancing digital integration, while acknowledging current infrastructure gaps, to improve timeliness, feedback mechanisms, and real-time reporting.
- Strengthening communication and risk management, including advocacy, community engagement, integrated messaging, and social listening strategies.



Over two days, stakeholders reviewed national AEFI surveillance data, discussed MR campaign readiness, and agreed on priority actions to improve vaccine safety oversight. The meeting produced a draft Terms of Reference for the TWG, an action plan for MR campaign AEFI surveillance, and commitments from partners to support the procurement of AEFI kits, strengthen digital reporting, and expand training and mentorship for healthcare workers. Participants also agreed on regular coordination meetings, improved feedback mechanisms, and institutionalization of AEFI funding at federal and state levels. The establishment of the AEFI TWG marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's efforts to safeguard immunization programmes, reinforcing government and partner collaboration toward building a stronger, more responsive vaccine safety system nationwide.

STRENGTHENING VACCINE SAFETY: AEFI & VRE VALIDATION WORKSHOP



The Validation Workshop for the AEFI Surveillance Field Guide and Vaccine-Related Events (VRE) Response Plan was held in Lafia, Nasarawa State, from September 2–3, 2025. Organized under the leadership of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA). The participants included representations from the FMOH&SW, NAFDAC, NCDC, AFENET, World Health Organization (WHO) and state representatives. The aim of the workshop was to review, refine, and validate two cornerstone documents (AEFI Surveillance Field Guide and the VRE Response Plan) aimed at strengthening Nigeria's vaccine safety framework.

The sessions provided a platform for in-depth review of the AEFI Surveillance Field Guide and the VRE Response Plan, focusing on improving case detection, investigation, reporting, causality assessment, and risk communication. The participants identified key challenges, including fragmented reporting systems, weak feedback loops, funding constraints, and capacity gaps.



The workshop highlighted the need for harmonization across digital reporting systems—including District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), the MedSafety App, and the Surveillance Outbreak Response Management and Analysis System (SORMAS) and emphasized the importance of stronger coordination and timely feedback to health workers and communities to enhance public confidence in vaccines



NPHCDA and FMOH&SW were tasked with leading policy endorsement, integration into national health systems, and ensuring sustainability through dedicated budget lines. Partners such as WHO, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), AFENET, and NAFDAC committed to providing technical and financial support for implementation, training, and monitoring.



The successful validation marks a major milestone in Nigeria's vaccine safety agenda, positioning the country to achieve a more responsive, coordinated, and trusted vaccine surveillance and response system.

By the end of the two-day workshop, both the AEFI Surveillance Field Guide and VRE Response Plan were formally validated and endorsed for nationwide implementation. Stakeholders agreed on actionable recommendations and next steps, including training rollout, digital integration, and mass dissemination of the validated documents.

AFENET TECHNICAL SUPPORT: INTEGRATED MEASLES-RUBELLA AND POLIO VACCINATION CAMPAIGN (OCTOBER 2025)

In October 2025, Nigeria introduced the Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccine through an integrated national campaign led by NPHCDA with support from WHO, AFENET, UNICEF, and other partners. Phase I covered the northern states and Oyo State. Although the MR vaccine is globally proven to be safe and effective, yet a small number of recipients experienced AEFI—mostly mild symptoms such as fever and local reactions, with a few serious cases like seizures.



To address these, stakeholders recommended stronger reporting practices, regular refresher training for Disease Surveillance Notification Officer (DSNOs) and frontline workers, full adoption of electronic systems linked to DHIS2, and enhanced risk communication through the ACSM (Advocacy, Communication, and Social Mobilization) team.



Strong AEFI surveillance ensured timely reporting, investigation, and management of these events, helping to sustain public trust.

Key challenges included under-reporting, poor documentation, inconsistent use of digital tools Open Data Kits (ODK, e-tally), weak feedback systems, and capacity gaps among health workers.



The 2025 Integrated Measles-Rubella and Polio campaign demonstrated strong coordination and effective implementation, with few serious adverse events following immunization (AEFIs) reported—reaffirming vaccine safety and programme integrity

Continued investment in training, digital integration, and supportive supervision remains essential to strengthen Nigeria's vaccine safety surveillance system.

AFENET STRENGTHENS NIGERIA'S VACCINE SAFETY DATA SYSTEM



From November 18–21, 2025, AFENET, with technical and financial support from the U.S. CDC and in collaboration with NPHCDA, convened a landmark four-day National Technical Meeting on Data Harmonization of the AEFI Reporting Tools in Abuja. The workshop brought together over 80 participants from key national agencies including FMoH & SW, NPHCDA, NAFDAC, NEC AEFI members, Chairman SDSNO, Chairman SEPID, NCDC, Health System Information Packages (HISP), AFENET, WHO, and other development partners to address Nigeria's fragmented vaccine safety surveillance system.

Nigeria's AEFI surveillance system has long been hampered by parallel reporting channels, incomplete documentation, and weak coordination across agencies. Multiple unlinked digital tools NAFDAC's MedSafety/VigiFlow, NCDC's SORMAS, and NPHCDA's DHIS2—operated in silos, with reliance on paper forms, low investigation rates, and data that failed to flow seamlessly across systems, threatening both child health outcomes and public confidence in vaccine safety.



The workshop produced significant outcomes including a unified national data governance framework with clear institutional roles and shared accountability among agencies.

By the close of the meeting, stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to actionable steps that enhance coordination, improve data quality, and strengthen public trust, marking a major step toward a more transparent, efficient, and integrated vaccine safety reporting system for Nigeria. The workshop successfully shifted participants from problem recognition to collaborative solution design, demonstrating that Nigeria possesses the technical capacity, human resources, and partner support needed to build a world-class AEFI surveillance architecture, with transparency, coordination, and sustainability emphasized as the foundation of this robust vaccine-safety surveillance ecosystem.



Stakeholders developed a revised national AEFI checklist with improvements in clinical history fields and privacy protections, mapped pathways for system integration proposing standardized variables and APIs for data exchange, and drafted a comprehensive capacity-building strategy and national SOPs covering roles, data flows, and governance structures.





National Expert Committee (NEC) on Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) Causality Assessment Meeting

Nigeria's National Expert Committee on Adverse Events Following Immunization (NEC-AEFI) convened a four-day workshop in Lagos to evaluate the safety profile of the recent Measles–Rubella vaccination campaign.

The workshop brought together national and state-level vaccine safety experts, including the NEC Members, NPHCDA, NAFDAC, NCDC, WHO, AFENET UNICEF, Saving Lives and Livelihood Pharmacovigilance (SLL PV) and state health teams. Participants conducted a detailed review of all serious adverse events reported during the campaign, assessing whether these events were truly vaccine-related or coincidental illnesses occurring around the same time.

Most of the serious health conditions investigated such as malaria, meningitis, and other infections were determined not to be caused by the vaccine. Cases that were linked to vaccination were largely expected, manageable reactions such as allergic responses or anxiety-related fainting, similar to those observed globally. The review confirmed that the Measles–Rubella vaccine remains highly safe.

The workshop also highlighted ongoing challenges within Nigeria's vaccine safety surveillance system. State teams reported issues such as inadequate documentation, delayed reporting, and limited training for frontline health workers.



Participants also emphasized the need for improved guidance to help health workers and caregivers know when vaccinations should be postponed due to pre-existing illness.

In response, the committee recommended strengthened documentation practices, expanded training for health workers, better pre-vaccination screening, and enhanced use of digital reporting platforms.



AEFI job aids were also reviewed to support improved detection and reporting of adverse events. The findings will be disseminated this month, with updated procedures expected to roll out early next year. These efforts reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to ensuring vaccine safety and sustaining public confidence in immunization programmes.



FEATURE HIGHLIGHT: NEW AEFI COMMUNICATION MATERIALS TO STRENGTHEN CAREGIVER AWARENESS AND HEALTH WORKER REPORTING

As part of Nigeria's ongoing effort to strengthen AEFI surveillance and improve vaccine safety communication, new visual materials have been developed to support both caregivers and frontline health workers. With technical support from US CDC and AFENET, the NPHCDA collaborated closely with NCDC, the Federal Ministry of Health, NAFDAC, subnational Disease Surveillance and Notification Officers (DSNOs), and State Health Promotion teams to co-create clear, culturally responsive messaging on AEFI detection and reporting.



A caregiver-focused poster—designed to complement verbal counseling during immunization sessions—encourages parents and guardians to ask questions, observe their children after vaccination, and promptly report any reactions. The material also clearly communicates the importance of postponing vaccination when a child is unwell, reinforcing safe immunization practices. Development was led by a subnational health promotion officer, ensuring contextual relevance and community-aligned messaging.

The draft design was reviewed by the National ACSM Technical Working Group and the National Expert Committee (NEC) on AEFI, who provided feedback on clarity, visual appeal, and message tone. To ensure resonance with diverse caregiver groups, the poster underwent pretesting across health facilities in both northern and southern regions before finalization. In parallel, a dedicated one-page guide for healthcare workers was created to reinforce frontline reporting responsibilities. This quick-reference material highlights priority AEFI signals, key reporting timelines, and the need for complete documentation. Like the caregiver poster, the healthcare worker version was presented to ACSM TWG and NEC members for validation and subsequently pretested across subnational facilities.

Feedback from the field helped refine content layout, color visibility, and terminology to ensure usability at busy vaccination points.

Together, these communication tools represent a strategic boost to Nigeria's AEFI system—enhancing caregiver confidence, strengthening provider vigilance, and supporting early detection and response across all levels of the health system. The materials will be deployed nationwide as part of ongoing efforts to build a safer, more responsive immunization programme for every child and family.

FEATURE HIGHLIGHT: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL LISTENING FOR AEFI SURVEILLANCE AND VRE RESPONSE

Nigeria's social listening ecosystem is undergoing active enhancement to better support vaccine safety communication, AEFI surveillance, and the management of VREs. AFENET, working closely with the ACSM unit of the NPHCDA, is facilitating an ongoing exercise to analyze the national social media and rumor landscape. This work is focused on integrating VRE monitoring into existing multisectoral social listening mechanisms used to detect, track, and respond to health misinformation. The collaborative review spans systems across NPHCDA, NCDC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and partner platforms, ensuring improved alignment and insight-sharing.

Social listening, the continuous monitoring of public sentiment and misinformation across digital and community channels, remains vital for sustaining vaccine confidence. Lessons from COVID-19, especially misinformation about infertility, continue to shape proactive communication, early rumor detection, and targeted response strategies. Using the adapted World Health Organization (WHO) Infodemic Management Model, the exercise mapped how national actors—including the NPHCDA, NCDC, WHO, UNICEF, NOA, state Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) structures, civil society organizations, media networks, and community platforms contribute to health misinformation surveillance in Nigeria.

Key tools and channels mapped include Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS), U-Report, Auto-Visual Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Detection and Reporting (AVADAR), Tataafo, campaign feedback systems, partner-supported community reports (e.g., Mood of the Nation, Pulse of the Nation), social media platforms such as WhatsApp and TikTok, town hall intelligence, radio discussions, that can serve as potential rumor logs.

Strengthening efforts focus on improving workflows from early rumor detection and verification to sentiment analysis and actionable communication response.

Dashboards such as Tataafo insights, LGA polling data, and the AEFI surveillance dashboard are being considered for optimization to support rapid decision-making and real-time tracking.

While challenges persist, including limited analytics capacity, fragmented data systems, language diversity, and the absence of a dedicated national social listening coordination unit for VREs, several opportunities are being leveraged.

These include AI-enabled analytics, system integration efforts across MDAs (Nigeria infodemic management system, existing call center intelligence, and NOA's monthly public community based reporting).

Overall, this ongoing national effort reflects a strategic shift toward a unified, intelligence-driven approach to rumor management advancing Nigeria's ability to detect public concerns early, respond proactively, and reinforce confidence in immunization programmes nationwide.

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