Context
Caring for vulnerable children and their households require multisectoral support to enable them attain better health outcomes. The Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) implementing Integrated Child Health and Social Services Award (ICHSSA-2) project in partnership with FHI360, Project HOPE and Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development (MSYS) with support from USAID to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). Towards this end, the organizational and technical capacity of local organizations and state health systems have been strengthened to offer basic services to vulnerable children and their families especially those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Lagos State is one of the red states with 65,420 PLHIV (15% of the burden) experiencing unmet needs (NAISU, 2018).

Activity Description
ARFH through the USAID funded ICHSSA-2 project supported the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development (MSYS) to develop 4-year operational plan for Vulnerable Children in Lagos State. The Ministry of Youth and Social Development is the line ministry responsible for the coordination of OVC activities in Lagos State. Advocacy visits were paid to the Honourable Commission, Permanent Secretary of MSYS and Local Government Chairmen/Council Managers of the 11 LGAs (Apapa, Agege, Amuwo Odofin, Badagry, Kosofe, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Ojo, Shomolu, Orile and Surulere) where ICHSSA-2 project is being implemented in Lagos. Mapping of key stakeholders and sectors critical to quality service delivery for vulnerable children was done.

A five-day stakeholders workshop was organized between 8th – 13th November 2021 to deliberate, map out and develop concrete framework for the implementation plan for OVC in Lagos State. The following key steps were used in the areas - Leadership, Governance and Coordination; Healthy, Stable, Safe, Schooled and Secure. On the healthy domain, 3,000 beneficiaries have been placed on the basic health care provision fund of Lagos State Government for uninterrupted access to healthcare services. On the stable domain, 2,500 children were provided with educational needs. On the safe domain, 1,000 children were provided with security. Involving both the public and private sectors which culminated in the increased leveraging of support from the public and private sector organisations including Access Bank, LASHMA, SUBEB, MYSD, LGA and other stakeholders. This increased access of vulnerable children to food and improved economic resilience of the households.

Evidence
Bringing together diverse voices from relevant sectors was critical to the success of the first 4-year operational plan for OVC in Lagos State. In addition, 4-year Operational Plans were also developed for 10 LGAs where the project is being implemented. This document served as a significant advocacy tool in mobilizing resources, promoting equity and strengthening healthcare delivery to vulnerable children and their families in Lagos State.

Figure 1: Resources mobilized (Naira) as a result of the Operational Plan

Lessons Learned
Leveraging multisectoral voices is critical to inclusiveness, trust, ownership and sustainability. Other sub-national units have taken the same step to put in place collective frameworks/plans to improve resource optimization, achieve equity and quality service delivery to vulnerable children and their families. Countries or states should not be afraid to go through the road less travelled especially if the results will improve health outcomes for the vulnerable populations. Other health system activities can take a cue from this approach.

Challenges
The underlying challenges were anticipated based on the experience of ARFH in implementing OVC activities in Nigeria and the responses below and approaches were part of the lessons learned in previous implementation which currently have proved very successful on the ICHSSA-2 project

Key partners responsible for the success of the result include: • USAID Nigeria • Lagos State Government • Ministry of Youth and Social Development • Lagos State Health Management Agency • Project Local Governments (Eleven) • State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) • ICHSSA-2 Health Systems Strengthening team (ARFH, Project HOPE, FHI360) • State OVC Technical Steering Committee (TSC) • Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Facilitators
Leveraging multisectoral Support in the Development and Implementation of Four Year Operational Plan for the Care and Support of Vulnerable Children in Lagos State, Nigeria: Experience of ARFH

Iwuala Felix1, Alawode Gbadegesin1, Magaji Doreen2 Mobereade Ayokanmi1, Idoko Elijah1, Johnson Inioluwa1
1Association for Reproductive and Family Health 2United States Agency for International Development Nigeria

Activity Impact
This effort led to the development of a 4-year costed operational plan to guide investment, resource mobilization and quality comprehensive service delivery across the four OVC service domains of Healthy, Stable, Safe and Schooled. On the healthy domain, 3,000 beneficiaries have been placed on the basic health care provision fund of Lagos State Government for uninterrupted access to healthcare services beyond the project tenure. This represents eloquent testimony of ownership and sustainability by Government through the Lagos State Health Management Agency (LSHMA) implementing the Lagos State Health Insurance Scheme - Ilesa Eko (Good Health of Lagosians). As part of private sector involvement, the Access Bank provided 500,000 naira to support economic empowerment of vulnerable households through cash transfer and business startup; which increased access of vulnerable children to food and improved economic resilience of the households.

In addition, the project has leveraged various support from local governments (Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Shomolu, Ojo, Surulere,) in Lagos State in the provision of food packs and economic empowerment of vulnerable households for the overall wellbeing of vulnerable children. The costed operational plan provided clear pathways to activities and programmes to be funded at both the state and local government levels geared towards improved health outcomes for OVC and their families. It ensured effective governance systems through the Technical Steering Committee (TSC) at the state and the local government level. These platforms bring together critical stakeholders to effectively coordinate comprehensive care and support for OVC.

Figure 1: Resources mobilized (Naira) as a result of the Operational Plan