



End Of Year Letter 2024: A YEAR OF CONSOLIDATION

My Dear Colleagues,

Once again, I am delighted to write all of you as the year 2024 gradually ends. At the heart of our collective successes this year has been your enthusiasm and untiring dedication to the vision and mission of NVRI. Milestones achieved this year were because of our undying spirit of resilience and hard work which continues to inspire and drive “TEAM NVRI” to keep forging ahead despite difficult challenges. Indeed, 2024 has been a year of consolidation on the outlined objectives captured under the five pillars in the strategic plan which has defined our trajectory and served as a guiding compass on this interesting journey towards actualising NVRI's aspirations. I am by this letter updating you all on the major highlights for the year.

As the only animal vaccine manufacturing centre in the country, this critical mandate is one which the Institute's management has devoted considerable efforts in sustaining over the last few years. As a result of strategic engagements on the need to scale vaccine production, the World Bank-supported Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support Project (L-PRES) is extending support to the Institute to expand its existing fill and finish line while working towards securing funding for the completion of the new vaccine production facility. Through the support of the UK's FCDO, NVRI reviewed critical aspects of the report on feasibility for vaccine commercialization conducted last year. A Climate Resilience Infrastructure Development (CDEL) grant to equip the PPR vaccine production laboratory was secured under the Propcom + programme. This will enable NVRI to triple the production of PPR and NDV I-2 vaccines over the next 12 months. Building on the successes achieved in 2023, capacity building for staff continued with the training of 12 personnel at the African Union –Pan African Vaccine Centre (AU-PANVAC) laboratory, Ethiopia in new vaccine production techniques as well as other specialised trainings. Six (6) members of staff also visited the IMA-Life Aseptic and Freeze-Drying Solution Factory in Italy as a part of consultancy to engage with manufacturers of freeze dryer and fill and finish production line. This visit provided technical insights to enable the selection of appropriate aseptic vaccine manufacturing equipment for NVRI. To provide alternative back-up power for production activities, solar electricity installations were commissioned for the production facilities. Bacterial Vaccine Production laboratory has been given a considerable facelift to enhance efficiency in its operations. Investments are also being made in improving cold chain infrastructure by the installation of a new Cold room as well as the introduction of sustainable energy solutions to support vaccine production. These installations are expected to be completed by end of Q1 of 2025. These efforts represent significant investments in NVRI vaccine production and will lead to optimised manufacturing operations, skills, and capacity improvement, as we continue to strive towards scaling and commercialisation.

Management sustained its focus on pitching for grants to support research and innovation through the year. Progress in this regard can be seen by the number of collaborative projects and Memoranda of Understanding entered into with different partners with research work being conducted on One-health, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), rabies, Newcastle disease, PPR, FMD, Mpox, Influenzas, Anthrax, Viral Haemorrhagic fevers, other infectious and transboundary animal diseases (TADs) etc. NVRI has showcased competence and capacity in collaborative research endeavours hence the continued interest by stakeholders and partners to embark on research projects with the Institute.

As the National Diagnostic Laboratory, the Institute has continued to play a critical role in disease surveillance and diagnosis. We provided support to prevent, detect and contain the Anthrax and HPAI outbreaks that were recorded in several States around the country. Through collaboration with the FAO-ECTAD country office, several laboratory personnel have been trained through the year following laboratory assessment and gap analysis. As an outcome of the hard work and dedication of staff in this department and management's commitment to execute this mandate, over 63,114 samples were processed through the Central Diagnostic Laboratory in 2024 supporting the national strategy towards combating the spread of economically important animal diseases and zoonoses.

As a year of consolidation, significant milestones were achieved through the concerted efforts of management to sustain and strengthen the Quality Management System, improving quality and timely service delivery within the Institute's laboratory network. 60 staff members benefited from End User training; 40 were trained in laboratory Risk Assessment. Sustained internal laboratory audits were conducted through the year along with quarterly Management Review Meetings. Equipment calibration has continued, and efforts are ongoing for re-accreditation of laboratories whose accreditation period will elapse in 2025. Seventy staff were trained on Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), document control and technical report writing. 108 personnel also benefitted from training on biosafety and biosecurity, 109 on QMS and 81 members of staff trained on bio risk management. Through collaboration on the PROLAB-WAHO project on cross cutting competency trainings 6 technical staff received trainings in Monrovia, Abidjan, Dakar, Lome, Ouagadougou, and Banjul all aimed at building better laboratory capacity in the Institute. I must extend commendation to the staff who have continued to drive this process. My appeal is that we must not rest on our oars in this regard.

Our collaborations with international partners have flourished in 2024, opening new vistas for knowledge exchange, research funding, and mutually beneficial projects. These partnerships have strengthened our global visibility and have brought fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to the challenges we face. A major strength on the Institute's management team has been our ability to leverage on high level introductions and networking to foster collaborations and build brand awareness as well as trust for NVRI. In 2024 we received the British High Commissioner to the Institute as well as the US. Charge De Affaires Ad-Interim. Highlights of the positive outcomes of engagement with partners was the historic groundbreaking ceremony for the National Pathogen Repository in May, as part of the US-DTRA support for the Institute. Interventions under this collaboration include on-gong trainings, the overhauling of power, water, as well as laboratory renovations and the deployment of pathogen asset control system (PACS) to ensure security of valuable biological materials. Another positive outcome of our engagement with partners was the successful

pitch and subsequent award of a grant through the FCDO PROPCOM+CEDL for support to replace some major equipment for vaccine manufacturing along with other interventions in adoption of climate smart solutions and storage for cold chain maintenance. Through the L-PRES project, the World bank is also extending support for expansion and remodelling of the existing vaccine production facility.

The five-year EU supported LIDISKI project was completed in 2024. The close out meeting was successfully held in November with the project outputs being the training of 139 Community Animal Health Workers, 34 field veterinarians while direct enlightenment campaigns were conducted in 222,000 farmer and rural communities. Eighteen peer-reviewed publications were authored from the project with three MSc, and five PhDs, all staff of the Institute have been trained as a direct output of the project. Over 3.9 million doses of PPR and 7.7 million doses of NDV-I2 vaccines were distributed in the three project States of Bauchi, Kano and Plateau. Under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) grant, the training and certification of 100 Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW's) was completed. Their certification by the Veterinary Council of Nigeria has been successfully concluded for the CAHW's marking the end of the first phase of the project. Collaboration with the FAO-ECTAD country office has continued to bring positive outcomes with local and international trainings in the Institute on PPR, AMR, FMD, Wildlife animal disease surveillance. Accreditation laboratories under the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 standard was also achieved with the support of the FAO through ECTAD. FAO-ECTAD also funded a surveillance project on Mpox in collaboration with the Institute. Additional support to consolidate on these gains has been requested for by the Institute. Collaborative projects such as GPAZDS, WAC-EID, Arpexas, AMR, NACOH, BMGF, LIDISKI and others have collectively offered training opportunities, capacity building, and research opportunities to over 400 personnel in the Institute. Under the Livestock Markets Project being conducted in collaboration with the Pirbright Institute, 55 value chain actors were trained with the project culminating in the construction and donation of two boreholes in Amper (Plateau State) and Nabordo (Bauchi State) livestock markets. These are a few positive outcomes from what the Institute benefits from these partnerships and engagements. The successes achieved from the implementation of the various projects and collaborations could only have been possible through the tireless commitment of all of you who have proven to be assets to this Institution.

The incorporation of ICT into the institute's operations has continued as planned with increased penetration achieved through the year. An additional network provider (9Mobile) has been added to support the existing one as the networking for additional offices and laboratories is ongoing. Management has sustained the purchase and replacement of hardware for systems to further drive the digitalisation process along with the purchase of an institutional anti-virus system to reduce vulnerability on the institute's ICT platform. 5 members of staff have been trained on the pilot phase of PACS which is gradually being deployed with the goal of coverage and integration of all laboratories on the system. A scoping visit by personnel from the Amazon Web Services (AWS) for potential integration of cloud computing solutions offering valuable insights on an actionable plan that will help streamline operations and enhance research capabilities through advanced cloud computing technologies was undertaken earlier in the year. The outlook is to follow up with a view of exploring the deployment of ICT in facilitating research within the Institute.

I must acknowledge that navigating the challenging landscape of the recent economic downturn has been difficult due to dwindling revenue available to government. Also, the withdrawal of fuel subsidy, increase in electricity tariffs, along with prohibitive cost of diesel and rising inflation increased the burden on the limited resources available. This appears to be a service wide limitation and has compounded the situation thereby affecting the financial outlook for the Institute leaving little room to improve on welfare packages for staff. In spite of this limitation, training and retraining as well as capacity building for staff has remained close to my heart. We have supported some staff on laboratory exchange visits for bench work, shipment and processing of samples in specialized laboratories, supply of some reagents and consumable for postgraduate project embarked upon by staff members, etc. We have also sustained renovations for staff housing based on the available resources. May I reiterate that the Institute's management remains committed to entrenching a better welfare outlook for all.

NVRI has reached the 100-year landmark since its establishment and this historic feat has only been possible through the hard work and dedication of all its past and present staff who have ensured that this noble institution continues to shine through the continent by our tireless commitment to excellence. The Centenary celebration has been deferred to a later part in 2025 where it will be commemorated in style with all friends and partners whose support we are thankful for. Once again, I congratulate us all as we look forward to the grand finale. With the creation of a Ministry for Livestock Development and the Federal Government's renewed drive to revitalise the livestock sector in the country, NVRI is strategically positioned based on its over 100 years of experience in this sector to support the overall growth of this sector aimed at food sufficiency driven by modern research along with the adoption of new technologies in order to achieve the set objectives of the Livestock Development Ministry. As we stand on the brink of a new year, it is important that I thank each one of you for your enduring spirit of optimism. This continues to motivate us daily in our laboratories, farms, workshop, and office spaces to keep giving our best for the Institute. I thank you most sincerely for your support which I have relied on to steer the Institute on the path of progress. I am confident that as we consolidate on the achievement of the last four years, growth opportunities lie ahead for the Institute. The fact that we continue to triumph, innovate, and excel is clearly a product of our teamwork and purpose-driven attitude.

In conclusion I must say that I am proud of our achievements; your commitment is what has propelled NVRI to where it is today, a centre of research driven by excellence.

Wishing you all a colourful holiday season and a prosperous new year.

Dr. Maryam Muhammad
Director/Chief Executive

