



CHIPO: Coalition Against Hepatitis  
for People of African Origin

Coalition Call Minutes

March 17th, 2025

2:00pm-3:00pm EDT

[Zoom Link](#)

Phone: +1 646 558 8656

**Attendees: Please let me know if I missed you, misspelled your name, or got only your partial information!**

Beatrice Zovich (Hep B Foundation), Rachel Rosen (Hep B Foundation), Sharon Njie (Louisiana Organization for Refugees & Immigrants), Ben Juul (Phila Dept. of Health), Leso Munala (University of Minnesota), Lutamaguzi Emma Bakojja (Hepatitis Aid Organization, Uganda), Assita Belemkoabga (Project HONE, Mount Sinai, NYC), Amadou Goita (Adilo-ONG, Mali), Ibrahim Usman Yerima (Jeneso Development Initiative, Nigeria), Maurizio Bonacini (California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute, San Francisco, CA)

**2:00 pm: Welcome and Introductions**

**2:05 pm: Announcements:**

- HBU Mini-Grants open: Due March 31st
  - [RFP](#)
  - [Application](#)
- New training module on B informed → [Preventing Mother to Child Transmission](#)
- Upcoming webinar, March 18th at 3pm, second part of two-part webinar → [Preventing Liver Cancer from Birth: Discussing Childhood Vaccines in a Changing Landscape](#)
- State Grassroots Call on March 25th - Email Beatrice if you would like more info or to attend
- Hep B United B Informed Session on April 1st at 3pm: [Organizing Community Hepatitis B Screening and Vaccination Events](#)
- Virtual Advocacy Day on April 30th
- Learn the Link Multimedia Art Contest
  - Email your submission to [hepbfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:hepbfoundation@gmail.com).
  - Be sure to put Learn the Link in the subject line.
  - Contest closes at 11:59 p.m. DST on March 31.
  - Learn more and find official rules [here](#).
  - Cash prizes available!
- Featured #BtheVoice storytellers for March
  - [Prince](#) learned of his diagnosis during a community blood drive, inspiring him to create an organization raising awareness and partnering with the government.
  - [Teresa](#), diagnosed during mass testing after fleeing the South Sudan war, advocates for screening pregnant women to protect newborns and combat stigma.
  - [Ibrahim](#) discovered his diagnosis while seeking help for his mother, balancing financial struggles with his health, and urging others to follow medical advice.
  - [Irinam](#), a life scientist counseling others on viral hepatitis, found himself on the other side of the diagnosis. His journey highlights that hepatitis B is treatable and the value of lived experiences in advocacy.
- [Upcoming #justB Storytelling Workshop in April in Philadelphia](#)
- [Upcoming Webinar from Empire Liver Foundation](#) → [Hep B and Pregnancy, March 27th at 4:30pm EST](#)
- African Hepatitis B Advocacy Coalition

- ***We would like for those who are members of CHIPO and are located within Africa to transition over to ABAC, as we believe that this will better serve your needs.*** CHIPO will continue to serve as a coalition for groups serving the African diaspora in the US.
- Capacity-building, networking and resources will be shared through the ABAC coalition to address elimination targets for the community. To learn more about this coalition please view our [webpage here](#).
- **To join this network, [please complete this form](#).** A member from the Hepatitis B Foundation will be in touch to discuss your organization, its activities, goals and specific needs.
- **The first coalition call will be held on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 4pm Central Africa Time and the [Zoom link to join is here](#).**
- HBF has also created a WhatsApp community. You can join by using this link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/LXZccPMRpVG5H5BMuP0rzQ>
- Additionally, the Foundation is seeking logos designed by creators across the Continent for the Africa Hepatitis B Advocacy Coalition (ABAC). Prizes will be awarded to the top three logos submitted and members will have the opportunity to vote on the coalition's final logo. **Please [click here](#) for details on the logo contest and eligibility and share widely with creative individuals you know.**

## 2:15 pm: Presentation:

- **Sharon Njie**, Director of Communication and Strategic Partnerships at the Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI) in Baton Rouge, discussing the organization and the work that they do specifically to promote the health and welfare of African Immigrant Communities across the state.
  - **LORI**
    - Organization created by refugees and immigrants that is able to help other immigrants and refugees become self-reliant
    - To do that, they use key pillars, including education and access to resources, civic engagement, and advocacy and policy, which leads to self sufficiency and systemic change
  - **Health and Wellbeing**
    - In partnership with other health organizations
    - Louisiana refugees have found safety and new opportunities in the state
    - If refugees and immigrants are given a chance to give back, they do.
  - **Historical Perspective: Healthcare for Immigrants**
    - Earl. K Long Medical center served immigrant communities in Baton Rouge. Its closure in 2013 left many without access to affordable healthcare
  - **A Crisis that Changed Everything: The Covid-19 Wake-up Call**
    - The healthcare system was already failing immigrants, but the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and worsened gaps.
    - Many immigrants feared seeking medical care, even for life-saving vaccines due to barriers such as language, misinformation, discrimination, and systemic distrust.
    - Had to act immediately
  - **COVID-19 Vaccine Response: A Historic Turning Point**
    - Took vaccine centers directly into immigrant communities, breaking barriers of fear and access.
    - Immigrant-led: African doctors took charge and built trust in healthcare professionals.
    - Community leaders & cultural navigators educated immigrants on vaccine safety
    - 90%+ success rate in vaccine outreach – one of the highest immigrant vaccination rates in Louisiana
  - **Forefront: Public Health & Safety Response**
    - 15+ COVID-19 & Monkeypox Awareness Events
    - Statewide vaccine drives serving thousands of immigrants
    - Mental health interventions to support families impacted by pandemic stress
    - 500+ HIV home test kits distributed (302 results received)
  - **Preventive Healthcare & Access to Care**
    - Feeding stations: addressing food insecurity during crisis periods

- Medicaid Assistance: 21 in-house Medicaid applications completed
  - Majority of Medicaid cases assisted through referrals
  - Car Seat Safety Checks (National Safety Administration Certified)
  - Direct partnerships with clinics for chronic disease screening
- **Community Health Fairs: Historic Impact**
  - Over 300 refugees & immigrants received direct medical attention
  - Collaboration with Love Heals Free Clinic - over 500 immigrants served
  - Provided critical services: Dental and vision Care, chiropractic services, cancer screenings, flu vaccines & STD testing
- **Mental Health: Breaking Barriers & Providing Support**
  - COPE (Community Organizing for Power through Empathy): interventions, workshops
  - Behavioral Health Symposium: Trained 264 mental health providers to serve immigrant families
  - Addressing trauma, mental health stigma, and access gaps for immigrants
- **Opportunities for Collaboration: Moving Forward**
  - Strengthening Medicaid support, providing guidance to immigrant families, partnering with schools and medical centers, increasing medical health services, and de-stigmatizing mental health care

### 2:35 pm: Q&A

- **How is LORI supported?** People with lived experience are able to help others. They use education and access to resources, civic engagement, and advocacy and policy. They build partnerships and relationships within the community and beyond, and are involved and show presence in events to get access to more resources. They do not necessarily have funding, but they negotiate with healthcare providers for free health services for the community.
- **Any encounters with vaccine hesitancy around COVID and other illnesses, and how to overcome/combat it?** Yes, people were very concerned and scared to take the vaccine. Lead by example and show people that it is safe. Brought in immigrant doctors and doctors that could understand and speak community languages to gain the trust of the community.
- **HIV and Test Kits: Any thoughts on how to overcome and address the stigma and raise accurate information and encourage storytelling?** They do a lot of campaigns and bring in a lot of experts to help people realize that the people living with HIV are still real people. Have to talk about it to be able to get help. Try to make people feel comfortable by allowing them to take the tests at home to protect confidentiality. Create a lot of awareness and education to break the systemic barriers.

**2:45 pm: Member Updates** – please feel free to email any updates or events to the listserv!

### 3:00 pm: Conclusion

Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be on **Wednesday May 14th at 2pm EDT**

Thanks so much for joining! Please keep us updated about research and programmatic news and let us know if you'd like to present at the next meeting!