Effective Communication for Behaviour Change

Stories from Gateway Behaviors' Study

NIGERIAN URBAN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INITIATIVE
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Building Healthy Families Together

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SAFE DELIVERY, HEALTHY FAMILIES
STORIES FROM THE GATEWAY BEHAVIORS' STUDY

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Behaviour Change Communication

The Study focused on the completion of all recommended antenatal (at least 4) visits by pregnant women and interpersonal communication between intimate network (spouses/partners/friends). The aim is that government, communities, households and individuals are working together in order to ensure pregnant women understand the importance of ANC, are booked in the first trimester and complete at least four ANC visits. Healthcare providers are adequately equipped with interpersonal communication and counseling skills to provide quality ANC services, including educating pregnant women on future behaviors vital to their health and that of their families.

In addition, that couples and individuals have improved interpersonal communication skills; initiating and sustaining discussions around family health issues; and women are empowered and supported by the community to initiate and participate in household decision making for healthy lifestyles.

The Target Audience

Most families in Ilorin live with extended family members (parents-in-laws and relatives) with most women having an average of 5 children during their lifetime. Newly married couples often live with their in-law in what is referred to as 'family house' where community members have strong influence over accepted life decisions. Because of this influence some women do not register for ANC at all, while many who do register late in their pregnancies.

With the background knowledge of these audiences, the communication objective focused on ensuring that by the end of the project, pregnant women understand the importance and benefits of ANC, register early, attend all appointments recommended by the provider, and deliver in a health facility with skilled birth attendants; and that partners and friends of pregnant women value the benefits of ANC and delivery in health facilities; supporting pregnant women to adhere to ANC schedules and recommendations.

What the Gateway Behaviors' Study Did

Behavior change communication messages and materials (leaflets and posters) were developed for target audience that included pregnant women, partners of pregnant women and mothers-in-law. Community members were trained as social mobilizers and discussion guides developed for them. These mobilizers conducted door-to-door sensitization to community people and referred unregistered pregnant women to the health facility. Texts messages were also sent routinely to pregnant women and their partners. These were complemented by other community-level interventions that included community dialogues, happy couples' event and entertainment-education at naming and wedding ceremonies.

Women and Antenatal Visits

The consequences of not attending antenatal clinics are very dire. In the case of women in these communities where family and friends' influence are very high, regardless of the realities of the situation, many of them have died or lost their precious children to deaths that could be avoided if they had registered early for ANC, completed all ANC visits and given birth at a health facility.

What Gateway Behaviors Study Did

The study through its behavior change communication messages, reached out to spouses, friends and mothers-in-law of pregnant women, providers and also used testimonials from satisfied clients to promote the link between completion of all ANC visits and its wide reaching positive health outcomes for a mother and her child. Actions taken based on messages heard showed that 45% had registered for ANC, 40% discussed with partner/spouse on family health matters and 14% discussed with friends.

Message

Early registration and regular attendance at the ANC clinic ensures the mother is receiving adequate medical and nutritional support necessary for a healthy pregnancy and successful delivery, as well as preparation for protection of postpartum and neonatal health.

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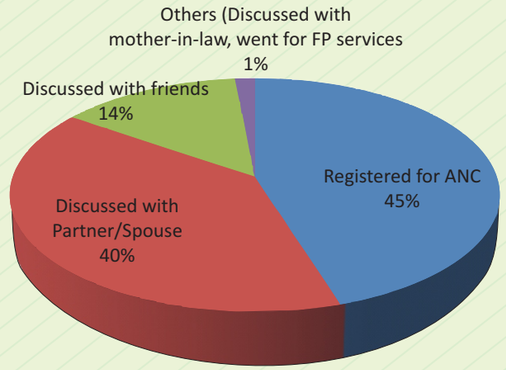
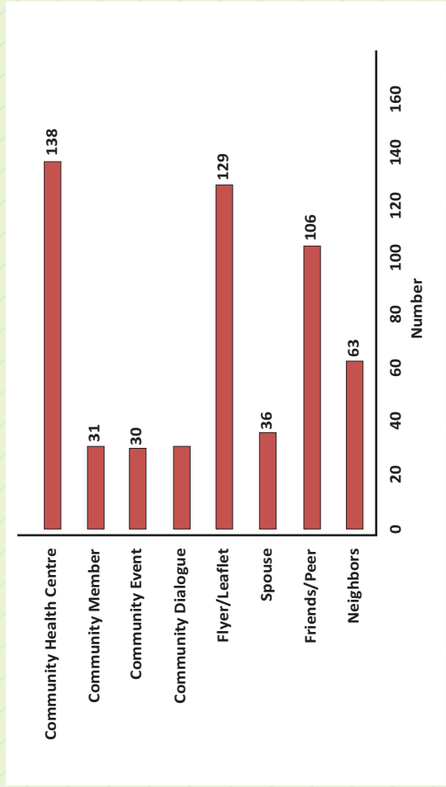
Actions taken by community members as a result of messages exposed to



Source of ANC messages by community members



An Unusual Advocate

Safiya Ibrahim, a 34-year old mother of four had not always been an advocate of hospital delivery. In fact she did not attend antenatal care neither did she put to bed in the health facility for her first three pregnancies. A full-time housewife who lives in Zango, she was always scared about the high cost of using health facilities.

The turnaround for her came when she was pregnant with her fourth baby. She met Halimat Ahmed, a social mobilizer during a door-to-door mobilization in her community. “As she came to my house that day, she encouraged me to register for ANC and gave me a card with my name and phone number written on it, she directed me to the hospital”

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Money had always been the reason she could not attend ANC and her husband was not likely to agree.

A happy and content Safiya

The social mobilizer however appealed to her husband on reasons why she should go to the hospital for ANC. Safiya got a surprise, her husband not only gave her the money to register but also went with her to the hospital. which was a Gateway-supported health facility. She went regularly and had a safe delivery. "My husband was very pleased when I delivered safely without any complication". According to her, this pregnancy was unusually different

questions that were answered by service providers.

Message

Key messages focused on promoting the idea that decisions made by individuals and families now will have prominent impacts on their future health. The target audience was encouraged to proactively be involved in shaping their health status by anticipating future health decisions they make regarding their own and their family's health and preparing for these decisions and actions at each stage of life.

A Positive Deviant

On this cool Thursday evening, Mr. & Mrs. AbdulGaniu Ahmed share their interesting story in their modest apartment in Ajegunle, Ilorin. Seated in their living room with their four-month old son, the couples talk about their experience during the wife's pregnancy. Mr. Abdul Ganiyu, an NCE holder who is also an Islamic cleric (Alfa) met his wife during the course of his study in Kwara State College of Education where his wife was also a student.

When the wife was two months pregnant, he met a social mobilizer who gave him a referral card after explaining the benefits of antenatal care. He in turn gave his wife the card and encouraged her to register in Kulende Basic Health Center, a nearby health facility supported by the Gateway Project.

On days when she went for antenatal visit her husband would help with house chores such as laundry and cooking so that she could rest. For Mrs. Ahmed, going for antenatal care afforded her the opportunity of listening to vital health information such as exclusive breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning by health workers. The nurse who attended to her in the hospital encouraged her greatly. On the day of delivery Abdul Ganiyu accompanied his wife to the hospital where she had a safe delivery. The Ahmeds have adopted a family planning method while she is also an advocate for exclusive breastfeeding.