



Community Based Advocacy Stories from the Gateway Behaviors



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

This report was commissioned and published by the Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative (NURHI) with support from the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs.

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ISBN

Raising Advocates

Ilorin is a deeply religious, conservative and traditional society. Promoting early antenatal registration in such a setting therefore requires the engagement of community and religious leaders to ensure it becomes a social norm. The influence of community and religious leaders in Ilorin is very deep. The family house and extended family concept is still very dominant in Ilorin thus most couples still live in their family houses which allows a considerable influence over their daily lives and decisions. It was with this understanding that an intensive and strategic approach was used in engaging leaders at the community level.

What Gateway Behaviors' Study Did

In getting the support and commitment of leaders in various communities in the local government, advocacy interventions were conducted following the mapping of communities in Ilorin South LGA. The targets of the advocacy were community/traditional leaders, male and female religious leaders of both the Christian and Islamic faiths as well as leaders of various trade associations in the LGA.

Community-based advocacy was conducted to community leaders at the inception and extended to religious and association leaders in 2014. A total of 156 community, religious and association leaders were reached through advocacy. The existing forum of three of the target groups was used as the initial avenue to engage them. These included: the forum of Alanguas and Mogajis, the Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The leaders of the various community/trade associations were engaged on individual association basis. The advocacy was strategically conducted in three phases.

The first phase involved the community leaders, this was done both individually and jointly using their meeting avenue. In the second phase, leaders of WOWICAN, FOMWAN and community associations were engaged. The third phase involved leaders of CAN and the League of Imams and Alfas in the LGA. After the initial engagement, a-day orientation was conducted for each of the target groups. During the orientation, the



leaders were taught on how to integrate messages promoting antenatal care and spousal communication into community discussions. The orientations were followed by series of community engagements that involved the leaders.

Strategy

During community dialogues community and religious leaders utilized the avenue to speak in support of the adoption of healthy behaviors such as early ANC registration, family planning and interpersonal communication on family health.

Message

Community and religious leaders are well respected in their communities and information from them is highly valued. Using the forum of community meetings and religious gatherings, these leaders promoted messages imploring men to give consent early enough for their pregnant wives to register for antenatal care. They also used scriptural quotes, proverbs and the IPC leaflet to promote love and spousal communication on family health.



Exemplary Leadership

It is often said that true leadership comes with great commitment, that is apt with the paramount leader, the Alangua of Tanke, Ilorin South LGA - Alhaji Umar Salaudeen. Cases of pregnant women dying at delivery in his community had given him cause for great concern. He knew that many of the pregnant women do not attend antenatal care in the hospital and preferred to deliver at home. He was also aware that a major cause of this was the poor attitude of men not encouraging their wives to attend antenatal care. Thus, when the team introduced the project to him to get his support, he readily accepted to mobilize his community.

He assisted in getting committed community members to volunteer as social mobilizers. His motivation was "to see that pregnant women in his community are healthy, deliver safely in the hospital and that their newborn are healthy. His commitment to this cause, made him call a meeting of all the 14 Mogajis (Community leaders under him) and invited the project staff

to conduct an orientation for them in his residence. A very happy man now, Alhaji Salaudeen is excited that many people in his community now know the benefits of women attending antenatal care. "They know it does not cost as much as they pay when complications arise due to home delivery". He believes the situation will continue to improve as community leaders continue to sensitize their members.



*Alhaji Umar Salaudeen ,
Paramount leader Tanke community, Ilorin South
Local Government Area, Kwara State*

"They know that proper antenatal care does not cost as much as they pay when complications arise due to home delivery".



Call to Duty

Alhaji Ibrahim Saka is the Chief Imam of Ero Omo Community. As the leading Islamic cleric in the Community and the Chairman of the Community Development Committee (CDC) he gets regular feedback from the health facility in the community, thus, he knew that many of the pregnant women do not go to the hospital for antenatal care and would prefer home deliveries. He was also aware many of these women experienced life-threatening

complications and death of their newborn babies as a result. This made him more resolute to change the situation. Just around that time, the project team was going round communities to engage community and religious leaders.

He took part in the orientation organized for religious leaders and thereafter he held a meeting with all the Imams of other settlements in the community. He said "meeting with the Imams and Alfas in the

community was a means of getting the men involved as they are the primary decision-makers at home". Thus regular prayers and community meetings were used as avenues to encourage men to love their wives. "if a man loves his wife, he will give consent and money for the wife to register for ANC and delivery in the hospital" He also used the avenue of the CDC to sensitize various groups and associations in conjunction with service providers who had attended trainings conducted by the project.

Alhaji Ibrahim Saka is now a happy man as the situation has improved and he gets positive feedback from the health facility during the CDC meetings. "More women are now going for antenatal care and deliver in the health facility unlike before when they stay at home".

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