



The Use of WhatsApp for Continuous Coaching of Family Planning Coordinators from 16 Local Government Areas in Taraba State, Nigeria

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The Challenge Initiative (TCI) works to scale up high-impact, proven to work urban family planning and reproductive health interventions to States in Nigeria. TCI uses a demand-driven model where States request TCI's technical support and provide human and financial resources to match TCI's contributions. TCI employs a three-pronged strategy of **Advocacy, Demand Generation and Service Delivery**, with cross-cutting Research, Monitoring & Evaluation to ensure provision of quality, affordable, accessible, voluntary family planning services across partner States. Through TCI's technical support, States take the lead in implementing the high-impact interventions that meet the specific local needs. Through continuous technical support also referred to as coaching, TCI transfers the relevant skills and strengthens the capacity of State, local government authority (LGA) and facility level personnel to implement the high-impact interventions.

Two high-impact service delivery approaches include [provider capacity strengthening](#) and [quality improvement](#) which focus on ensuring skillful provision of family planning services at the facility level. In Taraba State, TCI created a WhatsApp Group to provide constant mentorship and coaching to Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH) Coordinators, ranging in age (from 30 to 55-years old) and experience, on all aspects of family planning. The purpose of the WhatsApp Group was to stimulate real-time sharing of reports, facilitate exchange of best practices among the FP/RH Coordinators and provide problem-solving support by responding to challenges faced by the FP/RH Coordinators in record time.

The 28-member WhatsApp Group included all four members of the TCI Technical Support Team in the State, all FP/RH Coordinators from the 16 LGAs in Taraba State, members of Taraba State Family Planning Team which includes the State Family Planning Coordinator, the State Assistant Family Planning Coordinator/Service Delivery Counterpart, two Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Counterparts, the Demand Generation Counterpart and the State Primary Healthcare Board Logistics Officer. As a result, TCI-supported LGAs and non-supported LGAs in Taraba State are provided continuous coaching support through this WhatsApp Group.

Since its establishment, the WhatsApp Group has encouraged immediate and timely transmission of data and pictures; it has also provided a cost-efficient way of providing mentorship and coaching as it saves time and resources required for provision of physical mentoring visits. Because of the ubiquity of the WhatsApp platform and its easy-to-use nature, the members of the Group find it easier to use for communication purposes, preferring it to email.

Weekly, FP/RH Coordinators post about 10 summary reports on activities taking place in the various sites and the changes that they are witnessing as a result in their LGAs via the WhatsApp Group. In addition to the reports, an additional five posts are shared on average related to challenges and other issues. These posts always receive numerous responses.

How is WhatsApp Used

TCI uses the WhatsApp Group in three main ways to support its goal of sustainable impact at scale led by States:

1. **Sharing materials:** TCI utilizes WhatsApp to share materials, including presentations, manuals, videos and links to family planning information. For example, TCI shared the Requisition, Issue and Request Forms to assist the FP/RH Coordinators in printing clear copies while awaiting the production of the Commodity Logistic Management System tools.
2. **Coaching and mentorship:** The WhatsApp Group is used to respond promptly to questions to situations found in the field. In addition, refresher information to guide the process of service delivery and address myths and misconceptions is also shared.
3. **Fostering accountability and healthy competition:** The LGA FP/RH Coordinators are encouraged to share reports of activities with pictures and attendance sheets (where applicable) to the WhatsApp Group. This has become routine, where the various LGA FP/RH Coordinators share, motivate and spur each other on with the reports shared on the platform.



Mrs Harira Bashir, Nurse/Service Provider at PHC Jalingo, Sintali B providing Family Planning counseling to women attending postnatal clinic. Picture from WhatsApp Group. Photo Credit: Mrs Hafsat Saleh FP/RH coordinator Jalingo LGA.

Steps Taken for Setting Up the WhatsApp Group

1. Discuss how best to coordinate and communicate with all relevant stakeholders, In the case of Taraba, a discussion was had with all members of the service delivery team. They discussed the platforms available to them, which includes WhatsApp Groups, TCI's online Community of Practice Groups, Springboard, email, etc., and their benefits.
2. Come to a consensus on which platform would work best for the stakeholders. In the case of Taraba, the use of WhatsApp was agreed upon.
3. All members of the team need to submit their phone numbers to someone who is identified or volunteers to serve as the group administrator to at least create the Group.
4. Establish ground rules for what is appropriate to post on the platform. The Taraba WhatsApp Group decided that only information relevant to family planning service delivery should be shared.

Tips for Sustaining Use of the Platform

- Provide prompt responses to all relevant information shared and thank the sharer for his/her efforts.
- Use the platform for Contraceptive Technology updates by sharing new information.
- Encourage the State team to participate in the discussions to avoid taking the lead as a partner, recognizing those who frequently share and encouraging them to lead discussions.

Results from Use of the WhatsApp in Taraba State

Through the WhatsApp Group, TCI has supported the State to follow-up on the submission of Requisition, Issue and Report Forms on Navision, a software for the National Health Logistics Management Information system (LMIS) developed by the National Supply Chain Integration Project (NSCIP) to bridge gaps and maintain uninterrupted supply chain system in Nigeria. Reporting of Requisition, Issue and Report Form improved steadily. In March/April 2018, 0% were returned. In May/June 2018, there was a 5% increase. By July/August 2018, 83% were returned. From September to December 2018, there was a 100% return rate.

There is rekindled enthusiasm among the LGA FP Coordinators in carrying out their supervision and mentorship to service providers at service delivery points and this increased enthusiasm is a result of increased access to information on family planning services and in uptake of services.

As a result of the coaching provided to the FP/RH Coordinators, they train service providers at the facility level to include FP information and services in routine activities. In February 2019, 25 women at Comprehensive Health Centre Karim Lamido MNCH clinic received FP messages during antenatal care along with messages on immunization, breastfeeding and use of bed nets. Similarly, 35 women at Zing General Hospital received counselling from the LGA FP/RH Coordinator during antenatal care. The LGA FP/RH Coordinator in Bali LGA conducted counselling to 43 women during antenatal care visits. The women made commitments to space their children after deliveries to achieve healthier families. And, in February 2019, in Jalingo PHCC, Sintali B Jalingo LGA, 42 women were counselled on the benefits of FP during the postnatal care clinic, and 25 women received a modern contraceptive method of their choosing after the counselling.

“With TCI intervention, we see a lot of progress in Taraba State. Every day, the number of people accepting family planning is increasing. State store inventory is now known to all FP Coordinators. Whole Site Orientation to the facilities contribute to high uptake of family planning in the State. Well-done TCI and all the FP and RH coordinators in Taraba State. Thanks” - Reported by FP Coordinator of Jalingo LGA on the WhatsApp Group

Challenges faced from using the platform

No communication platform is without its challenges, the main challenges faced by Taraba State in using a WhatsApp Group to support continuous coaching include:

- Periodically, random information not specific to family planning is shared via the Group. While it is important to remind Group members of the purpose of the Group, this should be done gently to ensure that member still feel motivated to share relevant information.
- At the beginning, TCI needed to take the lead to foster a safe space for sharing to get discussions rolling in the Group.
- Poor network/Internet connection in some areas in the State sometimes effects the timeliness of information shared.