



## CASE STUDY

# Improved capacity attracts women to Umumagama health centre, Enugu State

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Umumagama women along with service provider Mrs Augustina Udaya singing and demonstrating some of their new knowledge about care and danger signs during pregnancy.

The women of Umumagama are far from timid. Unlike their counterparts in more conservative parts of the country, the women here are mostly petty traders and home-makers. Mrs Augustina Udaya has been the service provider at the Umumagama health centre for over eight years.

The health centre is located on a busy road. Until recently, it was typical to hear the shouts of a woman in labour along with passers by joining in each delivery episode. Twenty-eight-year-old Mrs Juliet Ono lives in Umumagama with her five children. “We were always shy to deliver at the health facility because of the

location. There was simply no privacy,” she said.

“In the very few cases where I took deliveries, it was mostly an emergency, where the woman had spent critical time with the traditional birth attendant without success,” Mrs Udaya concurred—frustrated professionally, but having resigned herself to the very slim chance that clients would visit the health centre.

Juliet Ono spoke of her experience with a traditional birth attendant. “They will induce labour prematurely to speed up delivery,” she said.

In March 2013, Mrs Udaya joined 12 other service providers in Enugu State in an advanced life-saving skills training sponsored by the UK aid-funded PATHS2 programme. “The training exposed me to new approaches for client care, including techniques for facilitating the delivery process,” said Mrs Udaya. Afterwards, she worked with the facility health committee set up by PATHS2 in the area, conducting outreaches.

Confident, and poised to better serve the health needs of households in the area, during the outreaches Mrs Udfaya discussed the importance of antenatal care and hospital delivery with pregnant women. Afterwards, a women’s support group was created to keep mobilising and motivating pregnant women to go to the health centre. “The following day, after the outreach, I led three women to register for antenatal care,” said women’s support group leader Mrs Ijeoma Onuh. Unlike in the past, from Mrs Augustina the women learned about the danger signs in pregnancy, and nutrition for pregnant women, and she taught them critical breathing exercises to ease delivery.

The women’s support group meetings inspired Juliet and several other women to try out the health centre. “When I joined the women’s support group, I was almost due, and attended antenatal care twice. My labour began during the second antenatal care visit,”

Ono said.

“When she came, she did not know how far along her pregnancy had progressed,” said Mrs Udaya. The breathing exercise and flexible birthing position eased the delivery process. “The breathing exercises help with the pain, and I did not have to shout as much,” said Mrs Ono.

Although Umumagama would be better off with a bigger health centre, the women here have realised that it is not only about the building. Working closely with Mrs Udaya, the women’s support group has continued to mobilise women to come to the health facility. What began as a platform for mobilising women to get health care services has evolved into an opportunity for women to also learn new skills in other areas.

“During the meetings, we also take cooking classes and learn new recipes. We often share experiences and remind ourselves of the ANC visits and appropriate care during pregnancy,” said another member of the women’s support group, Ijeoma Onuh.

“Without the outreach and support group, I would not know about the danger signs in pregnancy and labour,” said Mrs Ono. “I will deliver my next child at the health centre.”

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Funded by UKAID from the Department for International Development, PATHS2 is working in partnership with the Government of Nigeria and other stakeholders to improve the planning, financing, and delivery of sustainable health services for those most in need. In addition to its work at the federal level, the PATHS2 programme is implemented in the five states of Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, and Lagos. PATHS2 follows the successful PATHS programme, which was implemented from 2002 to 2008.

PATHS2 is managed by Abt Associates, in association with Options, Mannion Daniels, and the Axios Foundation.

