



CASE STUDY

Revamped health centre brings services closer to home

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Mrs. Nwobodo conducting routine checks on a newborn delivered at the revamped Ozalla PHC

Ozalla Primary Health Centre (PHC) is located in Nkanu-West Local Government Area (LGA) in Enugu State. Ogechi Owuh lives in a nearby community and delivered her second child at the PHC in July 2013. Three years ago, she might have had to travel farther or resort to traditional and self-help alternatives that are life-threatening.

Although built as a model PHC in 2008, two years later, Ozalla PHC was rundown, with leaking roofs and cracked walls. Most residents travelled as far as the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Nsukka, to get health care services. Evidence has shown that

the breakdown of health care services at Nigeria's PHCs leads to congestion of patients at secondary and tertiary centres, which considerably reduces the amount of "quality time" spent on each patient during consultation.

"When I was posted to this PHC in March 2010, the gates were locked. The environment was bushy and abandoned by the residents," says Community Health Officer, Mrs Gloria Nwobodo. "I could not enter the PHC at first because of rodents and snakes."

Acting swiftly to reopen the PHC, Mrs Nwobodo sought caretakers from the LGA to help cut the grass and clean the building. Then she began home visits to invite clients to the PHC. The home visits presented community members with an opportunity to share their reasons for abandoning the PHC.

“Besides the run-down structure, they raised issues about security, especially at night, since the PHC did not have regular power supply. They also complained about the lack of skilled staff,” said Mrs Nwobodo. Despite her efforts, only a handful of clients with minor illnesses ended up visiting the PHC for health care.

Then, in May 2010, the UK aid-funded PATHS2 programme, led by a team from the State Ministry of Health, visited Ozalla PHC for integrated supportive supervision. Findings of that exercise led PATHS2 to support the establishment of a facility health committee (FHC) to work with Mrs Nwobodo and community members in managing the PHC. The FHC successfully advocated for more service providers from the LGA. A member of the FHC also offered a room in his house near the PHC for service providers to stay, to improve response to emergencies, especially at night. Another member of the community agreed to pay for a guard.

PATHS2 afterwards renovated the PHC and provided furniture and equipment, including a generator and inverter, to make it easier to provide round-the-clock services. The programme trained the staff in the provision of comprehensive services.

“After the training, we began providing family planning and post-abortion care services,” said Mrs Nwobodo. The training in advanced life-saving skills introduced Mrs Nwobodo to modern approaches that facilitate deliveries and mitigate complications: “The training by PATHS2 has improved my skills. The new positioning techniques during delivery, procedures for infection prevention, and training on referrals are especially valuable.”

To keep up the momentum, Mrs Nwobodo, supported by the FHC, continues to conduct community outreaches to tell residents of the possibilities at the revamped Ozalla PHC. In February 2012, PATHS2 helped the PHC get a volunteer doctor, who provides services there.

“I am thankful for the support provided by PATHS2. Now, the PHC is equipped and providing services to five communities in this area,” reports Mrs Nwobodo. Meanwhile, deliveries increased by 100 per cent, from 3 in January - June 2012, to 6 in January - June 2013.

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The Partnership for Transforming Health Systems Phase Two (PATHS2) is a six-year development initiative that aims to ensure Nigeria achieves important health-related Millennium Development Goals.

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.

