



CASE STUDY

Supervising Health Workers to Improve Quality of Care

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Health workers in Enugu State during an ISS process

One of PATHS2's strategies to help Enugu State improve the capacity of health workers and the care they provide is integrated supportive supervision (ISS)—an on-the-job mentoring process that helps improve the quality of services provided at the primary health care level.

Since PATHS2 started supporting the ISS, infection prevention and control practices have been introduced in three health centres—Uvuru, Nara and Ozalla—based on universal precaution guidelines. The use of partographs to chart the progress of labour by the minute has greatly improved, and the growth of children under the age of five years is also better monitored. The government has begun to recruit and deploy much-needed health workers to rural

communities, making it easier for some health centres to run shifts and work around the clock.

PATHS2 did not introduce ISS in Enugu State, but the process had become quite weak before, at the start of 2012, PATHS2 revived it. Since then, PATHS2 has worked with the State Ministry of Health (SMoH) and the State Health Board (SHB) to conduct ISS monthly. The methodology for ISS in the state was made more efficient, in part by revising the ISS checklist used by the SMoH to conduct the ISS. PATHS2 also brought stakeholders together to review the ISS process and challenges that contributed to make it weak. Some of these challenges pointed to the checklist, inadequate funds and resources for the teams to travel from one LGA and health centre to the other. Another major challenge was the non-implementation of the recommendations that were given by the teams based on the visits. After the stakeholders forum, PATHS2 worked with the SMoH to address these challenges and improve the processes.

“The quality of health care provided has been better since the recent ISS restructuring and reinforcement supported by PATHS2.”—Dr. G.P.I. Oluka, Health Administrator, SHB

The state officials visit the health care facilities across the whole state to supervise health care workers while they provide services. The knowledge and skills gaps

of the workers noticed in the process are recorded in the ISS reports, which are then used to make changes in policy at the state and LGA levels, and to make changes in service delivery at the health facility level.

“It has been a big change since PATHS2 came. Although some of these improvements are difficult to measure quantitatively, we see some critical things that are changing because of this intervention. It has led to a general shift in the orientation of health workers. Right now health workers in Enugu State know it is no longer business as usual; that the SHB now conducts ISS monthly and monitors the way they work and attend to patients. The SHB shows them the best way when they are not doing something right. The visiting officials record what they see, then share it with the health workers and return later to check for improvements. This has also built self-confidence among the health workers, because they know that the government cares about what is going on in the health centres.”—Chijioke Ngwu, Human Resources Director, SHB

Barely two months into PATHS2 support, the SHB followed through on their plans to scale up ISS. Using funds that was approved by the SMOH after the first ISS was successfully conducted, ISS was extended to 20 secondary health facilities, and from the first 51 primary health facilities in seven LGAs (which are PATHS2 focal facilities) to more than 300 facilities in 17 LGAs in the state.



Dr G.P.I. Oluka, Health Administrator of SHB flanked by Chijioke Ngwu (right) and other members of staff and the ISS team

The Assistant Officer in Charge at Nsukka Health Centre, Mrs. Maureen Abor, confirms the good that has come out of ISS. “Our prescription pattern has changed,” she says. “Before the ISS started we used to prescribe up to 5 or 6 antibiotics at a time for a patient, but we were corrected and no longer do that.” Mrs. Abor wants the ISS to continue. She feels that it is the only way health workers know that the government’s eye is on them: “It is a very useful supervisory tool. It has helped to identify and correct many lapses in the quality of care we provide.”

The evidence for increased ownership and sustainability of the ISS programme in Enugu State is seen in the reduced financial support to ISS by PATHS2. The SHB’s capacity to make ISS operational has improved remarkably. An official ISS hub, which will be managed by the SHB, is currently being set up by the SMOH with only minimal support from PATHS2.

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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.



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