



Breaking Down Barriers:

PATH2 joins forces with Federal and State Ministers to dialogue with the people

With a turnout of over 1500 people, PATHS2's inaugural Town Hall Meeting took place in Lere, Kaduna State on December 17th, 2009. Organised by PATHS2, in association with the Federal Ministry of Health, the Meeting opened up channels of communication between Federal, State and Local Governments, whilst ensuring that the wider community was both included and participated in the ensuing healthcare discussions.



"This dialogue is to hear what the people have to say, it is to understand you the community better. This is an attempt to bring all of us together so that what the LGAs are doing, what the state is doing and what the federal will eventually do, would be one focused intervention that will make a difference"

Professor Babatunde Osotimehin,
Minister for Health

"This Forum is to publicly discuss issues which affect the people and to present and explain policy direction to them, in an environment that is devoid of conventional bureaucracy." - Mike Egboh, PATHS2 National Programme Manager

Setting the tone of the Meeting was a piece from Theatre for Development played out in Hausa to ensure clarity and accessibility of message. Highlighting issues such as women's restricted access to healthcare treatment and the poor quality of the few healthcare facilities actually available, the drama led into the debate.

Keynote speakers, including Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, Federal Minister for Health, Architect Namadi Sambo, State Governor, Mike Egboh, National Programme Manager, PATHS2, HRH Alhaji Umaru Mohammed, Emir of Lere and Hon Ibrahim Nuhu Kayarda, Chairman of Lere LGA contributed their views together with their aims and ambitions for improved healthcare services.

Over the course of the next five intensive hours, Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, together with local Government officials, Traditional and Religious leaders were tackled on a wide range of health concerns by community groups and local people alike.

Representatives included Hajia Hawa Ahmed from Women in Da'wah, Kauta Aliya from Technical Birth Assistants and Amira Hussaina Y Sambo, President of FOMWAN, Lere Branch. Topics ranged from the lack of healthcare facilities, staff and equipment to social, cultural and educational barriers that need to be addressed.

Key to the success of the Meeting, and yielding the high turnout, was the participation of the local community. This was achieved by a combination of advocacy work and a strong media campaign.

Working closely with the FMOH and Kaduna's State Ministry of Health, PATHS2 enlisted the support of local Council officials, Traditional, Community and Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organisations, Faith Based Organisations and the Media. An important partnership was formed with the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria in order to reach out to a wider number of organisations such as Traditional Birth Attendants Association, National



L to R: Mike Egboh, PATHS2 National Programme Manager and Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, Minister for Health

Council of Women Society, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Women in Purdah and Samiuaka Youth Forum. These groups ensured important messages reached those people usually forgotten or excluded from such events. Special attention was given to encouraging women, young people and the poorest members of the community to attend.

The Media Campaign used a variety of methods to ensure that the Meeting was publicised. These included road shows that travelled into remote rural areas and spread details by loud-speaker in the local language of Hausa



L to R: Governor Representative, Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation, Hon. Joshua Okisa Shekarau (in blue), Emir of Lere, HRH Alhaji Umaru Mohammed and Chairman Lere LGA, Hon. Ibrahim Nuhu Kayarda

and two news items that were broadcast on a local television station: DiTV. Seen by approximately 4 million people, one feature included representatives from FOMWAN and was specifically targeted at women. Radio spots helped to continue publicising the meeting right up to the day of the event, which was then transmitted live on the Kaduna State Media Corporation (KSMC) with commentary in Hausa.

The success of this joint approach, and specifically the extra drive delivered by an innovative Media Campaign, is evidenced by the volume of attendees: over 300% more people attended the meeting than had been originally estimated and of those, 70% were from the primary target group of women and youths.

Concluding the Meeting, His Excellency the Emir of Lere, confirmed the importance of educating the public in order to support changes in cultural and societal norms. By encouraging

local men to enable their wives to access appropriate healthcare during pregnancy and labour, he ensured that the weight and importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was brought home.

PATHS2 logged encouraging feedback from the public at the end of the Town Hall Meeting. Whilst the majority interviewed seemed very positive about the event, they still need to see real activity, real change happening.

"The Federal Minister came to listen to the problems of the people. He came to discuss the problems affecting the health of the people of Lere and to see how the Government can intervene"

-A local woman and mother

"We have gotten victory because the Minister answered us in respect of our health problems"- A local woman interviewed after the Town Hall Meeting had ended.

The Lere Town Hall Meeting is the first of a number of PATHS2-initiatives that will enable the FMOH and SMOH to speak directly to those most affected by poor quality healthcare. By providing a regular and accessible platform, where lively and open debate is encouraged, PATHS2 aims to promote understanding, trust and partnership from the grassroots up. In this way, PATHS2 is working in concert with Federal and State Governments to ensure that Nigeria delivers on its health-related MDGs.

ABOUT PATHS2

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, through the UK's Department of 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 in most need.

Apart from working at a Federal level, PATHS2 is working in the five States of Enugu, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna and Lagos.

PATHS2 follows the successful PATHS1, which ran from 2002 to 2008, and was also funded by UKaid.

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