



CASE STUDY

Providers get creative tracking pregnant women for health care

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Midwife Aisha and Mallama Amina place follow-up calls to pregnant women

Mallama Amina Ari is the local attendant at the primary health center in Gyallesu, a rural community in Zaria Local Government Area in Kaduna State. Women here have various reasons for not attending antenatal care or not delivering at the health facility. According to Amina, “Most of the women usually say that their husbands did not allow them.”

A few women who registered for antenatal care did not return to the health facility for the next appointment. Health facilities in Nigeria, especially

throughout its rural areas, find that far too many women drop out of antenatal care sometime after their first visit. (Proper antenatal care requires at least four visits.) “Sometimes when we happened to meet them, and asked about it, the women would say that they had forgotten about the appointments,” said Mallama Amina. The health facility was recording only one or two deliveries in a month, and an average of 35 women were attending antenatal care. The situation was compounded by the lack of 24-hour service at the health facility.

In June 2013, the UK aid-funded PATHS2 programme introduced a client tracking system at the health centre, through mobile telephone technology. PATHS2 support also enabled the health facility to hire a doctor and a midwife, do minor renovations, and buy a basic telephone and a register for use in tracking client visits. PATHS2 began providing the facility with a monthly allowance of £40.

With the start of 24-hour service and the launch of the client tracking system, the facility's staff conducted an outreach to educate community members on the developments at the Gyallesu Health Centre. Before each appointment, Mallama Amina places a follow-up call to the woman, directly or through her husband. Mallama Amina, who leads the tracking system, explains how it works. "Once women visit a health facility for ANC registration, we begin tracking them until they are between 32 and 36 weeks pregnant. During the first visit, we collect the client's contact number. Where the woman does not own a phone, we seek out the husband's number."

Twenty-four-year-old Hajia Sardatu Abubakar delivered five children at home and lost two immediately after delivery, which might have been avoided if she had delivered with a qualified health staff. She recently delivered her sixth child at the health

facility. "My husband was especially excited to learn of the new care that the staff provide at the health facility. He ensured that I did not miss the appointments," said Sardatu.

Two months of tracking shows an increase of almost 300 per cent in antenatal care attendance—from 35 in May to 99 in June 2013. The number of women delivering at the facility has increased as well. "We had six deliveries in June, and nine in July," said midwife Aisha Suleiman. The health facility already has a telephone directory for 98 registered pregnant women living in the area. "The list is growing as more women help spread the word," said Mallama Aisha.

Mallama Amina has gradually become a mentor to several women in the area. "I noted that even a few shy women become more expressive and interact with Amina more during their next visits," said Dr Bunmi Olonisakin, the physician the facility hired with PATHS2 funding. In two months, the health facility paid only 2,000 Naira (about £8) on call costs. "The register helps us to track women who revisited the health facility for antenatal care and delivery because of the calls," said Dr. Olonisakin. "I will have my next child at the health facility," said Hajia Sardatu.

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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.

