



## CASE STUDY

# A Traditional Herbalist Changes His Views and Becomes An Advocate for Safe Motherhood

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Binta Saidu holding her three-month-old daughter

**S**ixty-five-year-old Mallam Ramalan Garba is a prominent and influential soothsayer in the Tudun Wada Local Government Area in Kano State. For many years, most pregnant women for miles around have patronised his home office for herbs, prayers and incantations. Until recently it was common knowledge that he had no faith in modern medicine, especially since he saw it as inaccessible and generally unavailable—and his patients agreed.

PATHS2 identified Mallam Ramalan as an opinion influencer who needed to publicly accept the concept and aims of its Rapid Awareness-Raising (RAR) campaign if this life-saving intervention for women and young children was going to take off in his wide sphere of influence. The community containing Mal-

lam Ramalan's compound is about five kilometers away from Burum-Burum Primary Health Centre, one of the facilities that the UK aid-funded PATHS2 programme collaborates with. RAR is a mobilisation campaign that PATHS2 designed to build awareness in semi-urban communities about the benefits of using a health facility, especially for antenatal care (ANC), labor and delivery, danger signs in pregnancy (including some that are often misconstrued in the culture as not being a problem), and childhood diarrhoea. PATHS2 has trained 1,172 community volunteers to conduct discussion sessions during the RAR campaign in Kano since 2012. These volunteers have facilitated 3,026 discussion sessions, with an average of 40 people attending each session. After extensive advocacy and engagement on the part of PATHS2 RAR representatives, led by the Local Government Area staff, Mallam Ramalan was won over, and in December 2013 RAR was rolled out in his community. One of the discussion sessions was even held in his compound.

After participating in that session, he committed to ensuring ANC and facility delivery for his household. He also agreed to be an advocate for safe motherhood and facility delivery. Since then, three of his four daughters-in-law (Binta Saidu, Yar Ali Nuhu, and Yar Liman Saidu) have given birth in Burum Burum Primary Health Centre.

## Yahanasu, the Traditional Healer's First Grandchild Born in a Health Facility

Binta Saidu's three-month-old daughter and fifth child, Yahanasu, is the first child in Mallam Ramalan's compound born in a health facility. Having gotten the consent of her husband and father-in-law, Binta decided to attend ANC, because the RAR campaign on giving birth in a health facility had been very enlightening, and had aroused her curiosity about what happens to pregnant women in the health facility.

"Hussaina (the PATHS2 RAR representative) was a very friendly and charming lady who made very complex health issues simple," Binta remarked as she donned the PATHS2-branded hijab showing that she has joined the RAR herself as a community mobiliser. "Hussaina was brief but she was also graphic when she explained the benefits of ANC and what to expect, and the importance of giving birth in a health facility."

There are about 31 million women of childbearing age among the over 140 million people living in Nigeria. Maternal mortality rates in the North East and North West zones of the country are 1,549 deaths per 100,000 live births and 1,025 deaths per 100,000 live births respectively. These figures show how badly Nigeria needs high-impact interventions

to reduce maternal mortality. Studies show that when women and their husbands have greater knowledge of safe motherhood issues, there is greater likelihood that they will have better pregnancy and delivery outcomes, and a healthier family.



Mallam Ramalan Garba

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**The Partnership for Transforming Health Systems Phase Two (PATHS2)** is a health systems strengthening 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.

