



CASE STUDY

Emergency Transport Scheme Saves Women's Lives in Kano, Northern Nigeria

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Malama Mejita cuddles her newborn baby

Mejita Rabiou lives in Gwarzaye, a small community in Kumbotso Local Government Area in Kano State. When Mejita was pregnant with her fifth child, she went into labour at 5a.m. She was screaming in pain, but her family had no way to get her to the health facility on her own, so her husband phoned the local driver from the Emergency Transport Scheme (ETS). By the time the driver had arrived with another ETS driver, Mejita could not walk. Aided by her husband and another man, the two drivers managed to lift her safely into the taxi, using the lifting techniques that the drivers had been taught as part of their training for this scheme.

There is no health facility in Gwarzaye community; the closest is Panshekara Primary Health Centre, 25 kilometres away. When Mejita got to the Panshekara health facility, her case had worsened, and she was referred to Murtala General Hospital in Kano City.

The staff there attended to her immediately, and enabled her to give birth to a healthy baby. This was the first of Mejita's five children to be born in a health facility, which meant that she could also receive proper post-natal medical care.

Mejita's husband had found out about the ETS scheme through announcements from the community's traditional leaders. The ETS drivers had also distributed their telephone numbers to him and to other community members. The United Kingdom government-funded Partnership for Transforming Health Systems Phase 2 programme (PATHS2) is implementing the Emergency Transport Scheme in Kano in collaboration with the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), a local taxi drivers' union. The ETS aims to provide access to health care for pregnant women and reduce maternal mortality by training and encouraging local taxi drivers within the community to drive pregnant women to their local health facility in a timely manner in the event of an emergency.



ETS drivers during training on techniques for lifting a pregnant woman in labour

“Truly, I am very happy,” says Mejita. “This is a very good programme. I was afraid I might die but the ETS saved my life. May Allah bless the ETS drivers. They are doing a very good job. Now I tell the women in my community about the ETS.”

The ETS drivers in Kombotso local government have been working very hard, and stories such as Mejita’s show why they have earned the recognition of both the traditional leaders and people within

the local community. Every year nearly 600,000 women around the world die due to complications arising during pregnancy. After India; Nigeria has the second highest maternal death rate in the world: 52,000 Nigerian women die in labour or from complications of pregnancy every year. According to the World Bank, up to 75% of maternal deaths could be prevented by timely access to healthcare through adequate transport.

The drivers are rewarded for their volunteering services through a benefit known as “priority loading.” Once a driver has proven that he has transported a pregnant woman (by presenting his ETS driver’s log book complete with the signature of a health facility in-charge), the driver is granted permission to park his vehicle at the front of the loading queue, potentially saving himself many hours of waiting for passengers.

The impact of the ETS was instant. The ETS in Kano began in April 2012, and to date more than 250 women who might have died during labour have been transported to health facilities in the state.

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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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