



CASE STUDY

I Am Fine Here...

Mrs. Mercy Okpara gives up Private Hospital for Public Health Facility

Lagos • September 2012



Mrs Mercy Okpara cuddles her baby a few hours after giving birth in the Ogudu PHC, Lagos

Mrs. Mercy Okpara lay beside her new baby in a bed in the maternity ward of the Ogudu public primary health care centre (PHC) in Lagos State on 4 July 2012. She had given birth four hours before to a healthy 3.9kg baby girl. Although wincing slightly as she adjusted from one reclining position to another for comfort, she presented a healthy picture of strength. She certainly did not look like a woman who had just endured labour pains to bring her baby into the world.

Mrs. Okpara had started using the PHC in January 2012, when she registered for ante-natal care (ANC). She had her two other children born in a private hospital. A friend at the beauty salon where she works had told her that services at the Ogudu PHC had greatly improved after the PATHS2 Facility Community Outreach (FCO) had been held in Ogudu in December 2011. The FCOs bring health workers

and the community together to discuss problems concerning the health care services they receive, and ways to improve the services.

Since her friend had delivered safely in the PHC and was so positive about the experience, Mrs. Okpara had decided to go see for herself, and was convinced. At the time, she was two months pregnant.

Cuddling her newborn child, Mrs. Okpara said, “I am fine here. I had a normal delivery. They always answer me quickly. They did not collect any money from me. There was no shouting at me or the other women who came to deliver. It is because they used to shout at patients that I left before and went to a private hospital three years ago to deliver my first baby. When my friend told me that they are good now, I didn’t believe it till I came and saw for myself.”

The Ogedu PHC’s Chief Nursing Officer, Mrs. Ganiu Ajasa, responded to questions about these changes in practice there following the Facility Community Outreach. Mrs. Ajasa has been practising since she graduated from nursing school in 1983, and was posted to the PHC in 2010. She says that she and her fellow staff were not embarrassed by the complaints from the community during the FCO, but that it was

quite painful that they were giving so much and yet their efforts were not being appreciated.

“People complained that when they come to clinic we talk to them in a rude manner and waste their time. Some complained that they were told that everything is free but when they got to the clinic they were asked to pay. We let them realise that not everything is free. ANC is free, but they will need to register for it first, and before they will be registered they must bring the results of their scan, blood test and HIV test. After registering, they will get a free tetanus injection, anti-malaria injection and mosquito net.

“People at the outreach said there was no generator at the clinic, so that when the electricity went off we had to use candles. They said we did not have enough nurses to run 24-hour service. We’ve let them realise that things have changed. Last May 2012 after the second outreach, the local government hired three more midwives. Not only that: we now have both National Youth Service medical doctors and resident medical doctors. We talked to the people about the danger signs in pregnancy and about how if they notice any of those signs they should come to the clinics, both husband and wife.”

For more information, please contact: Bisi Tugbobo (b.tugbobo@paths2.org)

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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.

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