



Improving community-based primary healthcare in Nigeria

Providing technical assistance to Niger state to reduce maternal and child mortality

Background

Over the last decade, Nigeria has made significant progress in strengthening maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH). Between 2008 and 2017, Nigeria's under-five mortality rate dropped from 191 to 100 per 1,000 live births;^[1] and in 2018, 57 percent of pregnant women attended at least four antenatal care visits, compared to 45 percent in 2008.^[2-3] However, Nigeria still has the sixth highest under-five mortality rate and fourth highest maternal mortality rate in the world.^[4-5]

Access to quality MNCH services — a key component of primary healthcare — remains limited, especially in rural areas. In 2017, only 18 percent of children 12–23 months received all recommended vaccinations before their first birthday.^[6] Women do not always receive permission from their spouses to access care — such as immunisation and family planning — for cultural or religious reasons, and female health workers may not be available. The costs of transportation and seeking treatment can also be prohibitive.

To revitalise primary healthcare and work towards securing universal health coverage, Nigeria's National Primary Health Care Development Agency launched the Community Health Influencers, Promoters and Services (CHIPS) programme in 2018.

Country

Nigeria

Donor

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Length of project

November 2018 – November 2022

Partners

Niger State Ministry of Health

Niger State Primary Health Care Development Agency

Project outline and objectives

Malaria Consortium is providing technical assistance to support Niger state in north-central Nigeria with the implementation of a community-based primary healthcare programme that is integrated with CHIPS. With a special focus on MNCH, the project aims to increase demand for, and equitable access to, quality services by:

- strengthening state capacity to manage essential community-based health service provision
- facilitating the delivery of community-based health interventions by frontline health workers at health facilities and at the community level in line with national policies and global best practices
- gathering evidence to inform state-wide implementation of the CHIPS programme.

The project's first phase will support the Niger State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDA) to recruit 724 volunteer community health workers and train them as CHIPS agents and community engagement focal persons (CEFPs). The CHIPS agents will visit households to provide integrated community case management of diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia; manage other priority MNCH issues such as antenatal care, immunisation and family planning; and refer complicated cases to the nearest health facility. They will also promote healthy behaviours through social and behaviour change activities. The CEFPs, on the other hand, will be trained to promote community participation and increase community demand for services. All volunteers will receive a stipend from the state to cover the cost of work-related logistics.

Activities

Malaria Consortium will support the Government of Niger state, the State Ministry of Health and the SPHCDA to:

- develop a strategy and annual operational plans to sustainably roll out the CHIPS programme led by the Government of Niger state
- ensure that the currently offered community-based health services are integrated into the national CHIPS programme
- train CHIPS agents and CEFPs with the help of specially developed training materials
- develop supervision and quality assurance systems for the SPHCDA to effectively supervise local government area health officers, who will in turn supervise CHIPS agents and CEFPs
- facilitate collaboration between the SPHCDA and other state agencies to strengthen the supply chain management of drugs at the state and local government area levels
- expand the national community-based health information system to the local government area levels to gather all data obtained by CHIPS agents and CEFPs
- promote transparent governance at the state and local government area levels.

References

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Cover image: Women attending an antenatal care visit, Nigeria. Credit: Susan Schulman

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