

# Lead Mothers **Protect** a Million Children in Zamfara **Against Malaria**



Najr'atu Samaila – lead mother – poses for a photo with her two children

According to the 2018 Nigeria Demographic Health Survey (DHS), malaria is prevalent in Zamfara.

## 36%

**(Two out of five) of children under 5 with fever tested positive for malaria.**

Malaria transmission occurs all year round, and peaks during the rainy season. The Government of Nigeria's goal is to reduce the malaria burden and protect the most vulnerable people from malaria.

As part of the continuous effort of the United States Government to support the Government of Nigeria, the United States President's Malaria Initiative (PMI)-funded Breakthrough ACTION Nigeria (BA-N)

collaborated with the Zamfara State Ministry of Health (SMoH) to conduct an integrated malaria campaign in 2020. The campaign had two components: a mass distribution of insecticide-treated nets to ensure that every two persons in Zamfara State households would have access to at least one net (an ITN campaign) and to distribute preventive malaria medication to children 5 years and below (Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention campaign, SMC). SMC provides monthly doses of malaria medication to children under five years old during the peak malaria transmission period, offering protection against the illness.

During the ITN/SMC campaign, BA-N worked with communities to select and recruit 1,204 lead mothers (female volunteers) to visit households to encourage and counsel caregivers to complete the 2nd and 3rd days' doses of SMC medicine while also reminding them to participate in future monthly cycles. These volunteers were deployed to communities across 147 wards and 14 LGAs of the state. Studies have shown that through their strong connection to communities and unique relationships with caregivers, lead mothers can and do influence caregivers to adopt healthy behaviors during SMC campaigns.

Naja'atu Samaila volunteered and trained to be a lead mother. The 26-year-old mother of two was one of three lead mothers assigned to the Asako community, Bungudu LGA. To encourage caregivers to administer Day 2 and 3 doses of SMC medicine (called SPAQ) to eligible children, she conducted 35 household visits per day. However, as she came to appreciate the importance of the campaign even more, during the second cycle, she decided to increase the number of household visits to 47 to reach all households in the Asako community.



*"I travelled to Asako town almost daily on a motorcycle to carry out my task due to my passion for the job. However, 35 household visits were insufficient to cover that community, and I wanted all households to be covered. So, I redoubled my effort and started going to the community early to start and cover more ground."*

**- Naja'atu Samaila**

Furthermore, for Naja'atu, protecting children from malaria is born from personal experience and service to humanity. *"I almost lost my son twice... so I don't want it to happen to me again or anyone. I want to see all children healthy. That is why I make sure all my children take all the SMC medicines and sleep inside mosquito net"*- Na'ajatu

The effort of Naja'atu and other lead mothers contributed to 1.1 million eligible children in Zamfara state accessing SMC medicine and protection against malaria in 2020.



**I have always  
wanted to help**  
in keeping our  
community healthy.

So, when the opportunity came that they were recruiting lead mothers, it was not difficult to ask because my husband was in support - Na'ajatu