

Improving Maternity Services in a Primary Health Center in Sokoto State, Nigeria

Doreen Paul is a service provider at Gidan Kaya Primary Health Care Center (PHC) in Gwadabawa, a local government area of Sokoto State. She has over 15 years of experience providing maternal, newborn, and child health services and has worked at this facility for almost 11 years. Despite her vast experience, none of her clients delivered at her PHC because they did not feel it catered to their unique needs, even though they did come to the facility for antenatal care (ANC).

“When it is time for labor, they prefer that I take the delivery at [their] home, or better still, they go to the traditional birth attendants. When I inquired why, they told me the facility is close to the market and [thus] does not have enough privacy, [especially] because there is no functional labor room.”

— Doreen Paul, Health Care Service Provider, Gidan Kaya PHC, Sokoto State



OIC Doreen Paul filling out the attendance register at Gidan Kaya Primary Health Care Center. Photo credit: Jeroh Oghenevwogaga

The women also told Doreen they were not allowed to deliver in their preferred birth position (squatting, rather than laying on a couch), nor were they allowed to have a birth companion with them during labor.

Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria worked with service providers in Sokoto like Doreen to change attitudes and beliefs that prevented women from giving birth in their facilities. Since October 2021, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria has trained over 197 service providers in Sokoto State to provide respectful maternity care.

Through training and cluster meetings with other providers, Doreen grasped the importance of respectful maternity care. “After our cluster meeting, I took up the challenge, especially after I saw other providers talking about their experiences taking deliveries in the facility. I decided to look for a way out,” she said. Doreen began with addressing the women’s privacy concerns. “I looked at the room





OIC Doreen Paul providing empathic service to a client at the Gidan Kaya PHC. Photo credit: Jeroh Oghenevwogaga

we usually used for ANC and noticed that it could be converted into a labor room. With the assistance from other colleagues, we got curtains and screens.”

With a room that was more inviting and with a deeper understanding of why women shied away from delivering in the facility, Doreen began to encourage pregnant women to visit the PHC whenever she was asked to deliver babies at home. She learned that calmly talking to the women of her community was part of respectful care. And by doing this, Doreen convinced 17 women to deliver at the facility and hopes for more. She also shared her learnings with other facility staff, who have since begun to provide respectful care to clients when they come for deliveries.

“I am very happy that after 11 years of working in this facility, women now come and give birth here and are respected. These are people who did not come to the facility for delivery at all previously. Though the number looks small, if you see from our register, there is an improvement already. We will continue to advocate for them and hold orientation in the communities so that more will come. I thank Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria for letting me know I can do this.”

— Doreen Paul

This success story is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.