

A Public-Private Partnership Boosted Reach for a Nigerian Public Health Media Campaign

Khadija Kashim, a mother in Bauchi State, became very attached to her radio and mobile phone when she discovered that she could receive important health information for herself and her family by tuning into Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria's radio program or by calling the associated toll-free mobile service.

"My phone and my radio help me to continue to listen to Albishirin Ku! and we even discuss the health messages in our women's group. I practiced the behaviors, including attending [antenatal Care] and [exclusively] breastfeeding my newborn, and I am happy with the results so far."

— Khadija Kashim, a mother in Bauchi State



Khadija Kashim from Bauchi State with her infant during a Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria community meeting. Photo credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

Many Northern Nigerians do not commonly practice behaviors to improve maternal and child health due to ignorance about the benefits and preferences for long-standing traditional practices. Consequently, child mortality rates in Northern Nigeria are among the highest in the world.¹

In response, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria produced the [Albishirin Ku! radio drama series](#). It also partnered with Airtel Communications Limited, a leading telecommunication operator with over 51 million subscribers in Nigeria, to promote priority health behaviors highlighted by the radio series through mobile phones. The toll-free 4-2-1 mobile service provided information concerning malaria, family planning, nutrition, maternal and child health, tuberculosis, and COVID-19 to callers in their local dialects. *Albishirin Ku!* ("Glad Tidings" in the Hausa language) leveraged the power of storytelling to promote priority health behaviors every weekday in five-minute segments across 28 radio stations in

¹ World Health Organization. (2020, September 8). *Children: Improving survival and well-being*. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/children-reducing-mortality#_ftnref1



Bauchi, Kebbi, and Sokoto States and the Federal Capital Territory. Episodes were also available for free “streaming” via the 4-2-1 mobile service.



“One of the Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria content aimed at increasing awareness of behaviors that can improve maternal and child health outcomes is the Albishirin Ku! radio drama. [It] has been very popular within the state and has helped to increase our listenership and revenue. We now prioritize airing Albishirin Ku! over airing news.”

— Muhammad DanBinta, Commercial Marketing Manager, Kebbi Radio

Launched in August 2019, Albishirin Ku! broadcast for five seasons. Together with all other Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria radio health content, the campaign resulted in a total of 7,292,383 calls to the 4-2-1 toll-free number, representing 29,572,986 minutes spent by 1,271,379 callers to listen to health content. If Airtel had not provided this service to their subscribers for free, this would have cost callers about US\$508,668.

“We are pleased to see how the 4-2-1 initiative is helping to transform lives in many remote communities across the country by turning simple mobile phones into search engines that are both locally and globally relevant and in the mother tongue of the target audience.”

— Segun Ogunsanya, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Airtel Nigeria

The excitement around the program, coupled with its wide exposure, made the *Albishirin Ku!* radio drama and associated 4-2-1 service instrumental in improving knowledge of priority health behaviors in Northern Nigeria and beyond. According to Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria biannual omnibus surveys conducted between September 2019 and March 2022, there was steady improvement in the recall of the project’s health messages, with 92% of respondents recalling the program. A user experience survey with callers to the 4-2-1 service, found that 78% called to listen to *Albishirin Ku!* and other Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria content. Many callers were from outside the intervention states, for widespread reach across Nigeria.

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