



Accessing Healthcare: Mama Nura's Story



VOICES

"Mama Nura, should I go to the chemist (pharmacist) to get some drugs for you or at least ask the chemist to see you, you have been bent over in terrible pain for three days now?" Hafsat, Mama Nura's concerned neighbour asked.

"You know how long it took me to pay the last bill, I don't like to owe, I will bear the pain" replied Mama Nura.

A passerby who overheard the conversation insisted that she should be taken to the primary healthcare centre nearby and went ahead to pay the bill.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right that everyone should enjoy, regardless of social or economic status. This is not always the case, especially in developing countries where access to healthcare services is limited or costly. In Kano State, Nigeria, the government has made efforts to provide affordable and accessible healthcare for the vulnerable population, including pregnant women, and children under the age of five. Through this effort, health conditions are improving, and many lives have been saved. This piece tells the story of Mama Nura, a beneficiary of the healthcare scheme, and how a combination of care, and support made a significant impact on her life.

On Mama Nura's follow-up visit, the Doctor had some good news, or so she thought. *"Do you remember we did some tests*

after we took your blood sample the other day, congratulations! You are expecting!"

"Me no way! it cannot be," exclaimed Mama Nura. *"We cannot deal with this now, my husband and I cannot afford another child, not to talk of all the health challenges that came with all the previous pregnancies. No no!"* Mama Nura was lost in thought.

"Mama Nura," called the Doctor, *"Mama Nura,"* she called again jolting her out of her thoughts, *"come and meet Hassan he should be able to help."* Hassan, an official from the Kano State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency (KSCHMA) was on his monthly enrolment drive at the Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC). Hassan reassured Mama Nura not to worry about, he explained that the government has a scheme that covers pregnant women, under 5 children and other vulnerable people. Mama Nura was among the 50 other people that got enrolled that day. Their personal information was entered into digitised tools that are used to generate daily reports. These reports are collated into monthly reports required to access funding from the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF). *"Thanks to the tools developed by PERL (Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn), my job has become easier, ensuring a steady flow of funds so that Mama Nura and others like her have uninterrupted access to healthcare,"* remarked Hassan.

Reliable data plays a pivotal role in the running of healthcare facilities. Recognising this need, through PERL intervention, an Open Data Kit (ODK) system and a dashboard were tailored to enhance the quality and ensure the consistency of data received from facilities. These tools ensure that health facilities collect and remit routine data, which have improve the ability of the Kano State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency to monitor healthcare facilities centrally. The reports play a vital role in advocating for increased funding to support the vulnerable, this impact is evident in the rise of enrollees, from 381 in September 2023 to 480 in November 2023— a near 30% increase.

Mama Nura's story illustrates the impact achievable through a convergence of care and technical support. Her experience highlights how these elements can improve the lives of those in need. The responsiveness of the Kano State Government, coupled with the strategic interventions in KSCHMA facilitated by PERL, is reshaping healthcare services. It is a reminder that even in the face of adversity, collaborative efforts can lead incremental achievements towards a shared goal—the commitment to ensuring access to quality healthcare for all.

"They then enrolled me because they said I qualified by being pregnant. I am now 5 months pregnant and have been enjoying free services in this facility. When I come, they respect me and take their time to explain to me how I am supposed to take my drugs. They advised me on the kind of foods to take to help me regain my weight because I had lost quite a lot when I was ill. When I come for antenatal, I am given enough drugs to cover the period up to my next visit. Amongst all the pregnancies I have gone through, I have never enjoyed free healthcare until now and I feel healthier with fewer ailments."

Zaharau Habibu (Mama Nura)
Beneficiary, Gwagwarwa PHC, Kano

The support of PERL for the ODK has had a significant impact on our Agency's development. The quality of our data, which we captured from facilities operating the Basic Health Care program at the state level using the ODK, was recognized by the National Healthcare Insurance Agency (NHIA). As a result, the NHIA decided to increase the number of enrollees in the basic health care program by 100. Previously, we had 381 as a result of the data we provided, it was increased to 484 and we are grateful for the assistance we received from PERL.

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