

Advocacy Wins for Maternal and Newborn Health and Youth Access to Family Planning in Nigeria

Since 1965, Pathfinder International has worked in Nigeria to ensure that women, girls, boys, and men have access to the information and services they need to lead a healthy reproductive life—and advocacy has been central to Pathfinder’s recent successes in maternal and newborn health (MNH) and adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (AYSRRH).

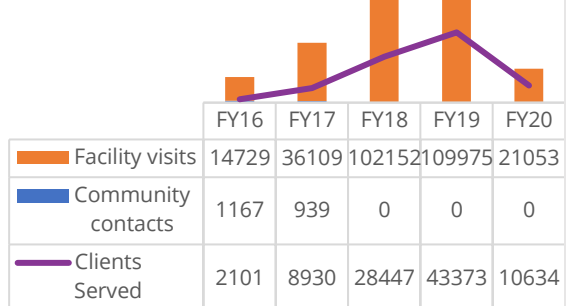
Over the past 55 years, Pathfinder has worked across Nigeria in close partnership with the government, community-based organizations, the private sector, and faith-based institutions to build capacity and strengthen health systems. Given the diversity of needs and social groups in the country, Pathfinder programs are tailored to local requirements and cultural norms. These include training legislators to advocate for the reform of reproductive health (RH) laws to meet the needs of youth; serving some of the most hard-to-reach groups and supporting remote communities with RH and environmental awareness; and breaking down cultural barriers to promote the importance of trained care during pregnancy, delivery, and the postpartum period.

Advocacy Win # 1:

In 2019, Pathfinder contributed 1% to Nigeria’s achievement for unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions prevented, as well as 1% to maternal deaths averted. This percentage reflects achievements for USAID Saving Mothers, Giving Life (SMGL) and Merck SMGL and SGBV for the period the projects were active.

MNH is a critical component of reproductive health, but the outcomes in Nigeria are poor despite years of investment. To address this gap, Pathfinder Nigeria made MNH one of its strategic pillars, and with funding from USAID and MSD for Mothers, Pathfinder implemented a five-year project in Cross River State to improve MNH facility services by addressing the three delays associated with maternal and newborn deaths—including the delay in reaching the appropriate health facility.

Fig 1: FP Consults and Clients Served



The decline in FY20 was due to project closures.

One of the strategies SMGL employed in solving for this delay was setting up a functional, community-driven emergency transport service (ETS). Sustained funding of ETS will ensure timely access to health facilities, improve MNH outcomes, and ultimately decrease maternal morbidity and mortality from preventable causes.

As part of Pathfinder’s advocacy efforts to sustain ETS in the state:

- SMGL trained 408 community stakeholders from 58 Ward Development Committees across 16 local government areas on advocacy for sustained ETS funding using the AFP SMART Advocacy approach.
- By the end of June 2019, 47 of 58 (81%) SMGL-supported WDCs in Cross River state, Nigeria achieved their mandate to secure provision of regular funds for ETS for pregnant women.

For inquiries related to Pathfinder’s advocacy efforts in Nigeria, please contact:

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Clients served	CYP	Unintended pregnancies averted	Maternal deaths averted	Unsafe abortions averted	HIV: Clients tested & counselled	HIV: Newly enrolled on ART	HIV: Currently enrolled on ART	GBV clients reached	PAC procedures
10,649	25,854	11,979	61	4,321	568,291	3,874	54,903	1,588	129

Advocacy Win # 2:

Pathfinder played a critical role in advocating for increased budgetary allocation for FP in several states across Nigeria, resulting in more funds for AYSRHR, increased contraceptive choice, and more.

Pathfinder International is the local partner of the Advance Family Planning (AFP) project in Nigeria, which has been operating since 2015. AFP aims to increase the financial investment and political commitment needed to ensure access to quality FP through evidence-based advocacy. Pathfinder works with local champions at the sub-national level to deliver advocacy messages to policymakers to push for sustained FP funding at the national, state, and local government levels; expanded access through task-sharing and task-shifting; and youth access to FP information and services.

Pathfinder played a critical role in advocating for increased budgetary allocation for FP in several states. Some of the successes achieved include:

SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR FAMILY PLANNING:

- In 2020, six Nigerian states marshalled a total of 231 million Nigerian Naira (NGN) (US \$616,000) for family planning. The states of Gombe, Kwara, Nasarawa, Ogun, and Plateau allocated funds from their state Ministry of Health budgets—all repeat allocations from the past three consecutive budget cycles.
- In January 2020, the Nasarawa State Commissioner of Health approved a first-time budget allocation of 5 million NGN (US \$13,000) dedicated to AYSRH in the State Primary Healthcare Development Agency FY2020 budget. The agency plans to train providers and peer educators, create youth clubs, and offer education and communications materials on family planning.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING:

- In December 2019, Gombe, Ogun, and Nasarawa each approved a state-level DMPA-SC (Sayana Press, a self-administered injectable contraceptive option) Accelerated Introduction and Scale-Up Plan to increase contraceptive choice and expand method mix. The DMPA-SC steering committee tasked with tracking implementation has successfully advocated for allocation of funds for provider training on DMPA-SC. In Gombe, the state allocated 15 million NGN in its 2021 appropriation, while Nasarawa state has allocated funds for procurement of DMPA-SC, which was distributed to all health facilities across the state. The efforts of the steering committee also contributed to the increase in uptake of self-injection by women in the 3 states

IMPROVED LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY:

- Between 2019 and 2020, four phased-out states (Kaduna, Kebbi, Lagos, and Oyo) allocated a total of 400 million NGN (\$1 million) for FP as part of the sustainability efforts being put in place to ensure local ownership by state governments and CSOs.

MEDIA ADVOCACY:

- A total of 48 media houses in nine states are publishing and airing FP stories, leveraging an estimated 13.3 million NGN annually in free coverage. In February 2020, we achieved the first sustainability win when members of the Advocacy Working Group in Lagos, a phased-out geography, obtained the renewal of a weekly FP column in Leadership, one of Nigeria's most popular newspapers. The column is valued at US \$1,080 per week. Pathfinder Nigeria cultivated young social media influencers/advocates to hold leaders accountable on FP commitments.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people's sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

