PATHFINDER

NIGERIA

Engaging Men and Boys in Nigeria

Implementation Phase

Engaging Men and Boys in Nigeria accelerates voluntary family planning (FP) use and supports healthy birth spacing by repositioning men as supportive partners, engaged fathers, and active co-decision makers in the reproductive health of their families.

Context

In northern Nigeria, low contraceptive use and poor maternal health outcomes are largely driven by male disengagement, entrenched sociocultural norms, and widespread religious misinterpretations about FP. Because men are primary household decision makers, overcoming these barriers requires moving beyond women-only clinical models toward integrated, faith-anchored, and couple-centered care.

Building on empirical findings from Surgo Health and behavioral segmentation analysis by the University of California San Diego, *Engaging Men and Boys in Nigeria* strengthens women's access to and use of modern contraception in Nasarawa and Niger States, establishing a model with potential to scale to other northern Nigerian states. The project focuses on men who are not opposed to FP, but hesitate to show support due to perceived social expectations, peer norms, and lack of clear pathways to act.

While expanding access to FP services via tailored male engagement strategies, the project remains committed to principles of bodily autonomy, voluntarism, and informed choice. *Engaging Men and Boys* recognizes that male-focused approaches can be a supportive framework for couples' joint decision-making but can never be used to override a woman's right to make decisions about her own body and fertility preferences.

The three-year project will be implemented **in 26 LGAs across Niger and Nasarawa States** by Pathfinder International, in collaboration with FOMWAN and WOWICAN.



Engaging Men and Boys in Nigeria

Donor: Gates Foundation

Technical Partners:

Pathfinder International

Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN)

Women Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN)

Government Implementing Partner

Niger and Nasarawa State Ministries of Health (SMOH)

State Primary Health Care Development Agencies (SPHCDA)

Budget: $4,000,000 USD (538,752,000 NGN)

Duration: November 2026 – September 2029

Intervention Areas

- 17 of 25 LGAs in Niger State (68%)
- 9 of 13 LGAs in Nasarawa State (69%)

Objectives

Goal: Strengthen the enabling environment for voluntary modern contraceptive use among couples in Niger and Nasarawa States by addressing socio-behavioral barriers to male support while protecting women's bodily and decision-making autonomy.

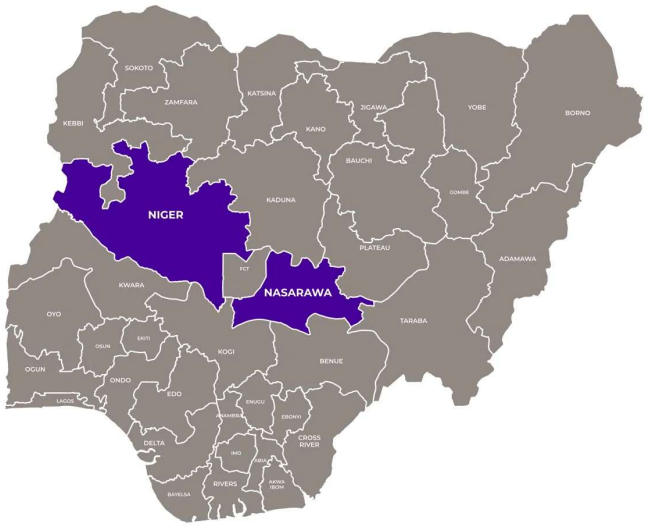
Objective 1: Leverage community and religious platforms to address socio-behavioral barriers to birth spacing and strengthen support for FP among men, women, and couples in priority LGAs

Objective 2: Develop discreet community-to-facility linkages connecting individuals and couples to FP information and services while addressing stigma and privacy concerns

Objective 3: Integrate structured couple dialogues and joint action planning into key points of clinical care to promote joint couples FP decision-making.

Objective 4: Strengthen government ownership to sustain quality and male-responsive FP service delivery across both states

Intervention Areas



Engaging Men and Boys **supported states**

Key Interventions

Objective 1 addresses the social permission barrier among Isolated Decision-Makers and Stigmatized Prospectives behavioral segments via FOMWAN and WOWICAN-led faith-based dialogues. Messaging will move away from population control, family size limits, or financial savings narratives. Instead, messages will focus on healthy birth spacing to safeguard maternal health and child survival, drawing on Islamic jurisprudential principles of parental responsibility and spousal care.

Objective 2 addresses privacy concerns and social stigma by establishing confidential links between communities and facilities. It focuses on person-centered community outreach and referral pathways by leveraging male champions and social diffusion dynamics. Activities target social permission and privacy barriers by establishing confidential pathways that guide men and couples from initial awareness toward voluntary service use at supported facilities.

Objective 3 targets men who support FP and accompany partners to health facilities. Activities will train providers to use a structured couples counseling protocol and restructure routine perinatal points of care to support voluntary method initiation. The project will strengthen provider capacity in public and private facilities as well as at community level.

Objective 4 addresses the structural omission of male engagement metrics in public health governance and supervisory routines in northern Nigeria. This omission has historically left male-responsive FP interventions isolated and unsustainable.

Expected Results

By 2029, *Engaging Men and Boys* will

1. Deliver ~2.47 million FP visits
2. Generate :
   - 1,013,337 couple years of protection in Nasarawa State
   - 1,654,131 couple years of protection in Niger State
3. Support an estimated 1,053,594 annualized users of modern contraception

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