Health Facility Sensitisation as part of an Emergency Transport Scheme (ETS) in Adamawa State, Nigeria

**Project Location:** Adamawa State, Nigeria  
**Project Start Date:** 2013  
**Project Duration:** 5 Years

**Introduction:**

Adamawa State, Northeast Nigeria, has one of the highest maternal, neonatal and child mortality rates in the country; with 1,100 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008, compared to the national average of 840 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Records from the Nigerian National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2008) show that only 12.8% of deliveries in the North-eastern States (including Adamawa) occur in health facilities, compared to a national average of 35%. In Adamawa State, health service vehicles are few, distances are great, and transport is prohibitively expensive for many people, particularly in rural areas and during emergencies. For these reasons, many pregnant women cannot seek assistance at the time of birth.

With funding from Comic Relief and in partnership with Society for Family Health (SFH), The Emergency Transport Scheme (ETS) in Adamawa State aims to provide affordable, accessible, safe, and timely means of transport for pregnant women during labour or obstetric emergencies by taking them to the nearest health facility using an existing, functioning and well-organised transport system as provided by the commercial taxi drivers of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). The ETS advocates and positively encourages taxi drivers to be seen as ‘life savers’ within the rural villages. It is expected that, by using the ETS, women seeking healthcare will reach facilities in a more stable health condition than those who deliver at home or reach health facilities through other means of transport.

This technical case study focuses on the health facility sensitisation activities conducted at a national and local level. These activities aim to make all of the health facility workers in the 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) where the ETS is being implemented aware of the need for them to actively support the scheme.

**Methodology:**

The process began by identifying the key stakeholders at both a state and LGA level.

The following key stakeholders were identified at the state level:
- The Director of Community Health from the State Primary Healthcare Development Agency (SPHCDA)
- The Permanent Secretary from the State Ministry of Women’s Affairs (SMOWA)
- The NURTW State Chairman, State Secretary and other union executives.

The following key stakeholders were identified at the LGA level:
- Maternal and Child Health directors from each of the LGAs (from the State Primary Healthcare Development Agency)
- Primary Healthcare Centres
- LGA focal persons
- Two volunteers from NURTW from each LGA.

SFH and Transaid hosted a workshop in 2014 that aimed to fully sensitize health facilities on the importance of providing appropriate care to pregnant women in a timely manner. Discussions with the healthcare workers highlighted the importance of providing immediate medical attention to pregnant women, having good relationships with the drivers, pregnant women and the community and the importance of keeping a record of the women transported through the ETS.

It is important to include the ETS drivers in the health facility sensitisation, in order to strengthen their relationship with the healthcare workers so that they understand each other’s concerns and priorities. The ETS
drivers and the healthcare workers agreed that good communication with one another is key to the success of the ETS. Healthcare workers emphasised the importance of drivers calling ahead when transferring a pregnant woman so that the health facilities are appropriately prepared for their arrival. Overall, it was agreed that strengthening the integration between the ETS and the health facilities is vital for reducing maternal mortality in Adamawa State.

Outcomes:

Through ongoing health facility sensitisation, all of the Maternal and Child Health directors and healthcare workers can become fully aware of their role in achieving a reduction in maternal mortality in Adamawa State. They also fully understand the importance of working cooperatively with the ETS drivers for the successful implementation of the Emergency Transport Scheme.

The healthcare workers have agreed to support the ETS activities, by keeping a record of the women who had been transferred to the health facility through the ETS. This involves signing the specified log sheet and keeping the duplicate after each successful delivery.

The contact numbers of all ETS volunteer drivers in each LGA are routinely distributed to each health facility for them to give to pregnant women for use in the event of a maternal emergency.

Ongoing health facility sensitisation is taking place to ensure healthcare workers and ETS drivers continue working together cooperatively, so that remote and rural health facilities are reached and pregnant women are provided with immediate medical attention.

Conclusion:

Health facility sensitisation has been successful in engaging the health facilities and the drivers. Most of the health facilities are now fully aware of the ETS and the role that they play. SFH are continuing this sensitisation to ensure that the health facilities remain engaged and committed to their role in the ETS, in order to achieve fully successful integration of the ETS.

Several further activities have been recommended below:

- Distribute lists of all the healthcare workers in each LGA to the two ETS Focal persons in each LGA.
- Distribute lists of ETS volunteer drivers in each of the 16 LGAs to the community during community engagement and open community meetings.
- Motivate other ETS drivers by identifying ‘ETS driver champions’

Tools Utilised:
Health facility Sensitisation event attendance template

Partners:
Society for Family Health (SFH), National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDA), State Ministry of Women Affairs (SMOWA).

About Transaid:
Transaid is an international UK development charity that aims to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods across Africa and the developing world through creating better transport. Transaid was founded by Save the Children and the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. Our Patron is HRH The Princess Royal. Transaid specializes in the following:

- Building the capacity of public health authorities to provide effective, safe and cost efficient transport management systems to promote equitable access to primary health care services.
- Developing and improving logistics and supply chain systems to enhance the delivery of medicines, equipment and relief services to vulnerable communities.
- Promoting effective partnerships to support and enhance community participation in developing sustainable transport solutions in rural areas.
- Developing and delivering transport and logistics training and qualifications for public and private sector operators.

Transaid has the capacity and reach to lead projects throughout the developing world, but is equally capable of providing niche technical assistance to large scale health systems strengthening projects. Transaid maintains strong relationships with a number of leading international organizations including donor agencies such as DfID, DANIDA and USAID, and implementing organizations such as Health Partners International, Options Consulting, John Snow Inc. and Management Sciences for Health.

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