

Understanding issues around inclusive family planning for people with disabilities in Nigeria

BBC Media Action conducted qualitative formative research among people with disabilities and non-disabled people in Kaduna and Borno states in Nigeria. It informed the production of our long-running Hausa radio drama '*Madubi*', social media content and other community level activities implemented by project consortium partner, Sightsavers. These addressed issues of inclusive family planning for people with disabilities.

Context

Data from the 2018 DHS conducted in Nigeria suggests that people with disabilities, and particularly adolescent girls and young women with disabilities, have misconceptions around sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and HIV or AIDS, limited knowledge of family planning methods and low perceived need of family planning compared to their peers without disabilities. Evidence further suggests that only a small proportion have ever used family planning methods – and when the need for

family planning is perceived, it is not always met.

Project background

With funding from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Inclusive Family Planning (IFPLAN) project seeks to contribute to the reduction of the unmet need for family planning and increase access to and use of available modern contraceptive methods by people with disabilities in Kaduna state mainly (a project priority state) - through mass media (including radio drama and social media content), community intervention approaches as well as capacity strengthening for media practitioners.

Research methodology

Face-to-face qualitative research methods including, in-depth interviews, family interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured facility observation were used in Kaduna and Borno¹ states. Participants aged between 15 – 49 years (women) or up to 59 years (men). Some with disabilities (including physical, visual, hearing or intellectual impairment or albinism) and some without disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, media practitioners and relevant community stakeholders and influencers. The Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) of questions on functioning was used to inform

¹ The radio drama will be broadcast across multiple northern Nigerian states hence Borno was also selected for the formative research to gain insights from a state with

key peculiarities such as continuous insecurity/insurgence to give a contrast to Kaduna, the priority state.

random selection/recruitment of participants to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Key findings

- **Accurate knowledge and use of family planning and modern contraceptives is low** among respondents with disabilities across the board.
- **Barriers to access and use of family planning services and modern contraceptives** for people with disabilities include factors such as unvalidated family stories/rumours, linked marital status (being unmarried implies that there is no need for family planning), and religious views, among others.
- **Motivating factors** include the financial and perceived health benefits of using family planning and modern contraceptives.
- **Decision making** is influenced by family members such as husbands and mothers-in-law, and community networks such as community leaders who give advice.
- Research participants within different disability clusters, except for people with hearing impairment, **desired information** about family planning services and modern contraceptives from radio, primary healthcare centres, and social media (mostly urban respondents). People with hearing impairment preferred to get information from their husbands (rural women), workshops, seminars, TV drama and short videos with subtitles, printed information and communication materials and through communication dialogue.
- **Preferred formats** across disability clusters are drama, public service announcements, hearing from religious and community leaders, real life stories and community dialogue.
- The research helped to identify **key profiles** of people with disabilities and their influencers, who are likely to access and use family planning services and modern contraceptives or not. These include Faiza, a young mother with hearing impairment who wants to have more children and is looking

to space them but does not have the right information about family planning, except from friends and family; Abu, a person with visual impairment who is averse to family planning, believes children are from God and measures should not be put in place to delay getting pregnant, among others. These profiles were used to develop characters in a radio drama with some of them directly moved into the drama world as they are, e.g. Abu.

- **Pretesting** these showed that audiences found the characters interesting and relatable, seeing them as real and reflecting people and events or situations around them.

“No... family planning is not something we discuss publicly unless the person is close to us, it is something we keep as a secret.”-
Married female, 18-25years,
Kaduna Urban (hearing impaired)

Key implications

- Mass media has a role to play in addressing family planning related issues for people with disabilities for its reach with mass audiences.
- Media practitioners interviewed reported that media has the potential to encourage people with disabilities to use and access family planning services and modern contraceptives by creating relatable programmes.
- Leveraging radio drama with interesting and true-life stories has the potential to encourage access to and use of family planning services and modern contraceptives among people with disabilities.

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