



Solar Power substitutes candle light in the theatre room of Bungudu LG General Hospital, Zamfara State

“Prior to PRRINN-MNCH’s intervention in our facility, the situation of our Labour Room was dire, and that of Theatre Room, terrible!”

- Malama Ummu, Maternity In-Charge at Bungudu General Hospital, Zamfara State

Until very recently, the fate of pregnant mothers due for delivery and ‘facing the surgeon’s knife’ on operating tables at Bungudu General Hospital (BGH) of Zamfara State are piteously tied to a dimming candle flame that was the only source of light and of hope in the Labour Room!

To compound matters for the pain-ridden mother, her fate is once again tied to the pulse power or otherwise of her family that were normally asked to buy the candles used in conducting the operation on her. Failure to provide one at that critical hour would mean delay in helping her through a safe delivery, a delay that often results in dire and fatal consequences to both the mother and the unborn baby.

The candle light draws the line between life and death for the innocent mother! Like the proverbial candle that burns out and melts to oblivion while lighting up and giving life to our once dark rooms or paths, mothers are needlessly dying giving life and meaning to our future.

According to a recent survey and estimates, Nigeria records an average of 42, 600 maternal deaths every year as only 32 percent of pregnant women are said to deliver with the assistance of a Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA).

For Bungudu LGA with a population of 283, 478 as at 2009, and with 14,174 out of that number being the population of pregnant women,

operation via candle light is a very worrisome development.

And with good news and success stories around Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) becoming a scarce commodity in Nigeria today, the news of the newly introduced use of nature-endowed solar power to light up the operating room of BGH on a sustained basis will prove a worthy story to share.

Partnership for Reviving Routine Immunization in Northern Nigeria-Maternal, Newborn and Child Health program jointly funded and supported by UK Department for International Development & the Norwegian Government has equipped the BGH’s labour and operation theatre room with solar power that comes through silicon panels placed on the roof of the maternity building. And the grim picture of the past is now replaced with a brimming picture of hope.

The Labour room was renovated through collaborative efforts by PRRINN and the State Government. It was floored and walled in assorted tiles to enhance hygiene.

According to Ummu, *‘we usually conduct ANC sessions at the reception of our previous maternity section which proved to be chaotic and never convincing, but today, PRRINN-MNCH has built for us a new purpose-built Antenatal Care Clinic (ANC) and equipped it with sitting arrangements and foldable chairs. This has helped in improving confidentiality and by so doing leveraged an increase in the number of women attending ANC and MNCH services’.*

The newly built ANC building is also used for immunization services and for child-spacing



Partnership for Reviving Routine Immunization in Northern Nigeria; Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Initiative

consultations. This has increased attendance at the facility.

Ummu divulged that, *'In the past, we used to have 5-10 women booking for ANC services, but now that we were blessed with the purpose-built ANC building, we usually have 60 plus women booking for ANC services'*.

Three standard delivery beds were also donated to the facility by PRRINN-MNCH to further harmonize its intervention at the facility. The facility is also a beneficiary of PRRINN-MNCH introduced Sustainable Drug Supply System (SDSS). SDSS is geared towards making essential drugs available, accessible and affordable to the client on a continuous basis.

As an important aspect of the intervention, staff members were sponsored for a series of capacity building trainings workshops such as Life Saving Skills training workshop, Quality Improvement Workshop, Integrated Maternal Care (IMC) training workshop and Newborn Care training workshop. The impact on the staff is yielding positive results.

'Despite my experience as a midwife, I only learnt recently about how best to do 'cut down' after we attended the training on Life Saving Skills (LSS). This has indeed improved my skills and I am now confident at doing it, thanks to PRRINN', a smiling Ummu proudly asserted.

PRRINN-MNCH is also working on securing pipe-born water for the facility through drilled boreholes. In the absence of water availability at the facility, clients were asked to buy water in jerry cans for use in their treatment.

Dr. Gambo Liman, the Principal Medical Officer in charge of the hospital, said that, before PRRINN-MNCH intervened at the facility, they were made to familiarize themselves and their clients with a lot of problems and challenges around service delivery and about running the facility as a whole.

He admitted that, the culture of training and retraining of staffs was missing in the past and

once PRRINN-MNCH arrived, amongst the first things it worked toward addressing is retraining of staff of the facility, helping us build that culture of training that was missing. The training has changed some of the old ways they used to address contemporary medical issues. Now, the staff attached priority to preaching the importance of personal hygiene and accords child-spacing consultations the strictest of confidentiality possible.

Our staff are now ably trained so much so that they now carry out services around obstetric emergencies with little or no supervision, Dr. Gambo comfortably announced.

Dr. Gambo added that,

'the training and other interventions has helped a lot in curbing the maternal and infant mortality rate we usually record at this facility. Before the intervention, we usually record 3-4 maternal deaths per month. But since last year when PRRINN-MNCH's intervention began to mature at the facility, we see the rate drastically reduced; in the last eight (8) months alone, we only recorded one (1) maternal death at the facility'.

PRRINN-MNCH has renovated some critical infrastructure in the facility. It renovated wholly the maternity section linking it up with the nurses' station and lying-in ward. It also renovated the once dilapidated and nearly decayed 'theatre room'.

The room was compromised on all fronts, structure-wise and from the top, with water seeping through the ceiling and down on operating tables during the rainy season. The facility managers now discuss this issue in the past tense.

Dr. Gambo concluded by saying that,

'PRRINN-MNCH interventions across board are helping in no small way towards raising the standard of healthcare delivery in the state at all levels'.