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A Year Well Spent A Story of Transformation

One woman dies every ten minutes in Nigeria because of complications in pregnancy or childbirth. 528 infants under 28-days old die each day. 2,300 children under age five die daily. These alarming statistics from the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health underscore the importance of World Renew's efforts to improve maternal, newborn and child health in Nigeria.

A high proportion of maternal, newborn, and child deaths are actually preventable. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals include reducing the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 pregnant women worldwide from its current level of 215 (and 800 in Nigeria) to less than 70 per 100,000 by the year 2030, with similar ambitious reductions in infant and child mortality as well. Meeting these goals will include efforts in prenatal and postnatal care, safer drinking water, promotion of breastfeeding, improved nutrition, and reduction in poverty. From July 2016 to June 2017, World Renew and its local Nigerian partner, the Beacon of Hope Initiative, have joined these efforts with the help of a Baker Foundation grant targeting rural communities in central Nigeria.

The World Renew project in Nasarawa State included four programs: Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health; Kitchen Gardening; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene; and Community Outreach regarding maternal and family health. Here are some highlights from each of those facets of this year-long endeavor.

Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

Many factors contribute to maternal, infant, and child deaths in rural Nigeria including inadequate healthcare facilities, medically unsound ideas regarding maternal care, malnutrition, delayed and/or non-exclusive



Visit with a traditional leader at project start

breastfeeding, and poor or non-existent prenatal care. Poor child feeding practices and inadequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life lead to stunting and impact brain development. This part of the project targeted 495 households with pregnant women, parents, and caregivers of children under two years of age. Participants were divided into 30 groups and received counseling via peer education in both weekly group meetings and home visits. 66 people, including Village Development Committee members, were trained as peer educators! Together with community health volunteers, they delivered messages promoting prenatal care, delivery by skilled attendants, and child spacing; improved knowledge of danger signs in pregnancy; postpartum care for mothers; and postnatal care for newborns.



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Kitchen Gardening

The kitchen gardening program included 238 households that received assistance in establishing vegetable gardens in order to add nutrition to their daily meals. Households learned about proper nutrition and how to cook meals that incorporate the vegetables they are now growing in their gardens.



Trained peer educators and volunteer health practitioners also carefully addressed attitudes and beliefs about nutrition that negatively impact a family's health such as superstitions that make certain foods unacceptable in the diet, as well as attitudes about who has priority in the household allocation of food, messages that specifically targeted the men in the household.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Water, sanitation, and hygiene intervention was a key component of this project, focusing on water purification, environmental sanitation, and basic hygiene. Educators emphasized three basic behaviors: proper handwashing, safe disposal of human waste, and use of clean water.

Community Outreach

The final part of the project was an effort to promote improved maternal, newborn and child health in tar-

get communities. Using what they had learned in their groups and home visits, project beneficiaries performed a total of 61 skits in public places covering topics such as: the requirements for safe motherhood and healthy babies, the benefits of child spacing, good nutrition, personal hygiene, appropriate waste disposal, and planning for timely transportation to a health facility. The skits created safe environments for learning and rich discussion following the presentations and the project participants said they found them very valuable.

What a success this project was.

Traditional leaders, Ministry of Health staff from both state and local government, and participants seemed to embrace the program with enthusiasm and sustained that enthusiasm through the life of the project. We saw increased attendance at the prenatal clinic as well as improved preparedness by women before showing up for delivery. Health workers at the clinic saw improved attention to breastfeeding, with 203 children under six months of age exclusively breastfed during the project. Some exclusive-breastfeeding mothers testified that their babies had fewer illnesses than their older children who were not exclusively breastfed. Clinic health workers also told us that 485 mothers attended at least four prenatal care visits during the life of the project — more than twice the turn out to prenatal clinics in the previous year! We observed increased engagement in environmental sanitation activities, increased desire for



Beneficiaries work together to clean a drainage ditch filled with litter.

and use of safe water, and use of local resources like vegetables to improve nutritional quality of food intake. Finally, the program facilitated immunization of 327 children in collaboration with the national and state immunization program.

Overall, members of nine village development committees were involved in the project as group leaders, and along with other project volunteers, visited households weekly to empower participants and ensure the project was carried out as planned. Many of the men involved expressed appreciation for making it possible to know their responsibilities in maternal and neonatal child health.



Drama presentation by beneficiaries

Prayers for Nigeria

- Thank God for sustained support for the ministry of World Renew globally. Pray for God's blessings for all individuals, churches, organizations, and government agencies supporting this work in various ways.
- Thank God for the growth of the church in Nigeria in spite of persistent challenges. Pray for an end to terrorism in Nigeria.
- Thank God for sustaining democracy in Nigeria and for keeping the country united. Pray for the federal, state, and local government leaders in Nigeria, that they would have the courage to fight corruption and stand for the truth.