

Newsletter



Welcome Note

Dear <<First Name>>,

I am excited to welcome you to this special edition of the Smiles for Mothers newsletter, where we launch our new quarterly spotlight series, *"From the Frontlines"*. Every day, health workers across Nigeria face impossible odds, make life-saving decisions, and carry untold stories of resilience, grief, and hope. This series brings forward their voices and tells their stories in their own words.

Timed to mark International Nurses Day 2025, the moments that shaped them, the challenges they face, and the passion that keeps them going.

Along with these powerful stories, we are pleased to share recent program updates, including trainings in Kano state, Essential Medicines List (EML) review workshops across three program states, and highlights from a recent study examining the economic impact of using substandard uterotonics in Nigeria.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to sharing more insights and progress with you every quarter as we work together toward safer motherhood in Nigeria.

Cheers!



From the Frontlines

A Smiles for Mothers Spotlight Series

Nurse Tunji-Ogbara Helen

Chief Nursing Officer, Shomolu General Hospital, Lagos State

"This work is more than a job. It's a calling."



I've been a nurse for over 20 years. What inspired me is the ability to help people. I wanted to be someone who solves problems and brings smiles to people's faces.

One day I'll never forget was when a pregnant woman came in. She was educated and confident. She had driven herself to the hospital. Everything looked normal at first. We prepared her for surgery because vaginal delivery would have been risky. But on the way to the theatre, she suddenly started foaming at the mouth. There were no warning signs. She started convulsing, and she died right there.

That moment changed me. It taught me to always take every complaint seriously and to always monitor my patients closely.

People don't see the hardest parts of our job. Nurses don't really have friends in the system. We're central to everything. We work with doctors and pharmacists but when we try to advocate for our patients, it sometimes backfires.

We are always on ground, even during holidays. I remember packing corpses at 2 a.m. on Christmas Day.

But then there are moments that remind me why I do this work. When a patient is told there's only a 50% chance of survival, and she pulls through, then comes back just to say thank you, not out of habit, but from a place of real relief and gratitude, that's when I truly feel appreciated.

If I could advise younger health workers, I would tell them this work is more than a job. It is a calling. If you are doing it for the money, it will be hard. You need passion to carry you through.

Nurse Mohammed Bilikisu Fati

Midwife, IBB Special Hospital Minna, Niger State

"I squeezed the blood bag with both hands to save her."

I became a nurse because of the admiration I had as a child for one woman who always wore white and looked so neat and graceful. Four of my uncle's wives were also nurses, the way they talked and treated people inspired me. I developed a genuine passion for the profession.

I've been working in maternity for about 8-10 years now, and one day that stays with me is when we had a patient with postpartum hemorrhage. She had delayed coming to the hospital and her blood level had dropped dangerously. I had to squeeze the blood bag with both hands to push the blood into her body faster. It was intense. But she survived. That's a day I'll never forget.

That experience taught me that no matter who the patient is, we must not delay care. If we had delayed just a little more, it might have ended differently.



The biggest challenge we face is the delay in decision-making. Sometimes, the woman is in critical condition, and the husband says he needs to call his father before agreeing to surgery. Others come late, about three or four days before delivery, with no antenatal care. And then there's physical barriers like long distances and bad roads.

The hardest part is that people rarely see the effort we put in. They don't see the long hours, the sacrifices, the moments when we're literally holding someone's life in our hands. But that's okay. We're not doing it for recognition. We're doing it to save mothers and babies.

What has kept me going are those newborn cries, like the sound of little angels. When a mother who was so afraid comes back smiling with her healthy baby, it's the best feeling.

My late mum used to tell me 'Always do your best. Don't ever cheat a patient. Let them leave with confidence in you.' That still pushes me forward every single day.

Update of Essential Medicines List (EMLs)

The Smiles for Mothers team has successfully supported the review and update of the Essential Medicines Lists (EMLs) in the remaining program states of Delta, Katsina, and Plateau.

The workshops were conducted in collaboration with the State Ministries of Health and key state agencies, aimed to revise the EMLs to facilitate the state wide adoption of the comprehensive postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) bundle of care.

As part of this effort, the PPH bundle commodities such as Heat-stable Carbetocin (HSC), Tranexamic Acid(TXA), and Calibrated Drapes, were incorporated into the updated policy documents. These additions align with the 2023 WHO recommendations for PPH management and are essential for reducing maternal mortality and improving outcomes across all levels of care.

Once launched, the revised EMLs will represent a major milestone in institutionalizing the PPH bundle within state health systems, reinforcing a strong commitment to ensuring the availability of life-saving medicines and improving maternal health at the point of care.



Participants having a group discussion at the Katsina EML Workshop



Participants at the Katsina state EML Workshop



Participants having a group discussion at the Plateau state EML Workshop



Participants at the Plateau state EML Workshop



Participants at the Delta state EML Workshop



Presentation at the Delta state EML Workshop

Kano State Training

As part of its continued efforts to strengthen maternal health systems in Nigeria, the Smiles for Mothers consortium successfully conducted a one-day refresher training workshop for Kano State master trainers, followed by a 6-day Local Government Area (LGA)-level Training of Trainers (TOT) for healthcare workers across 26 secondary health facilities (SHFs) in Kano State. The trainings took place from Tuesday, April 22 to Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

The workshops brought together 100 participants and 8 state trainers, including consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists, chief nursing officers, and doctors from institutions such as Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital (AKTH), Murtala Muhammad Hospital, and the Kano State Ministry of Health. These trainers had previously received Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) training under the Smiles for Mothers program.

Also in attendance were key representatives from the Federal and State Ministries of Health, including the Director of Human Resources for Health (DHRH), Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (FMOH&SW); the Director of Public Health (DPH); the Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH) Coordinator; the Director of Medical Services (DMS); the Assistant Director of Nursing and Midwifery Services (ADNS) and Hospital Management Board.



Dr Samuel Oyeniyi, Director/Head Reproductive Health Division, FMOH&SW



State master trainers and LGA trainers at the workshop

The primary objective of the training was to build the capacity of state-level trainers to effectively cascade training at the LGA level, while also assessing and strengthening participants' knowledge and skills in BEmONC and the comprehensive PPH bundle of care. The training aimed to ensure effective knowledge transfer to doctors and nurses across project-supported secondary and primary health facilities.

The LGA-level TOT commenced with Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) and case study analyses to assess baseline competencies. This was followed by a series of detailed lectures and hands-on sessions covering essential topics such as labor and delivery, prevention and early detection of PPH through Active Management of the Third Stage of Labor (AMTSL), appropriate use of the non-pneumatic Anti-Shock Garment (NASG), objective measurement of blood loss using calibrated drapes, and the E-MOTIVE bundle approach to PPH management.

Following the instructional sessions, participants completed post-training OSCEs to evaluate learning outcomes. The analysis of pre- and post-training results demonstrated significant improvements in both knowledge and skills, confirming the overall effectiveness of the training.

Participants were encouraged to cascade the knowledge and skills gained to their respective facilities and to integrate the lessons learned into routine maternal healthcare practices.



Pre-training OSCE assessment for a participant



State master trainers and LGA trainers at the workshop

Insights From Research

A paper published recently titled “*Modelling the Economic Impact of Substandard Uterotonics on Postpartum Haemorrhage in Nigeria*” examines the economic impact of substandard uterotonics (e.g., oxytocin and misoprostol) in the prevention and treatment of postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) in Nigeria. With an estimated **29,000 maternal deaths from PPH annually**, the study highlights the urgent need for quality-assured uterotonics to improve maternal outcomes and reduce the burden on the healthcare system.

Key findings show that the use of substandard uterotonics contributes to approximately **US\$89 million (₦68.4billion) in preventable out-of-pocket and productivity losses each year**. Eliminating these substandard uterotonics could **prevent nearly 75,000 PPH cases and avert up to 1,500 maternal deaths annually**, while also reducing the estimated US\$1.3 billion annual cost of PPH care in Nigeria.

[Click to Read the Paper](#)

Happy International Nurses Day to our frontline heroes, Thank you for your dedication to creating a world where no woman has to die giving life!

This newsletter is a collaborative effort of Hauwa Ahmad, Sarah Aligbe, Segun Oladipo, Fatima Muhammad, Tunde Amode, Peter Abu, Oyindamola Koya, Lotanna Chukwujama, Ikenna Oranezi, Sophia Ogefere, Chukwunonso Nwaokorie, and Naanma Kangkum, representing the views of the Smiles for Mothers consortium.

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