

How has mass media and outreach supported people living with disability to take up family planning in Northern Nigeria?

In consortium with SightSavers, BBC Media Action Nigeria implemented a four-year project to improve access to family planning for people with disabilities in Northern Nigeria. The endline evaluation indicates that the project's radio discussion programme, Mu Tattauna, social media content and community-based SBC activities increased discussion and contributed to improved understanding of family planning, strengthened awareness of the rights of people with disabilities to access healthcare and led to uptake of family planning services among audiences across the five focal states.

Context

Family planning use in Northern Nigeria has historically been low due to religious and cultural norms favouring large families, early marriage, and limited discussion of reproductive health, especially for women (Sinai et al., 2020; NDHS, 2018). People with disabilities are often excluded from family planning information and services due to disabling systems, norms, and environments failing to recognise and promote their rights as guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Their rights to access reproductive health services are further undermined by misconceptions that they should not marry, or should not have children (Zandam et al., 2022). This results in limited access, low autonomy, and poor health outcomes (LSHTM, 2024; Davey et al., 2023). Family planning decisions are commonly influenced or controlled by men, making male approval critical (Maaji et al., 2025). Women with disabilities face

compounded barriers due to both gender and disability-related power imbalances (Inclusive Futures, 2023). Physical inaccessibility of health facilities, lack of sign language interpreters, limited disability-friendly materials, and low literacy levels restrict family planning access for many people with disabilities, particularly in rural areas (LSHTM, 2024).

The project

With funding from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Inclusive Family Planning project aimed to reduce unmet need for family planning among people with disabilities in northern Nigeria. The project focused mainly on Kaduna and Borno states and worked to increase access to and use of modern contraceptive methods.

To achieve this, the project produced disability inclusive media content, including the radio drama *Madubi*, the radio discussion programme *Mu Tattauna*, which was broadcast in five states, and social media content. These media activities were supported by use of community-based social behaviour change approaches and capacity strengthening for media practitioners.

Research methodology

Research was conducted in five states to capture the reach and impact, and audiences' experiences and perceptions related to IFPLAN activities. The mixed methods evaluative study included quantitative survey (with 3,325 women and men aged 15–59 years), qualitative IDIs and FGDs with target audiences and stakeholders and online surveys with 38 media practitioners. Advanced statistical analysis like regressions tested associations between exposure to content and awareness of family planning while controlling for socio-demographic factors.

Key findings

The evaluation indicated that the project achieved:

Strong reach: Project's media content and outreach activities reached approximately **7.5 million** people, including approximately **1.2 million people with disabilities** (37% of the total population with disabilities) across the five states within a 12-month period.

High engagement: Listeners of the drama and the discussion programme, and users of social media content reacted positively to the outputs, with particular appreciation for the focus on disability inclusion and family planning. 85% of *Mu Tattauna* listeners reported paying close attention to the programme, often stopping other activities to listen (69%).

Prompted discussion: Half of the survey respondents say they have ever discussed family planning/child spacing with someone. Regular listeners and users of content discussed family planning more (by about 30% per exposure level) than those unexposed.

Improved knowledge: Awareness of family planning was higher among those reached by *Mu Tattauna* and social media contents (91%), compared to those not reached (81%). Regular listeners were more likely to correctly identify multiple modern methods of contraception and were able to articulate health and economic benefits of child spacing, compared to those not reached by project's media content.

Increased support for Family Planning:

Regular listeners of *Mu Tattauna* were more supportive of couples using family planning and more confident in challenging discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities. Project's audiences, including couples with disabilities, said they would use family planning services more (54%) than those not reached (38%).

Improved media skills: Media practitioners reported being more respectful and inclusive while interviewing people with disabilities,

improve planning of programmes and better structuring of scripts to reflect balance, accuracy, and inclusion.

Key implications

The context is shifting with increased social acceptability of family planning. Findings suggest that the project may have contributed towards this increased acceptability - acceptability is higher amongst those exposed to *Mu Tattauna*.

However, older (45-59yrs) and younger (15-24yrs), living in rural areas, more likely to be in Kano, with low media access and limited formal education remain unsupportive of family planning. Their low media access suggests that conventional media alone is insufficient to effectively engage this group.

Community-based SBC activities amplify impact and complement mass media outputs.

The evaluation highlights the complementary roles of media and community-focused SBC activities. *Mu Tattauna* and social media content reached large number of people and built awareness, encouraged discussion, and challenged negative social norms around FP/CS and disability. Community-based SBC activities in targeted communities translated this awareness into action by providing safe, interactive spaces to address misconceptions and build confidence to seek services.

"I didn't want to hear anything about family planning, except in dramas and movies, for fun. But now the importance has been established and the involvement of people with disabilities encouraged and made me confident. ... when I get married in future and if need be, I will practice family planning as a result of listening to this program."

- Female listener with disability, 18-25 years, Urban Kano.

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