



**STEERING THE
RUDDER IN
UNCHARTED
WATERS**

From the Editor



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Despite the general slowdown of activities as a result of restrictions in movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project adopted several innovative and adaptive measures to maintain some level of activities to support trained providers to continue with the provision of family planning and other primary healthcare services across the two states. In addition to providers previously trained on DMPA-SC Self-Injection in Lagos, 247 providers (CPs and PPMVs) were trained in Kaduna. They were also provided with Personal Protective Equipment (Face masks and shields) to enable them continue to attend to clients during this period.

As part of efforts to continue to support the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria in carrying out its regulatory functions over the Community Pharmacists and the Patent and Proprietary Medicines Vendors in Nigeria, the project supported in the upgrade of the regulator's website to make it more user-friendly and introduced some interesting features that will facilitate registration like the whistle blowing and feedback portal to improve response time to complaints as well as the automated SMS reminder system that will notify CPs and PPMVs when their registration is due.

Also, recognizing that profitability is key to sustaining businesses, the IntegratE project through PharmAccess' Medical Credit Funds (MCF) is partnering with some commercial banks like the Polaris Bank in designing a special loan product which will enable CPs and PPMVs in the network access loans with a lot of ease. Under this arrangement, MCF will provide partial guarantees to minimize the risks of lending to CPs and PPMVs especially in some remote part of the states.

Finally, in this edition, we will be sharing one of the many interesting impact stories of the project-A story of a couple whose marriage was saved by their contact with an IntegratE-trained family planning provider.

Sustaining the Enabling Environment for Implementation of the Project in KADUNA STATE



Advocacy visit to the Dep. Director PHC/State health Educator



Advocacy visit to Hakimin Birini da Kewayaya, Kaduna State



In other to sustain the enabling environment which had seen the project achieve so much in the past 3 years, the project team paid an advocacy visit to the new Director of Pharmaceutical Services (DPS), Pharm. Isa Abubakar.

Pharm. Abubakar, who until his recent appointment was the director in charge of the state medical stores replaced Pharm. John Bulus who retired from the state service in February 2020.

The visit was used to provide an update on IntegratE project's activities and to solicit for the State government's continued support toward the successful implementation of all its programs. It was also an opportunity to share the plans of training CPs and PPMVs on DMPA-SC self-injection and solicit for the support and the active involvement of the state in the roll out. Similar advocacy visits were paid to other stakeholders like the Deputy Director Primary health care services who also serves as the State Health Educator, Kaduna State Ministry of Health (SMoH), the Directors of PHC in Zaria and Sabon-Gari LGAs as well as the traditional leaders of the communities and wards where IPC intervention will be rolled out.

Working with Kaduna State Ministry of Health and PCN to roll out Self-injection training among CPs and PPMVs in **KADUNA STATE**

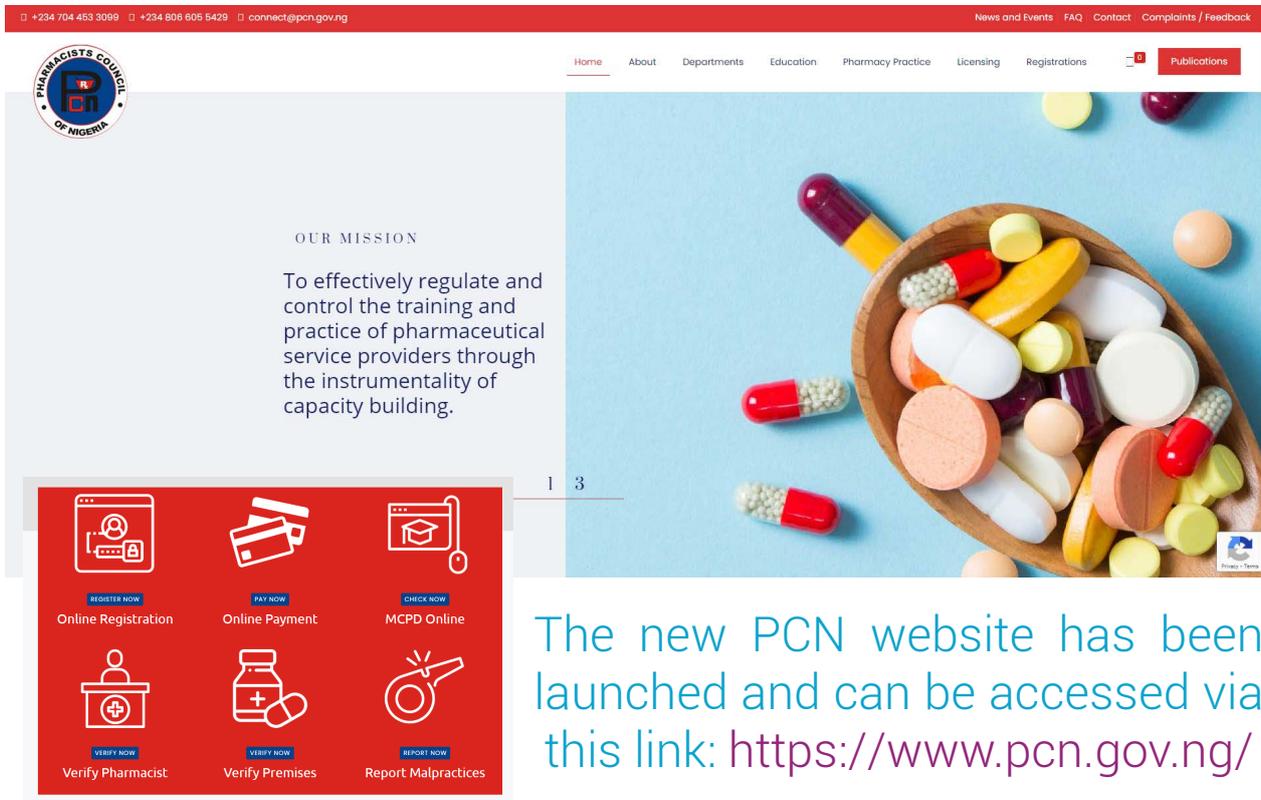
In line with FMOH plan to scale up DMPA-SC in Nigeria, the project worked in concert with the SMOH and PCN to layer-on self-injection training to providers who had previously received comprehensive FP training in the state.

A total of 247 providers comprising 30 CPs and 217 Health trained PPMVs were trained across 8 batches in 16 clusters. The providers were selected from those who were already consistently providing injectable contraceptives and cut across all the implementation LGAs (Chikun, Igabi, Kachia, Kaduna North, Kaduna South, Sabon-Gari and Zaria). The training which was in-person, was however conducted in strict compliance with government's guideline on non-Pharmaceutical interventions to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.



DMPA SC SI training in Kaduna with Participants observing non-Pharmaceutical precautionary measures to limit community transmission of COVID-19 pandemic

PCN'S LAUNCHES A NEW WEBSITE



It features platforms for online payment, verification of premises & pharmacists, report of malpractice, purchase of PCN resources/publications. The new website will ensure most of the Council's operations from registration, monitoring to licensure, are largely conducted online to improve the overall efficiency and reduce the turnaround time for registration and licensure of CPs and PPMVs. This platform is also incorporated with automated SMS reminder system that will notify CPs and PPMVs when their registration is due. A whistle blowing platform is built into the website to enable the Council receive, track and respond to complaints from providers and the general public. The PCN's IT staff have been duly trained on how to administer the website remotely.

Medical Credit Fund TO SUPPORT THE BUSINESS OF INTEGRATE PROVIDERS

To improve the business viability of CPs and PPMVs and support them to continue to deliver quality FP and other PHC services, the project led by PharmAccess through the Medical Credit Fund (MCF) assessed 92 CPs and 149 PPMVs across the two states in 2019.

Almost two-thirds of CPs (60%) were eligible for conventional loans, because their businesses and operations were well-structured. However, all PPMVs were ineligible for loans. MCF in partnership with Polaris Bank are designing a special loan product for these providers. MCF will leverage on the bank's network of branches to reach CPs and PPMVs with a financing product. The partnership team will onboard CPs and PPMVs into a lending program specifically designed to reduce barriers to accessing credit. Under this arrangement, MCF will provide partial guarantees to minimize risks to the bank and gain their confidence in granting loans to CPs and PPMVs.

As part of this scheme, the Medical Credit Fund team will also be engaging with technology partners to design a digital lending product that will facilitate easier lending to a large number of CPs and PPMVs. Community Pharmacists and PPMVs will be on-boarded on a platform that provides bespoke services to help them understand their businesses better. This platform is designed to assist MCF better understand their buying cycles so as to be able to provide better credit terms to them and also help scale the proposed lending program.



The couple with Mrs Zuwaira Bello the PPMV (seated)

“Thank you for saving my marriage”

A CONFESSION OF A BENEFICIARY OF FP SERVICE FROM AN INTEGRATE TRAINED PROVIDER

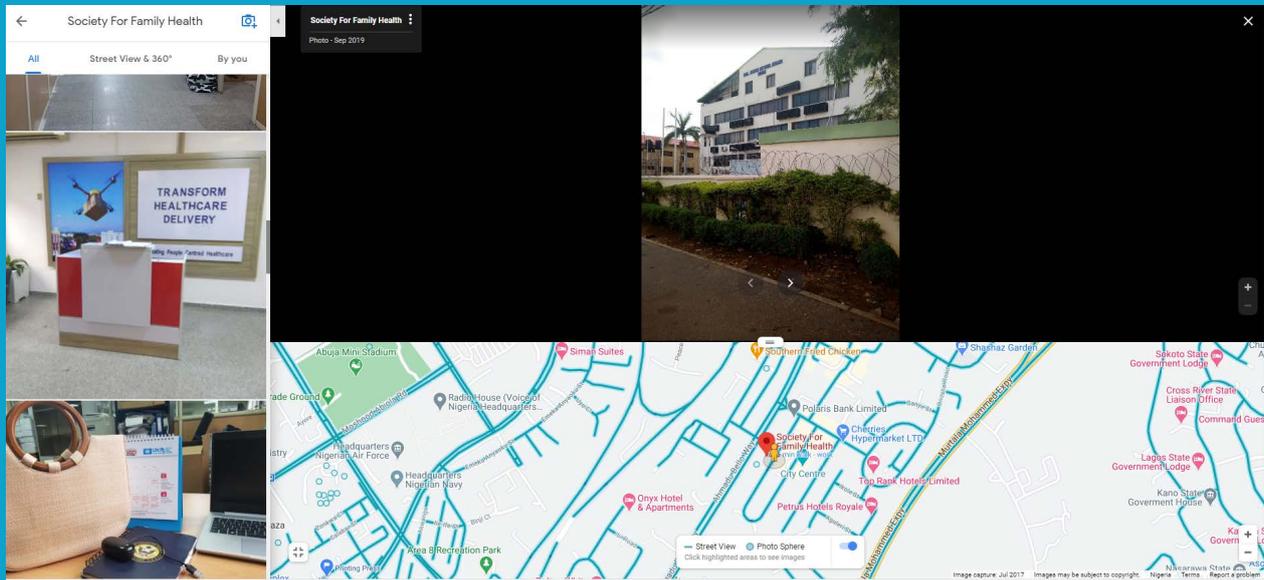
Abubakar Muhammad is a 32yr old petty trader married to Fatima Muhammad and both live in Rafin Guza, a rural community in Kaduna state. Both couples have had three children and do not intend to have more but were quite concerned at the rate at which the wife takes in. The frequent conception was beginning to strain their relationship until they came across Zuwaira Bello, one of IntegratE trained PPMV. Prior to visiting the PPMV, Abubakar and the wife only knew about the injectable contraceptive which didn't work quite well for them due to the side effect.

During the balanced counselling session with the trained PPMV, they were informed about all the available methods of family planning but due to the limited scope of practice of the trained PPMV (Tier1 PPMV), they were referred to a nearby hospital where they were initiated on oral pills. They were so excited at the information provided by the PPMV and has since continued to go back to the same PPMV for re-fill of oral pills and other family planning advice. In the words of the wife Mrs Fatima Muhammad

“My relationship with my loving husband went sour because of my unintended pregnancies, which I could say was annual (smiling and looking at the husband). I was advised by friends to go for injection, which I tried but didn't comply because of bleeding (making gesture with her right hand indicating flow or rush). My husband got the solution for us through Zuwaira. We did not know that options are there depending on the nature of the user”.

Mrs Fatima is one of the numerous women in Kaduna state who are currently benefiting from the comprehensive family planning training provided to some Community Pharmacists and PPMVs to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills to provide adequate family planning services to clients requiring to space or limit the birth of their children. From inception of the IntegratE project in 2017 to date, over 120,000 women have assessed various family planning services from both Community Pharmacists and Patent and Proprietary Medicines Vendors (PPMVs) in Lagos and Kaduna states.

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