Co-producing Sustainable Referral Pathways between Traditional Birth Attendants and Primary Healthcare Facilities: A Community Partnership Approach to Improving Maternal Health in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Cambridge Global Health Partnerships CONFERENCE 2026
Partnerships that deliver equitable and sustainable global health

BACKGROUND

- Maternal mortality remains high in Nigeria, particularly in peri-urban areas such as Ikorodu, Lagos State.
- Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) continue to play an important role in maternal care, but referral to formal healthcare facilities is often delayed or inconsistent.
- Strengthening collaboration between TBAs and Primary Healthcare (PHC) facilities is essential for safe, timely and equitable maternal healthcare.

AIM

To co-produce evidence-informed referral pathways between TBAs and PHC facilities to improve maternal health in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore stakeholder perspectives on maternal healthcare and referral practices.
2. Identify key challenges and opportunities for TBA–PHC collaboration.
3. Co-produce research priorities for strengthening maternal healthcare.
4. Develop a community-informed referral pathway model.

METHODOLOGY: A PARTICIPATORY CO-PRODUCTION APPROACH

1. Engage
19 stakeholders (Health professionals, representatives from women leaders, TBAs, PHC Staff , NHIS desk officers)

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2. Explore
Group discussions on maternal health challenges and why they matter.

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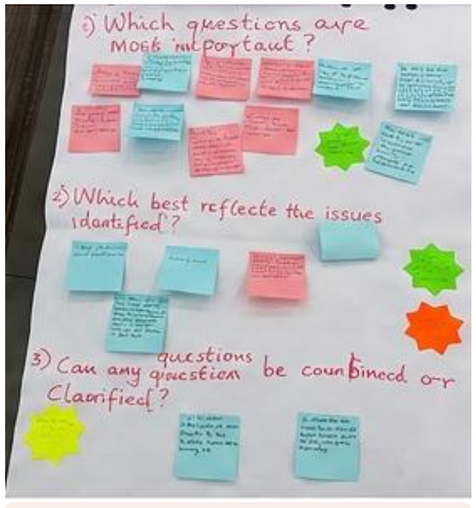
3. Co-produce
Joint development and refinement of research questions and solutions.

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4. Agree
Collective discussion to identify key research priorities for improving maternal health in Ikorodu.



Stakeholders identifying key maternal health issues



Discussion and refinement of research questions



Participatory co-production workshop in Ikorodu

KEY FINDINGS

Health insurance
Low awareness, complex processes and financial barriers.

Healthcare workers' attitudes
Negative experiences and lack of trust affect service uptake.

Affordability of maternal care
Cost of services, transport and medications.

Health information and communication
Language barriers and limited culturally appropriate information.

Quality and continuity of care
Concerns about antenatal, delivery and postnatal services.

Community participation
Need for greater involvement of women, families and local stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER-IDENTIFIED RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Through group discussions, participants identified the following key areas for future research:

1. **Strengthening health insurance awareness and utilisation**
   How can awareness, affordability and enrolment in health insurance schemes be improved for pregnant women?
2. **Understanding and improving provider attitudes**
   What interventions can improve respectful care and build trust between women, TBAs and healthcare workers?
3. **Reducing financial barriers**
   What strategies can make maternal health services more affordable, including costs of transport, medications and facility fees?
4. **Improving health communication**
   How can culturally appropriate and language-sensitive information improve maternal health knowledge and service uptake?
5. **Enhancing quality and continuity of maternal care**
   What approaches can improve the quality of antenatal, delivery and postnatal care in PHC facilities?
6. **Promoting community engagement**
   How can women, families and community stakeholders be more effectively involved in maternal health planning and decision-making?

PROPOSED TBA–PHC REFERRAL PATHWAY

Community
TBAs, families, pregnant women

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Identification of risk signs
Education and training for TBAs

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Timely referral to PHC facility
with clear communication

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Reception and appropriate care
at PHC facility (skilled providers)

Continuous communication, feedback and follow-up (community–PHC partnership)

CONCLUSION

- A co-production approach enabled stakeholders to identify key maternal health challenges and research priorities in Ikorodu.
- Strengthening TBA–PHC collaboration through clear referral pathways can improve timely access to skilled care.
- Future research should focus on health insurance, provider attitudes, affordability, communication, quality of care and community participation.

REFERENCES

WHO (2025), Trends in maternal mortality 2000–2023.
WHO (2018), Intrapartum care for a positive childbirth experience.