

Media And Health Care System Partnership: The Role Of The Midwives In Communicating Maternal And Child Health Issues To Nigerians Through The Mass Media

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ABSTRACT: The process of providing health care services to the public can be daunting, particularly when it involves maternal and child health matters. Sometimes, health institutions may be overwhelmed by the level of clientele they receive at a given time, for instance, when there is an outbreak of a disease or an epidemic. At such times, the media could become an extension of the hospitals where information on how to manage the situation and similar situations is provided. Health communication has become an important feature in today's mass media content. The extent to which the media can go to educate and inform the public about issues relating to their well being cannot be overstressed. The media set agenda for public discussion by framing issues and making them appear important and indispensable in the eyes of the public. It is this potential that makes the media a veritable tool for social change, mass mobilization, mass education, social re-engineering, and national development among others. The focus of this paper is to identify ways in which midwives could partner with the media in reaching out to women and the society in general with maternal and child health care messages. This study is based in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data for the study. The quantitative method involves a survey with the questionnaire as the instrument for data gathering, and a content analysis involving three newspapers (*The Punch, The Guardian and The Pioneer* (published in the State), four radio stations and two television stations operating in the State. Twenty-one midwives were selected from three major hospitals (St Luke's Hospital, Anua, Immanuel Hospital, Eket and General Hospital, Ikot Ekpene) each representing a senatorial district in the State. These midwives formed the population for the survey. For the qualitative component, a Deputy Director of Nursing, a Chief Nursing Officer and two journalists were interviewed. The findings indicate that, the several ways the media partner with midwives in helping to bring messages on maternal and child health issues to Nigerians include but not limited to reporting activities of the midwives as news stories, news commentaries and feature stories. Others are discussions/magazine programmes, teaching sessions, song, drama and announcements on radio and TV. However, because some of these programmes might require sponsorship, they may not be aired or published until someone pays for them.

Key words: Maternal Health, Child health care, Immunization, Antenatal care, Maternal and Child Mortality, Information dissemination.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have witnessed a number of global and regional initiatives aimed at improving the health and well-being of women and their children all over the world. These efforts according to Family Care International – FCI (2012) have been spearheaded by organizations such as Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, Countdown to 2015, the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA), the Commission on Life -Saving Commodities for Women and Children, leading voices in governments and the private sector. Many Third World countries (particularly African countries) have been targets/beneficiaries of the efforts and programmes of these organizations.

Similar efforts were enacted in Nigeria by some organizations. In the year 2000, the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) initiated a strategic plan to reduce maternal mortality rate in the country by 50 percent in 2010 (Okaro and Iyoke, 2010). One of the principles to guide the organization in the realization of this goal was promoting partnerships and joint programming among stakeholders including professional associations. As a major stakeholder in this arrangement, the media had the task of educating the public on the vital issues in this plan. Since advocacy and information dissemination on maternal, newborn and

child care were key components of the strategic plan, the mass media had to be co-opted into the scheme to get the message to a very wide audience. The authors note specifically, that a regular radio programme was to be established in local languages to facilitate public and community awareness on the issues in question.

In 1979, the Nigerian government introduced the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) which later became the National Programme on Immunization (NPI). The mass media were also co-opted as partners in mobilizing the public for the programme. Planned and well funded communication activities were integrated into the programme to raise awareness, create and sustain demand, and encourage acceptance of the immunization services. Shimp (2004) notes that these activities involved advocacy to make the NPI programme a priority, mobilizing communities to participate in it and educating caregivers on the importance of the programme. The need to communicate maternal and child health issues to the public through the mass media cannot be overlooked, more especially at a time when the world is witnessing an explosion in information and information sources.

The media have always played the role of informing and educating people on issues of public interest. Such information influences and shapes how they conduct their daily lives (Karki and Agrawal, 2008). The society gets to understand issues better when the media provide more insight and interpretation to them (Dominick, 2009). Maternal and child health issues are public health issues because women constitute a large segment of the world's population. Unfortunately, in the public health arena, issues like immunization are often perceived in terms of availability and cost of vaccines, their storage and handling (Shimp, 2004). Little is done about the communication component that should complement the other efforts.

The job of the midwives and other antenatal staff in providing health-care services to patients gets increasingly challenging by the day. It is more so, when they try to meet these demands only through some "recognised" means of dispensing such services. Wilmore, Rodger, Humphreys, Clifton, Dalton, Flabouris and Skuse (2014) suggest that these health-care providers should use other communication approaches suitable to their clients and that can reach a large number at the same time, such as the print media to disseminate their messages. Inegbenebor (2013) also advocates for a partnership between the midwives and the mass media, if the Midwives Service Scheme established by the Nigerian government in 2009 to reduce maternal mortality in the country would succeed. The reason for the partnership is to improve the general educational level of members of the community on maternal health care, available primary health care centres and maternities, the services they provide and the facilities available they have. This, she said could be done through media jingles, advertisements and other means through which the public could be reached. Abimbola, Okoli, Olubajo, Abdullahi and Pate (2012) had earlier discovered that four years after the Midwives Service Scheme was set up, it had not met the expected targets due to certain problems, one of which may have been communication related.

II. MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH IN NIGERIA

The well-being of mothers and their children should be everybody's concern not just that of some UN agencies, Foundations, Governments and a few individuals. Women and children form a large percentage of the world's population including Nigeria. It is in recognition of this fact that the Nigerian government came up with the Safe Motherhood Initiative in 1987, the National Programme on Immunization in 1979, the National Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy in 2007, the Nigerian Midwives Service Scheme in 2009 and also keyed into the Millennium Development Goals numbers 4 and 5. The Safe Motherhood Programme as conceived by government was aimed at reducing maternal deaths based on effective referral mechanism, provision of proper information/education through the use of appropriate communication strategy to reach the target audience and to provide community-based obstetrics. The Midwives Service Scheme was expected to reduce maternal mortality ratio to acceptable levels in the country. The focus of the NPI was to immunize pregnant women and children against these vaccine preventable diseases –Tuberculosis, Poliomyelitis, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Measles and Whooping cough. These diseases were identified as common causes of Infant mortality and morbidity in the country. Nigeria also launched a Road map in 2005 for the implementation of MDGs 4 and 5. This road map, according to Okaro and Iyoke (2010, p.143), "provided a framework for building strategic partnerships for increased investments in maternal and newborn health at institutional and programme levels focusing at two levels of care – health services delivery and community levels."

The Nigerian government had good intentions for women and children by initiating all these programmes. However, these efforts seem not to have achieved the desired results. UNICEF (2014) notes that every single day in the country, 2,300 under-five-years old children die as well as 143 women of child bearing age. These figures put Nigeria in the second position of countries that contribute most to the under-five and maternal mortality rate in the world. UNICEF recognizes Nigeria's effort to improve maternal/child healthcare and also to reduce maternal/infant mortality, but considers the less than one percent decline rate as slow compared to the 5.5 percent target by MDG 5.

World Health Organization's (WHO, 2013) statistics and verdict about Nigeria on maternal deaths per 100,000 live births is very disturbing. The figure stands at 630, which Cooke and Tahir (2013) observe is higher than what obtains in Afghanistan and Haiti and a little lower than what Liberia and Sudan have. Similarly, an earlier report by WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank (2010) put maternal deaths in developing countries as at 2008 to be 1 in 120 births as compared to 1 in 4300 births in the Western countries. The sub-Saharan Africa where Nigeria belongs is far worse, with the rate of lifetime risk of maternal deaths put at 1 in 31 births. Even more disturbing is the fact that maternal mortality is much higher in the North Eastern region than in other parts of the country. According to Sanda (2014), this rate stands at 70 percent. Prior to the introduction of the Midwives Service Scheme, Inegbenebor (2013) points out that the maternal mortality ratio in Nigeria was 1,549/100,000 live births in Northeast zone, 165/100,000 live births in Southwest zone, 351/100,000 live births in urban areas and 828/100,000 in rural areas.

Agreeing with this submission, Odesanya, Hassan and Olaluwole (2015, p. 65) citing Cooke and Tahir note that the disparities in maternal mortality rate among regions in Nigeria is very significant and name poverty as a major contributory factor to the situation. According to them, "Northern Nigeria has far higher maternal mortality rates than the wealthier South. The extremely poor North East has an estimated maternal death rate of 1,549, more than five times the global average." Factors responsible for the poor state of maternal health in this region as mentioned earlier include but not limited to poverty, lack of meaningful investment in healthcare, low literacy level and cultural issues. Beside these factors, the north eastern part of the country has suffered diverse religious conflicts and terror attacks by Boko Haram leaving it depleted in both human and other resources.

Maternal health/mortality rate depends on the quality of healthcare a woman receives during pregnancy, during and after childbirth. When the women are not properly educated on the need for antenatal and postnatal care, the need to present themselves and their babies for routine immunization or to seek proper medical attention as the need arises, the consequences are usually not too good. To minimize the risk of mothers and their children dying at any point in this process, there is need for them to receive appropriate antenatal and postnatal care from skilled health personnel. Butawa, Tukur, Idris, Adiri, and Taylor (2010) note unfortunately, that women who reside in urban areas tend to access maternal healthcare services provided by skilled personnel more than those who dwell in rural areas. The National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) conducted in 2013 confirms this position. According to the report, the percentage of women from urban areas who received care from skilled personnel that year was 67 percent as compared to 21.9 percent from the rural areas. Thus more women from the cities got protection against neonatal tetanus than mothers from the villages. This scenario is definitely not good enough for women, the Nigerian government or health policy makers. Anything that affects maternal health places an extra burden on the society because of the multi-dimensional nature of the issue.

According to Ogunjimi, Ibeh and Ikorok (2012, p. 34), "maternal mortality.... does not only affect the family involved but has a great effect on society as a whole. When a mother dies the children's chances of reaching adulthood is slim". Besides, the life/survival of infants/children under five is closely related to maternal health (Odesanya, *et al.* 2015). This brings to the fore why every effort made towards bringing maternal health education to the primary target (women) is a step well taken. Therefore, the idea of partnering with the mass media is inevitable in this issue. The media have the capacity to penetrate the hinterlands informing, educating and creating the needed awareness on matters of public interest.

III. THE MASS MEDIA AND MATERNAL/CHILD HEALTH

The role of the mass media in bringing information on health care matters to people's door steps and the effect such exposure brings are not in doubt. Karki and Agrawal (2008) note that, people are becoming more aware of their health status because of the information they get from health communication programmes in the media. As a result, they are willing to make changes in their health behaviour. In fact, according to them "exposure to messages broadcast through a variety of channels is currently considered the most effective way to change knowledge, attitudes and behaviour," (p.2).

Dominick (2009) lists five major functions of the media in the society to include: Surveillance, Interpretation, Linkage, Transmission of values, and Entertainment. The mass media survey the environment and warn the public sometimes, about immediate or long term threat on people's health, for instance, an outbreak of a disease, educate women on the value of breastfeeding, registering for antenatal and postnatal care, presenting their children for routine immunization, consulting medical personnel whenever there is need for that, among other issues.

Sometimes, the people this information is meant for may not quite understand the import or implication of what is disseminated. It is still the place of the media to interpret what the information means to the understanding of the public and provide necessary linkages or correlation. For instance, a correlation could be established between poor maternal hygiene and infant-related sicknesses, poverty and poor maternal/child health, illiteracy and ignorance with maternal mortality. The media also use their entertainment role to

disseminate useful messages on salient issues on maternal health to their target audience (Odesanya, et al 2015) . There are songs, drama presentations, jingles, advertisements, short messages when relaying sporting activities and even comedy shows that are centred on family planning, children immunization, baby-friendly practices and on sundry issues relating to maternal/child health which the media transmit for the purpose of educating the public.

Okaro and Iyoke (2010) believe that the National Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (IMNCH) introduced by the Federal Ministry of Health in 2007 needs a “watchdog” that will “oversee” and facilitate its implementation at the grassroots level. The society knows the mass media as the fourth estate of the realm and the watchdog of the society. Therefore, if such a programme must succeed, all the statutory bodies/agencies of government entrusted with the responsibility of its implementation must work together with the media to achieve the goal. Wallack (2000) admits that the mass media are a significant part of the environment in which they operate. This is because they facilitate the pursuit of public health goals, inform people about health threats and undertake campaigns on health issues. Omenugha and Ekwughu (2008, p.127) agree no less when they state that the newspaper stories they studied “gave a great deal of attention to breast-feeding, emphasizing the relevance of the mother’s milk on the development of the children.” Bankole as cited by Odesanya, *et al.* (2015) also agrees that the mass media can be effective in influencing people’s behaviour, creating awareness about innovations, stimulating desires in people for more information and facilitating their efforts to apply the information to their own behaviour.

Sanda (2014), in a study in Kano (Nigeria) found radio to be the most accessible source of information on Antenatal Care Services (ANC) for pregnant women in Kano city and its environs. The information disseminated through this medium, to a large extent influenced the women’s utilization of such services. Bankole, Rodriguez and Westhoff as cited by Karki and Agrawal (2008) also found the use of modern contraceptives among Nigerian women, the intention to use and even their desire to have fewer children to be related to their exposure to messages on family planning in the media. Similarly, Karki and Agrawal (2008) in their own study in Nepal found that majority of the married women in that country heard about family planning messages on radio and television.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Development Media theory. This theory attempts to explain the role the media play in helping to bring development to the society. Using the media positively to promote development is a common practice particularly in countries conventionally referred to as developing countries. Here, the government or whoever is in charge works in partnership with the media to disseminate information on several important issues to the society. Maternal and child health issues are of primary concern to the society, therefore midwives can equally take advantage of the useful role of the media to reach the women and those concerned.

Purpose of the study

Maternal and child health care services that midwives provide to the public are indispensable. Nigeria as a country has one of the highest maternal/infant mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Some of these deaths recorded are as a result of lack proper/adequate information on the part of the women who are the main target of such health care services. If they are ignorant of what to do for themselves and for their children, the obvious outcome will be more mortality. Given the enormity of the job the midwives have to do, interpersonal or face-to-face communication alone will definitely not be sufficient to effect the kind of mobilization required to bring messages of maternal and child health care issues to Nigerians. Thus, the major purpose this study set out to achieve is to identify the different ways midwives could partner with the mass media to bring information on maternal and child health issues to Nigerians and women in particular.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Two research approaches (quantitative and qualitative) involving survey, content analysis and in-depth interviews were used for this study. The questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data gathering for the survey. It had eleven questions. Two were on demographic data, while the remaining nine addressed the issue of partnership between the midwives and the media. The questionnaire was administered on 21 midwives working in three government-owned hospitals in Akwa Ibom State. The hospitals are St Luke’s Hospital Anua (Uyo), Emmanuel Hospital (Eket) and General Hospital Ikot Ekpene (Ikot Ekpene). Each of these hospitals represents a senatorial district in the state. The random sampling method was used to select seven respondents from each of the hospitals.

Three newspapers (*The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Pioneer*) were selected for content analysis. The study covered a period of three months – July 2016 to September 2016. *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers were chosen because they are national dailies and have wide reach and readership. On the other hand, *The Pioneer* was chosen because it is Akwa Ibom State owned newspaper and published in the state. All

the editions of the three newspaper were used and these amounted to 202 issues. The content of health programmes of four radio stations and television stations were also analysed. The radio stations were Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation radio service, Planet FM, Atlantic FM and Inspiration FM, while the television stations were Nigeria Television Authority Channel 12 and Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, TV service. In addition to the quantitative method, the qualitative method was also used. It involved interviewing two very senior midwives, one a Deputy Director and the other a Chief Nursing Officer and two journalists, one a producer of health programmes and the other a reporter.

Data presentation and discussion of findings

The data presentation and discussion of findings are based on the information gathered from the 21 midwives in the three hospitals using the questionnaire, information from the two journalists and the two senior midwives who were interviewed and lastly from the content of the newspapers, radio and television programmes analysed.

Table 1: Usefulness of the mass media in disseminating messages on maternal/child issues

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Useful	20	95
Not Useful	-	-
Don't know	1	5
Total	21	100

Table 1 presents information on the usefulness of the mass media in disseminating information on maternal and child health issues to Nigerians. The majority (95%) of the midwives admitted that the mass media were useful in this regard.

Table 2: Respondents' access to the mass media

Mass Media	Respondents	Percentage
Television	5	24
Radio	6	28
Newspaper	2	9
Billboard	8	39
None	-	-
Total	21	100

Table 2 shows data on respondents' access to the mass media. Access to billboard and radio ranked high.

Table 3: Issues usually discussed in the media

Messages on maternal and child health disseminated through the media	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Messages on contraception and birth control	1	5
Messages on breast feeding	2	9.5
Messages on best motherhood practices during and after pregnancy	2	9.5
Messages on immunization	1	5
All of the above	15	71
Total	21	100

Table 3 shows the kind of maternal and child health issues discussed in the media. Fifteen out the 21 respondents sampled said all the issues mentioned in table 3 were discussed in the media.

Table 4: Ways in which these messages are presented

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Drama presentations	4	13
Panel discussions	-	-
Teaching sessions by health personnel	11	37
Song	6	20
Comedy	-	-
Jingles	-	-

Announcements	5	17
All of the above	4	13
None of the above	-	-
Others (please specify)	-	-
Total	30	100

Table 4 indicates how the messages on maternal and child health issues are presented to the public. Most of the midwives (37% and 20%) said teaching sessions and songs were the ways these messages got to the people. The overall total in this table is slightly higher than 21 which is the actual number of respondents involved in this research. The reason for the difference is that some respondents chose more than one option which was allowed for this particular question.

Table 5: Extent of Use of the different modes of presentation

Extent of use	Respondents	Percentage
Very Large	11	52
Large	9	43
Few	-	-
Not-at-all	1	5
Total	21	100

Data in Table 5 indicate the extent to which the different modes were used in presenting information on maternal and child health issues to the public. Fifty-two percent of the respondents stated that these modes were used to a large extent.

Table 6: Effectiveness of the mass media in message dissemination

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Very Effective	8	38
Effective	12	57
Not Effective	1	5
Total	21	100

Table 6 presents data on respondents' opinion on the effectiveness of the mass media in disseminating messages on maternal and child health issues. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents (majority) said the mass media were effective in performing the role of message dissemination to Nigerians.

Table 7 : Content of the newspapers analysed

NEWSPAPER	NUM OF HEALTH ISSUES PUBLISHED FOR THREE MONTHS						TOTAL
	JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		
	Maternal/Child Health	Non-Maternal/Child Health Issues	Maternal/Child Health	Non-Maternal/Child Health Issues	Maternal/Child Health	Non-Maternal/Child Health Issues	
<i>The Punch</i>	11 (7.5%)	8 (5.5%)	6 (4.1%)	11 (7.5%)	14 (9.6%)	8 (5.5%)	58
<i>The Guardian</i>	10 (6.9%)	15 (10.3%)	14 (9.6%)	11 (7.5%)	17 (11.7%)	7 (4.8%)	74
<i>The Pioneer</i>	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	4 (2.7%)	2 (1.4%)	2 (1.4%)	1(1%)	13
TOTAL	24	24	24	24	33	16	145

Table 7 presents information on the analysis of the content of three newspapers for three months. The analysis was aimed at determining how much coverage was given to health issues particularly maternal and child health issues. From the result, the three newspapers analysed had a total of 145 reports on health matters. Eighty-one of those reports representing 56% were on maternal and child health matters, 24 reports in July, 24 in August and 33 in September. The remaining 64 reports (24 in July, 24 in August and 16 in September)

representing 44% were on other health issues. Majority of the reports came as straight news stories and feature articles.

Table 8: Outlook of Health programmes on Radio and Television Stations in Akwa Ibom State

Radio and Television Stations	Number of Health programmes run in each station every week
AKBC Radio Station	5
Atlantic FM – Radio Station	2
Inspiration FM – Radio Station	1
Planet FM – Radio Station	1
AKBC Television	—
Nigerian Television Authority, Channel 12	3
Total	12

Data in Table 8 indicate that the four radio and two television stations in the State ran 12 health programmes every week. Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Service has the highest number of health programmes while AKBC, TV Service has no specific health programmes but could schedule one as the need arises. Out of the 12 weekly programmes, only one is devoted to maternal and child health matters. This is aired on NTA Channel 12 and it is called *Just for the Baby*. Although, it is only this one programme that is on maternal and child health matters, the journalists interviewed said they recognize the importance of this aspect of health care and sometimes vary their programme content to include issues on maternal and child health care.

V. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to determine the different ways the mass media could partner with midwives to bring information on maternal and child health issues to Nigerians. The majority of the midwives (95%) believed the mass media were very useful in disseminating vital information on the health of mothers and that of their children. They also admitted to having access to all the mass media but most especially, billboard and radio. With these, the midwives can pass across messages on contraception and birth control, breastfeeding, best motherhood practices, immunization among others to the public. Whether the messages come as drama presentations, discussion by a panel, teaching sessions, songs, comedy shows, jingles, announcements or any other form, what is important is that 95% of the respondents believe the media are effective in performing their role of information dissemination. This finding agrees with the submissions of Wallack(2000), Omenugha and Ekwugh(2008), Dominick(2009), Sanda(2014) and Odesanya, *et al.* (2015). These authors remain united on the potency of the mass media to disseminate useful messages to the public, particularly on health issues.

Table 4 presents information on ways messages on maternal and child health issues are presented to the public. These also form the different ways the media collaborate or partner with the midwives. For a country like Nigeria, where development media journalism is practiced, that is, where the mass media work hand-in-hand with government to bring development to the masses, health matters are considered as issues of development. The UN recognized this a long time ago and in 1996 came up with a Special Initiative to develop mass communication and other social service infrastructures in Africa (Alozie, 2012). The aim was of course, to promote development policies such as health policies.

Journalists who cover stories in this area present them as straight news items, feature articles well investigated and with in depth interpretation, editorial reports or as news commentaries. At other times, the midwives are invited to a TV or Radio station to discuss these issues or even handle teaching sessions with a studio audience. Messages in the form of announcements on where maternal and child health services are provided and how to source for such services are equally carried by the media.

To further determine how much coverage the mass media gave to maternal and child health issues, the content of three newspapers, four radio and two television stations were analysed. The 202 editions of the three newspapers had 145 reports on health matters generally. The majority (81) of those reports were on maternal and child health issues. This is an indication that journalists in the print media, who handle health beats consider maternal and child health issues very important and thus give them attention and space in their newspapers. This is in line with the demands of the Development Media theory that encourages the use of journalism practice for development. The case of the electronic media is a little different. The health programmes on the radio and TV stations studied were not only few but also did not give maternal and child health issues the kind of attention they deserve. Only one of those programmes is dedicated to maternal and child health matters. However, the producers (journalists) of the programmes said they try to incorporate maternal and child health matters into their production.

The main reason for the paucity of health programmes in these stations as provided by the two midwives and two journalists interviewed for this study, is the unavailability of funds to produce and run the programmes. The midwives are willing to supply the expert information needed to build up and produce the programmes, so also are the journalists ready to go to work if funds were available. The midwives, on their own cannot raise the kind of money required from their earnings to sponsor such programmes. Thus, they have to depend on the Ministry of Health and NGOs such as BBC Media Action, Family Health International, Society for Family Health and SIDHAS – Strengthening Integrated Delivery of HIV/AIDS Services, among others to pay for the programmes. If sponsorship is not forthcoming, the programmes will also not be “forthcoming.” On the part of the journalists, except the managers of their various stations provide funds for the programmes to be produced, they cannot do much. Again, except there are special events like celebrating or commemorating World AIDS day, World Breastfeeding day, National Immunization day, World Cancer Day or an outbreak of a disease; there may not be frequent news reports on those issues.

The journalists further added that on their own, they have tried to collaborate with NGOs and other private individuals willing to sponsor health programmes particularly on maternal and child health matters to make such programmes available to Nigerians through the mass media.

VI. CONCLUSION

Midwives and journalists understand the need for them to work in partnership to reach more Nigerians with information on maternal and child health care issues. Results from the study reveal that the midwives and the journalists are also trying to do what they know should be done within the limits of their ability. But the problem of funds keeps sticking out like a sore thumb. The government definitely needs to show more interest in funding or sponsoring the production of radio and television programmes on maternal and child health issues. This will bridge this yawning gap between other programmes and that on maternal and child health issues produced on TV and radio. The media houses must be properly funded and government should take up the sponsorship of all health programmes especially the ones on maternal and child health issues.

However, no matter how the mass media and the midwives choose to work together, the ultimate aim is to bring information on maternal and child health issues to the Nigerian public. Maternal and child health issues as has already been pointed out are issues of development and they affect a sizeable segment of the population – women and children. Thus, whatever can be done to promote their cause through the mass media, give them more voice and visibility should be done.

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