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INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL BIRTH ATTENDANTS (TBAs) INTO MODERN FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES IN TWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF NORTHERN NIGERIA.

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Objective: Our purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of Traditional Birth Attendants (T.B.As) as facilitators of enhanced modern Family Planning Service delivery in rural areas with limited medical facilities and manpower.

Study Design: Information Education and communication (IEC), focus Group Discussion (F.G.D) and Community Mobilization were carried out with selected T.B.As in 2 local government areas of Kwara state, Nigeria having a combined population of 526, 884. The T.B.As were then used to counsel and deliver non-prescriptive contraceptives as well as refer patients in need of prescriptive methods to 2 sessional clinics supervised by the author at each of the local government Headquarters.

Results: Base line survey revealed a high patronage of Traditional Birth Attendants and Herbalists (62.8%). Awareness of Modern Family Planning Methods was mainly through radio Programmes. Only 5 (2.8%) of adolescents and 18 (9.9%) of couples use non-prescriptive Modern Family Planning Methods. Married women at average age 25 have 3.3 children per head and polygamy is practiced extensively by men (2.7 wives). After 11 months, knowledge of modern family planning methods increased to 96 (19.4%) among adolescents and 373 (75.5%) among couples. Adolescents and couples embraced modern family planning methods in the order of 42 (8.5%) and 397 (80.9%) respectively. IUCD, BTL and Norplant were used by 56, 17 and 5 patients respectively at 2 sessional clinics located in each of the local government area headquarters. Problems identified were that of abuse by some T.B.As, patient's inability to bear cost, transportation problems from the villages and problem of sustainability in terms of financial, manpower and material support.

Conclusion: In rural areas lacking manpower and facilities, T.B.As can serve as very effective agents for enhancing family planning service delivery.