



Gure Healthcare Project, Nigeria

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Organization: Real Medicine Foundation Nigeria (www.realmedicinefoundation.org)

Project title: Gure Healthcare Project

Project location: Gure, Kwara State, Nigeria



Nigerian health workers on strike include midwives, nurses, laboratory technicians, and pharmacists, among others

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Background

Since 2006, Real Medicine Foundation, supported by World Children's Fund (WCF) and in partnership with the Kwara State Ministry of Health, the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and the Gure Gwassoro Ward Development Committee, has been working to improve access to primary health care in one of the most remote areas of Nigeria: the community of Gure in Kwara State. Gure is located near Nigeria's border with the Republic of Benin, and before RMF's arrival in 2006, its only health center, Gure Model Health Centre, had been abandoned. RMF helped reopen, improve, and support the Gure Model Health Centre, providing the only source of accessible health care for a population of over 154,000 in the Baruteen Local Government Area and its surrounding towns. The health center also receives patients who travel to Gure from the Republic of Benin to seek medical treatment.

Until mid-2015, RMF supported the improvement and operation of Gure Model Health Centre, and in October 2016, we shifted our focus to health outreach. We provide free clinics and education sessions primarily for women, children, and the elderly. Through these outreach clinics, RMF aims to reach underserved, vulnerable community members with education, primary health care, maternal, and child health care.

Situation Update

Health workers in Nigeria have been on strike since April 17, 2018, requesting measures to increase pay and improve working conditions. Health care in Nigeria is underfunded; *The New York Times* reported in early May that "this year Nigeria spent 3.9 percent of its budget on health care, a fraction of the 15 percent target set by the United Nations." The health workers' strike was initiated by the Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU), which represents all health workers except physicians. With about 72,000 health workers on strike, hospitals and clinics have been crippled, and there are many reports of deaths caused by lack of access to health care. Pregnant and lactating women are also suffering, in particular, because the nurses and midwives who provide the bulk of antenatal and postnatal care are on strike.

Although Justice Sanusi Kado of the National Industrial Court in Abuja ordered the union to call off the strike within 24 hours, on May 30th, about two weeks later, Nigeria's *Premium Times* reported that according to the National Vice Chairman of JOHESU, Ogbonna Chimela, "The union was still 'consulting' and 'considering' when and how to suspend the strike." Some areas, such as Lagos State, however, have suspended the strike.

Project Update

Due to the health workers' strike ongoing in most parts of Nigeria, RMF has had to postpone its health outreach in Gure, originally scheduled for May 2018. We are hopeful that a fair agreement will be reached and health workers will be available soon to provide much-needed outreach services to the community of Gure and surrounding areas.