



# Building Capacity for Change: Community Workers Making a Difference in Nigerian Communities

Priscilla is a Nutrition Officer at a Civil Society Organization working in the Idu, Jiwa, Bassan Jiwa, Gwagwa, and Karmo communities of Abuja Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. Priscilla provides counseling on nutrition, water sanitation, and hygiene to mothers in those communities.

Priscilla received a five-day training on infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices, intended to create a cadre of coaches at the local government area level. The community-based IYCF (C-IYCF) training is aimed at empowering individuals to provide caregivers with the relevant information and support to achieve optimal nutrition for their children.

Since her training, Priscilla has in turn trained 18 community volunteers and five primary healthcare workers. She can also now answer questions on IYCF that she found difficult to answer previously.

***“IYCF training has brought me to lime light, I can now confidently counsel mothers.” Priscilla***

Before Priscilla was trained on C-IYCF by SPRING/Nigeria, she found it difficult to properly counsel mothers on the importance of adequate nutrition and IYCF practices. A major challenge was being unable to answer questions about breastfeeding and adequate nutrition for infants and young children. She also had difficulties dissuading mothers from giving water in the first six month of life as many of them had already started using ‘ruwan zamzam’ (presumed holy water from Mecca) as it is their belief that the water protects the babies.

The training has also improved her counseling methods and has enabled her to promote optimal breastfeeding behaviors. She utilizes the C-IYCF counseling cards, which help visualize optimal IYCF practices and encourages mothers and care givers to share their personal experiences.



Priscilla counseling a group of pregnant and lactating mothers

In Nigeria, SPRING is working to assist the USAID Umbrella Grant Mechanism (UGM) partners, STEER and SMILE, in achieving their nutrition- and food security-related objective. SPRING/Nigeria is supporting the IYCF trainings in the five UGM-supported states (Bauchi, Benue, Edo, Federal Capital Territory, and Kaduna) in two ways: targeting secondary and tertiary health personnel and facilities on the use of the facility-based IYCF (F-IYCF) counseling package and the UGM partners to roll out the C-IYCF training package.

***“SPRING has armed me with knowledge and tools to work.” Priscilla***

**SPRING**

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.  
1616 Fort Myer Drive, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, VA 22201 USA  
T: 703-528-7474  
F: 703-528-7480  
info@spring-nutrition.org  
www.spring-nutrition.org

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Priscilla making a presentation during her training

Since July 2012, SPRING/Nigeria has trained 1,216 people through the C-IYCF training cascade, with 106 support groups formed across the five implementation states. An estimated 16,100

women and children have been reached as of October 2014. In FY15, the project will expand to assist SMILE and STEER in continued IYCF activities in five additional states (Kano, Kogi, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Sokoto).

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