



NETBRECSIN

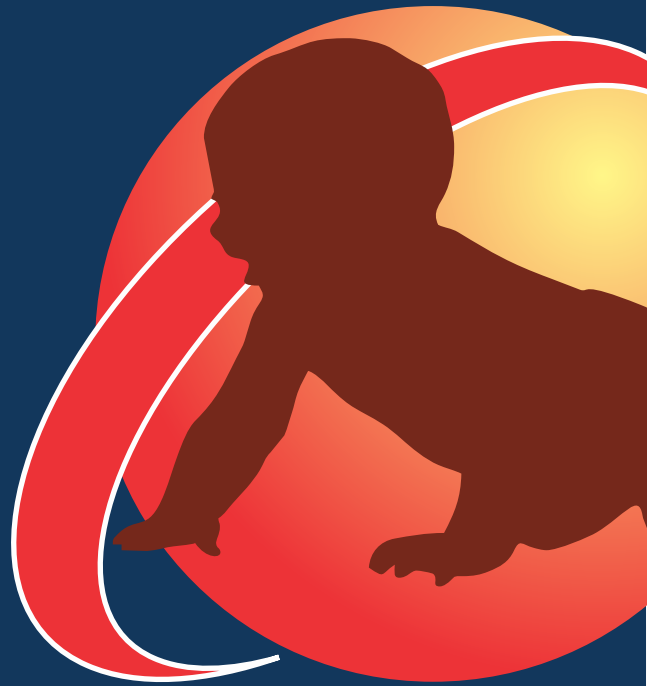
NETWORK ON BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH FOR CHILD SURVIVAL IN NIGERIA

NEWSLETTER

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INSIDE THIS EDITION

- ▶ NETBRECSIN, a Vision Forged in 2011 – Onajole
- ▶ Ogubike unbundles the 'Why' Behind Health Outcomes
- ▶ NETBRECSIN's Growing Influence
- ▶ Beyond the Needle: NETBRECSIN Decodes the 'Why' Behind Zero-Dose Children in Nigeria
- ▶ Eight Keys to Uptake: NETBRECSIN Launches Nation-Wide Behavioural Research Roadmap for Immunisation
- ▶ Innovation Watch: BIRD-Lab
 - Nigeria's BIRD-Lab Takes Flight: Africa's Biggest SBC Research Hub Opens for Business
 - Architects of Change: How NETBRECSIN Forged Africa's Largest Behavioural Science Lab to Save Nigeria's Children
- ▶ Update from Post Graduate Research
- ▶ NETBRECSIN Triumphs: Celebrating Academic Elevation and a Lifetime of Impact
- ▶ Candidates Share Experiences



Delegates at 25th NETBRECSIN-Meeting



Beyond the Benchmarks: Decoding Human Equation in Health

Welcome to the December 2025 Edition of the NETBRECSIN Newsletter; an edition that truly captures the growing influence of NETBRECSIN and the vision forged back in 2011. As the year draws to a close, this edition does not just look back at achievements; it propels us forward, firmly focusing on the human equation behind Nigeria's most pressing public health challenges. We are moving Beyond the Benchmarks, acknowledging that even the best-laid clinical plans hinge entirely on what people know, believe and ultimately do.

The cornerstone of this issue is a story of transformation and a new frontier for African health research. We are thrilled to introduce our new dedicated section, Innovation Watch: BIRD-Lab. Within its pages, you will witness the historic launch of Nigeria's BIRD-Lab, now Africa's Biggest Social and Behavioural Change (SBC) Research Hub. Through stories like "Architects of Change...", we explore the vision and dedication that led NETBRECSIN to forge this colossal lab, built to save Nigeria's children by decoding the "why" behind health actions. Subsequent newsletters will bring you the essential BIRD-Lab Breakthroughs, showcasing the discoveries and solutions that emerge from this vital work.

So, you will read how NETBRECSIN is going "Beyond the Needle" to decode the critical factors behind the persistent challenge of Zero-Dose Children in Nigeria, culminating in the panel discussion session on a "Nation-Wide Behavioural Research Roadmap for Immunisation" that outlines eight key steps to uptake.

Again, the power of this evidence is now flowing directly to the highest levels of governance. So, we celebrate a recent development of having a dedicated website section, greenlit by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (FMOHSW), which ensures that NETBRECSIN's findings are seamlessly streamed and accessible to policymakers. This is a triumph of research translation, fulfilling the commitment that knowledge generated will inform broader policy and practice, solidifying the idea that research translated into policy is the cornerstone of effective health systems.

Finally, as in the tradition of NETBRECSIN, we celebrate academic elevation and hear directly from our post-graduate candidates. Read on, and discover how behavioural science driven by our new BIRD-Lab is charting the course for a healthier future for Nigeria.

NETBRECSIN, a Vision Forged in 2011

– Onajole

The 25th meeting of the Network on Behavioural Research for Child Survival in Nigeria (NETBRECSIN) commenced on Friday, 5th December, 2025 in Karu, Nasarawa State. Prof. Bayo Onajole, the Chairman of NETBRECSIN in his welcome address, expressed appreciation to members and participants for attending the meeting.

From a historical perspective, he stated that NETBRECSIN is a bi-annual powerhouse, launched in 2011 with UNICEF backing. It is a network of esteemed researchers, policy makers and development partners who are transforming abstract data into tangible, life-saving communication strategies and community engagement approaches. For twenty-five cycles, NETBRECSIN has been pioneering this initiative; has been the quiet but powerful engine driving this crucial battle.

Established as a strategic partnership in 2011 among the Federal Ministries (FMOHSW, FMINO, other MDAs), development partners like UNICEF and a growing number of the nation's Tertiary Institutions, NETBRECSIN began as a relentless, focused movement. Its mission was clear: to generate robust, scientific evidence that would directly improve Reproductive; Maternal; Newborn; Child Health; Adolescent and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Network bridges

academia and policy to slash child and maternal mortality; and propel Nigeria toward Universal Health Coverage.

Professor Onajole explained that, with 22 universities now part of the NETBRECSIN consortium, the Network ensures scientific rigour through a stringent review process for research proposals, guaranteeing that every study focuses on the Network's core priority areas. The ultimate measures of success for NETBRECSIN's relentless drive are not in publications, but in human lives: reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates and marked improvements in immunisation coverage and school enrolment. By putting behavioural science at the heart of national development, NETBRECSIN has positioned Nigerian academia as the definitive driver of sustainable change for the nation's children.

He also stressed the role of NETBRECSIN in bringing the town and gown together and emphasized to the candidates that a vital aim of the Network was to ensure candidates' research does not just end up on the shelves of the universities but is translated into insights that drive policies and programmes. He added that there were opportunities for the candidates and specifically mentioned areas which include: gaining exposure as UNICEF provides the platform for candidates' research to be exposed beyond their schools. He also encouraged candidates to continuously build their



capacities, which in the long term can qualify them to transit from candidates to become supervisors; and ultimately provide them the opportunity to become members of the Network, thereby ensuring the Network's sustainability.

He reminded participants that this 25th meeting was more than a meeting; it was a reaffirmation of a national commitment and a call to action. He urged participants to reflect on progress, identify gaps and "chart innovative pathways for promoting healthy practices". The collective mission is clear: ensure the research outcomes from the meeting "translate into practical interventions that improve the lives of children across Nigeria's communities".

Furthermore, the chairperson welcomed the institutions attending the meeting for the first time - Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State and Federal University, Dutsin-ma, Katsina State.

Ogubike unbundles the 'Why' Behind Health Outcomes

The story of maternal, adolescent and child survival is often told through statistics of medical interventions. However, as Mr. Henshaw Ogubike, the Director of Public Communication and National Orientation highlighted at NETBRECSIN's 25th meeting, that "maternal, adolescent and child survival is not driven by medical interventions alone but by social, cultural and religious beliefs".

He gave an instance, of a mother in a remote village who knows her child is sick, but traditional beliefs or fear of the clinic made her delay seeking professional care. He also cited an example of a family that adopts a life-saving health practice for a week, only to abandon it due to community scepticism.

So, in the bustling communities and quiet villages of Nigeria, the fight for a mothers', adolescents' and children's lives is not just happening in hospitals; it is unfolding in the homes, markets and social circles where behaviours, beliefs and social norms dictate health outcomes. This is where NETBRECSIN steps in. The network's journey over the past twenty-five cycles proves that to truly save a mother, adolescent and child, you must first understand the heart and mind of their community. So, it obvious that NETBRECSIN is an

indispensable tool, serving as the cornerstone for generating evidence-based insights that dive deep to understand the "why" behind health outcomes.

According to Mr. Ogubike, the network's findings ensure that communication solutions truly resonate with the people, preventing life-saving information from becoming lost in translation or dismissed as irrelevant. In an age of rapidly changing information landscapes, this evidence-based precision is more critical than ever. In the words of Mr. Ogubike: "Your research helps us fine-tune messages, tailor communication strategies to diverse communities, counter misinformation and strengthen national orientation efforts."

Mr. Ogubike commended the network and informed participants that NETBRECSIN's research is the compass that guides the national narrative on maternal, adolescents and child health. He submitted that NETBRECSIN, the driver of this initiative, embodies the hope for a healthier, safer and more promising future for every Nigerian child.



NETBRECSIN Unleashes Health Revolution

The 25th Network on Behavioural Research for Child Survival in Nigeria (NETBRECSIN) meeting held December 4-8, 2025. It united professors and graduate students from 22 leading Nigerian universities to showcase cutting-edge studies on Reproductive, maternal; newborn; child health; adolescents; nutrition; and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). These studies are not arm-chair or abstract, they are field findings, which from inception benefitted from academic experts insights and technical inputs from partners (Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare [FMOHSW], Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation [FMINO] and UNICEF. As such NETBRECSIN has become the lifeline translating these campus breakthroughs into frontline wins for Nigeria's children.

Dr John Ovuoraye, the Director of Family Health, FMOHSW set the tone with a rousing welcome speech, spotlighting the NETBRECSIN's pioneering work in Reproductive; maternal; newborn child health; Adolescent; nutrition; and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). According to Dr Ovuoraye, the output of NETBRECSIN is positioning the country to outsmart health barriers and build a generation that thrives.

Dr Ovuoraye further explained that every year, preventable causes claim thousands of young lives in Nigeria; but NETBRECSIN, a powerful alliance is rewriting that grim story through behavioural science. With this assertion, the air crackled with urgency to do more to tackle health barriers using data from university study findings.

Furthermore, he told participants that, the FMOHSW is deeply pleased with NETBRECSIN; and congratulated NETBRECSIN and UNICEF for the freshly launched Behavioural Insights Research and Design Laboratory (BIRD-Lab). This he said would help decipher why families skip vital health steps like vaccinations or hygiene. Such evidence from Bird-Lab will enhance the design of interventions, targeted fixes and shape national policy in order to save lives.

He reiterated FMOHSW endorsement of NETBRECSIN, when he said "a dedicated website section, greenlit by the Permanent Secretary, now streams NETBRECSIN findings for policymakers, with ICT Director oversight ensuring seamless uploads". This he said will ensure that knowledge generated during NETBRECSIN meeting is accessible to all and would be inform broader policy and practice. This endorsement electrified the room, earning UNICEF thunderous applause for funding NETBRECSIN workshops where student showcase their study findings.

Also, he hailed FMINO for its collaboration and for logistical muscle and appreciated UNICEF for its consistent support of this network that is enabling students to showcase their research work.



Dr John Ovuoraye

As Dr Ovuoraye declared the session open, NETBRECSIN delegates buzzed with promise to weaponizes science against infant deaths and unleashes child health revolution. All said, 25th NETBRECSIN meeting is not just research meeting; it is a blueprint to ensure no Nigerian child is left behind in the race for thriving futures.

Photo Splash

Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**



Architects of Change Unveiling BIRD-Lab



UNICEF



UNICEF

Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**



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Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**



Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**



Entertainment



Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**



Architects of Change Unveiling **BIRD-Lab**





NETBRECSIN's Growing Influence

During the 25th NETBRECSIN meeting, the first since the BIRD-Lab launch, Prof. Alphonsus Isara highlighted that the lab is evidence of the Network's long-standing impact. Prof Isara who presented the review of the 24th meeting noted that, the Network's growing influence and regional significance is underscored by his recent representation of NETBRECSIN at the UNICEF's 20-country meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

He emphasised the rigorous review process of the proposals submitted by candidates for the meeting; and the stringent criteria for attending the meeting by supervisors being that they are required to have candidates who are conducting research in the Network's focal areas.

This is important for ensuring that research remains focused on the Network's priority areas. He highlighted UNICEF's crucial role in the Network, which includes providing candidates with current trends and literature in focal research areas, as well as assisting them in facilitating community entry for their studies.

In a testament to the strong partnership, UNICEF was also appreciated for the donation of a laptop, which now stores all candidates' presentations, boosting the Network's operational capacity. Furthermore, he told members of NETBRECSIN that, the final drafting of the NETBRECSIN constitution and its registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) is set to be finalised during the 25th meeting, ensuring a strong institutional future.



Beyond the Needle: NETBRECSIN Decodes the 'Why' Behind Zero-Dose Children in Nigeria

The fight for child survival in Nigeria often focuses on clinic infrastructure or vaccine supply, yet millions of children remain 'Zero Dose' - those who have not received even their first routine immunization shot. So, the question is no longer where the vaccines are, but why caregivers are not accessing them.

At the 25th bi-annual meeting, the NETBRECSIN cemented its role as the intellectual driver in addressing this crisis. Using the rigorous lens of behavioural science, NETBRECSIN is moving beyond health statistics to analyse the social, economic and psychological forces that govern a caregiver's decision.

In a comprehensive presentation, Dr. Zaharaddeen Kabir of the Federal University Dutsin-ma, Katsina State, articulated NETBRECSIN's strategic roadmap: the selection of thematic areas that will define the next generation of child health research: social and cultural drivers; beliefs, perceptions and risk assessment; gender, economy and behavioural autonomy and the power dynamic; service experiences and health worker interaction; behavioural barriers on hard-to-reach populations; economic and time-related factors; information access and communication; and programme design and behavioural change intervention. The core premise is simple yet revolutionary: to understand what behaviour requires changes, who performs that behaviour, under what social conditions and why.



Eight Keys to Uptake: NETBRECSIN Launches Nation-Wide Behavioural Research Roadmap for Immunisation



The ultimate goal for NETBRECSIN's multi-disciplinary Network is to transform research findings into practical blueprints. This includes the behavioural mapping of the caregiver journey from first awareness to first vaccination; and the implementation of simplified reminder systems and community-based nudges to identify and reach every single zero-dose child. So, NETBRECSIN is not just studying a problem; it is forging the evidence required to solve it, placing Nigeria's academic community at the forefront of a global immunization revolution.

As a result, Dr. Zaharaddeen Kabir of the Federal University Dutsin-ma, Katsina State, leading a panel discussion during the 25th NETBRECSIN meeting articulated the Seven Pillars of Behavioural Change as keys to immunisation uptake.

According to Dr. Kabir, this behavioural framework provides the eight keys to unlocking immunization uptake, moving researchers from problem identification to generating scalable, practical policy options.

First, he identified **social and cultural drivers as the invisible hand** urging researchers to dive into how cultural beliefs and traditional practices actively discourage vaccination; and also examine the role of community influencers and the effects of household gender dynamics on a mother's decision to vaccinate a child.

Second, he stated that **beliefs, perceptions and risk assessment are the mind game**. He told participants that this pillar confronts the psychological barriers; and encourage researchers to specifically investigate how a caregiver's risk perception influences the likelihood of a child remaining zero-dose. From

the communication perspective, he also highlighted the need to focus on the influence of misinformation and rumour psychology on decision-making, as well as the crucial role of trust in health workers.

The third pillar is **gender, economy and behavioural autonomy** being **the power dynamic** urging NETBRECSIN to commission studies that treat women's decision-making autonomy as a key predictor of zero-dose status. The research, he argued should also explore the behavioural impact of male engagement in immunization decisions and the influence of gendered mobility constraints (such as travel) on health outcomes.

Fourthly, Dr Kabir said that **service experiences and health worker interaction (the human touch)** is another issue affecting immunisation uptake; and called for a focus shift to the health system

itself, by analysing how negative prior interactions or behavioural factors like long wait times and poor clinic design impact first-dose uptake. This study on the fourth pillar should also include the critical role of communication strategy in influencing zero-dose caregivers.

Fifth is **behavioural barriers on hard-to-reach populations** anchored on leaving no child behind. Research on this pillar should target the most marginalized to study the behavioural determinants of zero-dose status among nomadic or mobile communities. Such studies should also bravely address the impact of health system distrust and the profound challenge of decision-making under chronic

stress in conflict-affected areas.

Sixth is **economic and time-related factors** hinged on **the cost of care**. Research on the cost of care should address the tangible barriers by analysing how opportunity costs and time constraints lead to zero-dose status. Crucially, it should explore the behavioural impact of conditional incentives and effective nudging strategies to bridge the 'intention-action gap'.

Seventh, the **information access and communication** in the context on **the digital divide** study should be targeted at ensuring that no caregiver is unaware. Studies would generate behavioural insights on why some caregivers lack vaccination knowledge; and also,

researchers should test the effectiveness of message framing (loss versus gain) in motivating caregivers; and study how the digital information ecosystem contributes to zero-dose formation.

Finally, studies should focus on Program Design and Behavioural Intervention to address the challenges of the poor health indices in Nigeria. For effectiveness, it should use community-based nudges to identify and reach zero-dose children's caregivers; carry out behavioural mapping of the caregiver journey from awareness to first vaccination; and include simplified reminder systems to influence first dose uptake.



Innovation Watch: BIRD-Lab



Nigeria's BIRD-Lab Takes Flight: Africa's Biggest SBC Research Hub Opens for Business

A significant leap forward in addressing critical challenges facing Nigerian children has been marked by the launch of the Behavioural Insights Research and Design Laboratory (BIRD-Lab). Hailed as the biggest BIRD-Lab in Africa, it is positioned to explore deep insights into the drivers of behaviour and behaviour change intervention around Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) and other focal areas like water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

As such, the launch of the BIRD-Lab is a clear signal that Nigeria is leading the charge in applying rigorous behavioural science to achieve sustainable development goals for its youngest citizens. This new initiative solidifies the partnership between UNICEF and the Network on Behavioural Research for Child Survival in Nigeria (NETBRECSIN), promising to revolutionise evidence-based programming for Maternal, adolescent and child welfare.

The momentous occasion was acknowledged during the 25th NETBRECSIN meeting by the Chief of Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) at UNICEF Nigeria, Mr. Kshitij Joshi, who celebrated the successful launch and noted that the collaboration with NETBRECSIN has moved to "the next level". The excitement about the BIRD-Lab is palpable, with other African countries already reaching out to UNICEF for support and learnings from the Nigeria BIRD-Lab, potentially leading to the formation of a Pan-Africa university network.

Mr Joshi made a strong request to government partners to utilize the outputs from NETBRECSIN's research to develop UNICEF's new country programmes. In delivering the goodwill message, on behalf of the Nigerian UNICEF Country Representative, Wafaa Saeed Abdelatef, he **challenged NETBRECSIN to focus its research efforts on**

generating new and actionable evidence on out-of-school-Children (OOSC). In his words, "a key area of focus for the Network is the persistent challenge of OOSC in Nigeria, a major issue to which UNICEF is deeply committed".



Architects of Change:

How NETBRECSIN Forged Africa's Largest Behavioural Science Lab to Save Nigeria's Children

For decades, the challenges facing Nigeria's most vulnerable children - from alarming infant mortality rates to the crisis of out-of-school children seemed to defy solutions, often leaving programmes with insufficient impact despite vast investment of resources. Pertinent questions requiring answers: what if the missing piece was not funding but insight? What if the key to unlocking child survival lay in understanding the simple, everyday decisions of a mother in a remote village?

These profound questions became the driving force behind a movement led by a coalition of Nigerian academic powerhouses: the Network on Behavioural Research for Child Survival in Nigeria (NETBRECSIN) to launch Behavioural Insights Research and Design Laboratory (BIRD-Lab), Africa's new research apex.

Essentially, NETBRECSIN's vision has now materialised into the BIRD-Lab, which was launched at the University of Lagos College of Medicine on August 22nd, 2025. In framing the launch, Professor Adebayo Onajole, the Chairperson of NETBRECSIN, stated "the recent unveiling of BIRD-Lab is not just as an event, but the culmination of over a decade of dedication". Specifically on the launch, he stated that "The launch of the BIRD-Lab is the outcome of months of careful planning and visionary collaboration by this Network with funding support from UNICEF".

The BIRD-Lab is the Network's engine for progress.

It is an innovative, collaborative space that fuses psychology, sociology and data-driven experimentation to decode the 'why' behind community behaviours. For instance, why do parents skip vaccinations? Why is hygiene neglected or nutrition instructions ignored? Why are millions of children still out of school?

The BIRD-Lab provides a platform for answering these critical questions; transforming academic projects into laser-focused, actionable strategies that government ministries and partner organisations can implement. In a significant vote of confidence, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has already dedicated space to integrate the findings from the lab directly into national policies.

Hailed by UNICEF as the biggest BIRD-Lab in Africa, this cutting-edge hub is poised to transform the research landscape across the continent because the success of the Nigerian BIRD-Lab has spurred other African countries to reach out to UNICEF for support and to learn from the initiative, hinting at the potential for the Network to grow into a Pan-Africa university network. In no distant time, it will be scaling the impact: from Nigeria to a Pan-Africa Network. NETBRECSIN's impact is already felt beyond Nigeria's borders, evidenced by its recent representation at the UNICEF's 20-country meeting in Yaounde, Cameroon.



From War Zones to Wards: The Unseen Fight for Motherhood in Nigeria

The cry of a newborn should be a sound of hope, but across Nigeria that hope is increasingly fragile. The nation is grappling with a multi-front crisis impacting its mothers and children; from the unforgiving terrains of conflict and chronic hunger to the challenges of traditional barriers in urban clinics and the race to adopt technology in healthcare. At the heart of this struggle is the Nigerian woman, whose resilience and sacrifice are often the only shields against devastating outcomes. This is the story of four interconnected battles for maternal health, where innovation and advocacy, driven by initiatives are critical to turning the tide.

We tee off with what we tagged the *Sacrifice of Sahel Mothers: Hunger in the Shadow of Conflict* contextualised in Sokoto State, where conflict has turned the essential act of feeding a family into a daily peril. The scale of the crisis is alarming as over 70% of respondents in conflict-affected areas are consuming fewer than five food groups daily and less than 1% are achieving high dietary diversity. For women like Aisha in Sabon-Birni LGA, motherhood has become synonymous with sacrifice. A recent study titled **"Maternal Dietary Diversity in Conflict Settings: Access and Availability Challenges in Sokoto State, Nigeria"** paints a devastating picture as 71.9% of pregnant and lactating women reported disruptions in food access and a staggering 82.2%



noted a decline in access to nutritious food since the conflict began. Furthermore, Aisha's survival strategy is one shared by countless others: reducing her own food intake to prioritise her children; a maternal sacrifice with severe long-term health consequences.

Again, researchers found that prolonged displacement and refugee status were major predictors of poor dietary diversity. The desperate measures to cope include harmful strategies like begging, child labour, food rationing and scavenging. Even essential aid often falls short as they are found to be "inconsistent, insufficient and sometimes detrimental to dietary diversity" because it focuses on monotonous staples. So, the crisis is not just one of material hardship; it is a social and public health emergency. As such relevant ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs)

and relevant organisations should to respond with targeted, diverse nutrition interventions and long-term investments in local food systems and women's empowerment.

Another study, which is captured as *Breaking the Mould: Fathers Step Up in the City*.

This study reveals that miles away in Ibadan-North, a different kind of barrier to maternal health deeply entrenched gender norms as traditionally, pregnancy and childbirth are considered female domains, often restricting the male partner's role to that of a financial provider is being challenged. The study **"Male Partner's Participation in Pre-and Post-Natal Care in Ibadan-North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria"** states that despite the growing recognition of men's role in improving maternal and child health outcomes, male engagement in maternal care



remains limited due to entrenched gender norms, socio-economic barriers and institutional constraints. However, the findings of the study indicate a shift because a new generation of fathers is rewriting the script. The mixed-methods study shows a gradual, yet significant, shift: partners are providing emotional support (36.5%), encouraging proper nutrition (36.0%) and attending antenatal and postnatal sessions (18.2%). The vast majority of male partners (64.2%) also pay the full maternity bill of their wives. Obviously, this cultural shift is generational. The younger men, particularly those below 35 years and with higher education are more inclined to attend antenatal sessions and participate in caregiving. Notwithstanding, systemic issues remain. The strongest barriers to fuller involvement are work demands and financial constraints, highlighting the need for "male-friendly service design" and workplace policies like paternity leave and flexibility.

The next study is titled *The Digital Frontier: AI in the Race for Vaccination*. It argues that while the goal of healthy mothers and children is

often undermined by low vaccination coverage; in Ibadan-North, the answer might lie in the digital realm. The study, **"Leveraging Artificial Intelligence Among Health Workers to Enhance Vaccination Coverage in Ibadan-North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria"** states that health workers are increasingly aware that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a game-changer, offering automated reminders, tracking systems and decision-support. The findings of the study revealed strong, positive perceptions of AI with a large majority (96.2%) believing AI improves efficiency in vaccination services. However, the path to integration is bumpy. It submits that inadequate training and a critical lack of infrastructure such as reliable internet connectivity are major roadblocks. Others are poor capacity as only 26.7% of health workers had attended online AI courses. Additionally, over half (60.2%) of respondents expressed concern about potential job displacement. As a result, the key recommendation of the study is clear: invest in capacity-building for health workers, improve digital infrastructure and have supportive policies to harness AI for better health outcomes.

Finally, findings from postgraduate research are the *Continuum of Care*. Whether tackling conflict-induced hunger in Sokoto, shifting gender roles in Ibadan, or integrating AI into service delivery, the challenge remains ensuring a complete "continuum of care". The study **"Maternal Health Services Utilization and Satisfaction: The Experience of Mothers in Abba Na Shehu Ward, Jos North LGA, Plateau State,**



Nigeria" found that in Plateau State, for example, high antenatal care attendance (98.4%) stands in stark contrast to the 26.4% of deliveries that still occur at home, attended to by non-skilled persons like family members and Traditional birth attendants (TBA) and a mere 29.9% of women receiving postnatal care despite the danger of maternal death at this periods. Cost of care, transportation and family disapproval often dictate whether a mother receives essential care.

In conclusion, this collective research highlights that improving maternal and child health in Nigeria requires a multi-level, culturally sensitive approach. It demands action from policy makers to tackle the structural causes of food insecurity; employers to create male-friendly work policies; and the government to invest in the digital future of health. Only by addressing these diverse, structural barriers can Nigeria truly secure a brighter, healthier future for its mothers and children.



NETBRECSIN Triumphs: Celebrating Academic Elevation and a Lifetime of Impact

The Network on Behavioural Research for Child Survival in Nigeria (NETBRECSIN) proudly celebrates the milestone achievements of several esteemed members who continue to push the boundaries of public health research in Nigeria. They are, Prof. Andrew Obi, Prof. Nonye Egenti and Dr. Zara Wudiri. The towering legacy of Prof Clara Ejembi's leadership is undisputable, while the academic pillars elevated for others through promotions recognise the research excellence. All said, their recent elevations and personal milestones underscore the depth of expertise driving the Network's mission to understand and change behaviours for improved maternal and child survival outcomes. The NETBRECSIN proudly spotlights these valued members.



Prof. Clara Ejembi:

Legacy of Leadership

The Network joyfully celebrates the 70th birthday of Prof. Clara Ejembi, a foundational figure and esteemed Professor of Public Health and Consultant Community Physician at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. With over 40 years of experience in practice, teaching and research, Prof. Ejembi has dedicated her career to Primary Health Care and Reproductive Health. Her research has often served as a blueprint for policy, notably her work on community mobilisation to address maternal and child health challenges, such as increasing access to interventions like misoprostol to prevent postpartum haemorrhage in Northern Nigeria.

Prof. Ejembi is a passionate advocate who has consistently highlighted the challenges of low immunisation coverage and high maternal/child mortality rates in Nigeria. Beyond her publications, her legacy is defined by her role as a master-trainer, having supervised 38 Fellowship and PhD candidates and trained thousands of health professionals, ensuring the next generation of researchers upholds NETBRECSIN's commitment to evidence-based practice. Her tireless efforts continue to shape national and global policies, making her 70th birthday a celebration of a truly remarkable public health career.

Prof. Andrew Obi:

Championing Vaccine Uptake and Child Nutrition

NETBRECSIN congratulates Prof. Andrew Obi on his promotion to a full Professor at the University of Benin (UNIBEN). A distinguished Public Health Physician and Epidemiologist, Prof. Obi's elevation is a direct result of his impactful research in areas critical to the Network. His work focuses intensely on Epidemiology, Reproductive Health, Health Management and Infectious Disease Control. Prof. Obi has provided crucial insights into the behavioural factors affecting public health, including studies on vaccination uptake within target populations and assessing the nutritional status of under-five children in Edo State. Furthermore, his research into male involvement in maternal health interventions highlights the social drivers of health outcomes, aligning perfectly with NETBRECSIN's behavioural science focus.





Prof. Nonye Egenti:

Advancing Child Health Epidemiology

The Network extends its warmest congratulations to Prof. Nonye Egenti on her promotion to a full Professor at the University of Abuja (now Yakubu Gowon University). Prof. Egenti is a seasoned Consultant Community Health Physician whose research contributes significantly to the understanding of child morbidity and mortality. Her prolific work in Public Health and Epidemiology includes assessing the prevalence and trend of malaria among under-five children. Crucially, she has investigated the risk factors of cerebral palsy in health facilities, generating evidence that informs clinical and preventive strategies for newborn survival. Her promotion signifies a strengthening of the academic leadership dedicated to improving Nigeria's child health statistics.

Dr. Zara Wudiri:

Bridging Research and Reality in the North-East

We celebrate the promotion of Dr. Zara Wudiri to the rank of an Associate Professor at the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID). Dr. Wudiri's role as a public health specialist in the North-East region makes her research particularly strategic for NETBRECSIN, which focuses on reaching 'hard-to-reach' populations. Dr. Wudiri's work on topics such as the effects of insurgency on sustainable healthcare development in North-east Nigeria provides vital context for understanding the complex behavioural barriers that lead to the 'Zero Dose' crisis in conflict-affected communities. Her commitment to research on the ground, including her focus on violence against healthcare workers is indispensable to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of health interventions in challenging environments.



Candidates Share Experiences



Olubowale F. Gbemisola

*Department of Sociology,
University of Ibadan*

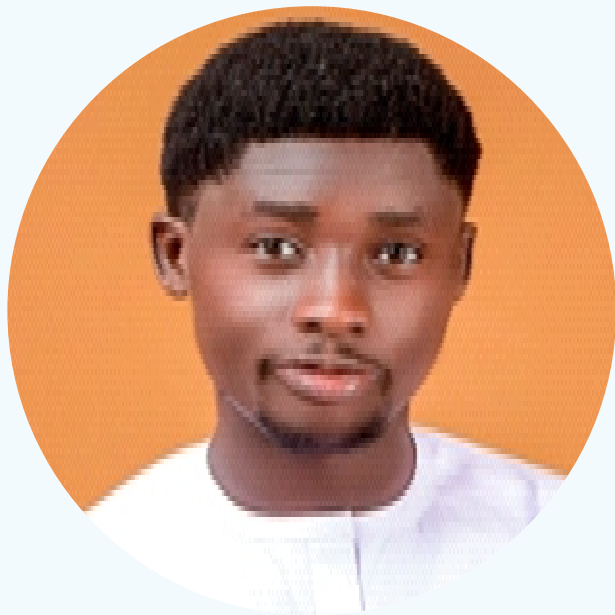
When I first presented my proposal at NETBRECSIN exactly a year ago, I walked in with confidence. Within minutes, my work was thoroughly dissected in a way I had never experienced. It was an honest academic reality check that shook me so deeply. After being referred to the Academic Review Clinic, the treatment plan I received was so detailed and compassionate that it gave my research a new and concise direction. Implementing the NETBRECSIN feedback transformed my work. It shaped my methodology, sharpened my arguments and strengthened my analysis to a level that even impressed the panel during my departmental defence. Standing before the panel in this December 2025 meeting to present my finished work, I felt a sense of pride, not just in the study, but in how far I have grown as a researcher. The experience has reshaped my academic journey and inspired me to pursue my PhD with renewed conviction. I am grateful for the mentorship, the patience of my supervisor (Prof. Salami), and the unwavering support embedded in this programme. I deeply appreciate NETBRECSIN, UNICEF, FMOH, FMNO. The transformation is tangible and I am a living testimony of what structured academic support can achieve. Today, I am proud. Proud of my work, proud of my growth and proud to have been part of the NETBRECSIN family.



Muhammad Habiba Kabir

*Department of Community Medicine,
University of Jos*

It was a great opportunity to present both my research proposal and completed work at the NETBRECSIN Bi-Annual Meeting. This experience marked significant milestones in my academic journey. The constructive feedback I received helped me improve the clarity and depth of my work, and the insights from scholars across different disciplines further enriched my understanding of research. Beyond the academic benefits, the encouragement from mentors and colleagues made the experience both fulfilling and rewarding. It was a valuable blend of reflection, learning, and growth, inspiring me both personally and academically. I sincerely appreciate my supervisor for believing in me, and I am grateful to NETBRECSIN, UNICEF, FMNIO, FMOH & SW for creating such a platform for emerging researchers. Thank you very much.



Sunday Oloruntoba Ojo

*Department of Sociology,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

I wish to express my profound gratitude to God and NETBRINCIN. It is really a privilege to be a partaker in this prestigious seminar. First thing first, I want to acknowledge the fact that NETBRINCIN cares about my safety. The safety measure was that they identified insecurity in my initial proposed study area and they changed my study location for my safety which am most grateful for that. Secondly, this seminar is an eye opener for me to explore in many areas of study and to add to my knowledge about research.



Bello Umar

*Department of Community Medicine,
University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital*

Over the course of three intensive days, I had the privilege of participating in a workshop organised by NETBRECIN. The workshop brought together practitioners, researchers, Participants and development partners focused on strengthening systems, enhancing organisational performance and driving innovation in programme implementation across various fields. I interacted closely with NETBRECIN facilitators, programme officers and other participants from diverse backgrounds. These engagements helped me build strong professional networks and new collaborative ideas. During my presentation, I received constructive feedback, technical guidance and validation from the review panel. Their insights helped refine the proposal to meet professional standards.



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Please send your reactions and suggestion to:

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