



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



Grandson and grandfather in northern Nigeria, photo by President's Malaria Initiative

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Background

Real Medicine Foundation has been active in Nigeria since 2006, first working to provide pediatric care to the estimated 15,000 young children living in the shantytown of Makoko in Lagos State. 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, we then began 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 2009, 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.

Project Update

The 6-week health workers' strike, which had crippled hospitals and clinics across Nigeria, ended in early June 2018. RMF was therefore able to schedule our health outreach in Gure for July 9–13, 2018. Through this outreach, RMF provided free healthcare services to the people of Gure and surrounding communities in partnership with the staff of Gure Model Health Centre. This included maternal and child healthcare services, wound care, HIV testing and counseling, other laboratory services, and more. Over 800 patients received free healthcare services during the 5-day outreach, and the most commonly treated illness was malaria, with 441 cases. With additional funding, RMF Nigeria will be able to provide additional outreach events, and we hope one day to support the infrastructure and staff of Gure Model Health Centre once more.

Situation Update

Nigeria struggles yearly with malaria and cholera during the rainy season, evidenced in part by the percentage of patients treated for malaria during RMF's July 2018 outreach mentioned above. According to WHO's World Malaria Report 2018, Nigeria accounts for a fourth of all malaria cases worldwide. The cholera situation is especially dire in northeastern Nigeria, including Borno and Yobe states, where many people have been displaced due to Boko Haram. In a November 6, 2018 update, WHO observes that Nigeria is experiencing "its largest cholera outbreak in recent years," with over 42,466 suspected cases and 830 deaths reported by October, as compared to 18,243 suspected cases reported during all of 2015–2017. Both malaria and cholera are preventable diseases, and the trends in Nigeria are due to low resources and lack of consistent primary health care and health education. In the same November report, WHO announced that 808,795 people will be targeted through Oral Cholera Vaccination (OCV) campaigns. RMF's vision is to support a long-term preventive strategy in Kwara State by strengthening primary health care and health education.