

Food Basket Intervention for Ante-Natal attendance in Nafada LGA, Gombe State

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Abstract

This study looks at the immediate outcome on food basket intervention for increase in antenatal care attendance in Nafada Local Government Area, Gombe State, Nigeria, implemented by the National Social Safety Nets Programme under the Accelerating Nutrition Result in Nigeria. The food basket intervention aims to alleviate micronutrient deficiencies, particularly anemia and vitamin A deficiency, among pregnant women, which are critical contributors to maternal and infant mortality. Despite the high rates of maternal and infant mortality in Nafada, with only 27% of women delivering in health facilities, the intervention seeks to enhance maternal health outcomes and encourage regular ANC attendance. Utilizing a desk review of secondary data from the Gombe State Health Sector Strategic Plan and administrative records from primary health care facilities, the study analyzes trends in ANC attendance from 2021 to 2024. Results indicate a significant increase in ANC attendance, from 10,522 in 2021 to 20,183 in 2024, demonstrating a cumulative increase of 91%. Qualitative data further supports these findings, revealing reduced hunger among beneficiaries and increased health facility attendance. The study concludes that the food basket intervention has positively influenced ANC attendance, thereby driving demand for health services and prompting government responses to improve supply. Recommendations include expanding the food basket intervention to other LGAs and enhancing behavioral change communication to promote ANC attendance among pregnant women. Further research is suggested to explore the sustainability of the intervention and its long-term effects on maternal health outcomes.

Keywords: Food Basket Intervention, Ante-Natal attendance, Nafada LGA, Gombe State

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Introduction

The Food Basket Intervention is a strategy designed to reduce micro-nutrient deficiencies among pregnant women. This intervention is being implemented in Nafada LGA of Gombe State. At the core of the deficiencies that the intervention seeks to address is anaemia and Vitamin A deficiency. Anaemia is a health condition that results from a lack of red blood cells or a dysfunctional red blood cells and this condition is dangerous and could be potential

fatal for a pregnant woman because it increases the risk of complications for the mother and child including premature birth and low birth weight of the infant (Kajang & Omeje, 2024). Similarly, vitamin A deficiency poses the same challenge like anaemia.

Poor ANC attendance is a prominent public health problem, causing poor pregnancy outcome. Antenatal care (ANC) services are crucial for improving the health and well-being of maternal and unborn child during pregnancy. ANC allows healthcare providers to have greater opportunities for early detection and management of obstetric complications, such as anemia, infections, and fetal growth restriction conditions. Additionally, ensuring access to and quality of ANC during pregnancy can prevent adverse maternal and perinatal outcomes and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality due to pregnancy-related complications (Asaye Alamneh & Gebeyehu, 2024).

The program aims to improve Ante Natal attendance. This study highlights the interventions to increase health outcomes for both mothers and the children. On the other hand, maternal health is a significant concern in Nigeria particularly in Nafada LGA of Gombe state where maternal and infant mortality is high. This high incidence may be attributable to non-delivery at health facilities or delivery under the supervision of Trained Birth Attendants (TBA). Only 27% of women deliver at facilities with most giving birth at home (Gombe State health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2025, 2020).

To address this, interventions as Food Basket programs have been introduced to improve ante-natal attendance and maternal health outcomes. Ante-natal care is crucial for monitoring pregnancy progress, identifying complications and providing essential health education. According to the Gombe State health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (2020) factors like food insecurity, poverty and limited access to health care services hinder ante-natal attendance in many Nigeria communities and Nafada LGA is not an exception.

Further studies on nutritional behaviour among women attending antenatal care in Gombe health facilities revealed a significant difference in nutritional behaviour based on location and work experience. This emphasizes the need for targeted nutrition education and interventions to address this specific need. So, therefore, combining ante-natal care with performance-based interventions like the food basket intervention can increase health facility deliveries instigated by a demand side pull. In Nafada LGA, private health facilities have seen a higher success rate in this approach compared to public facilities (Nafada LGA Health Profile, 2019).

This highlights the need for an integrated intervention in improving maternal health and safe delivery. The food basket intervention provides pregnant women with nutrient rich food packages, aiming to alleviate food insecurity and promote healthy eating habits. This initiative seeks to encourage regular ante-natal attendance, improve maternal nutrition and reduce pregnancy related complications.

Methodology

The study adopted desk review of secondary data obtained from the Gombe State Strategic Health Development Plan 2020, Nafada LGA Health Profile 2019 and administrative data from selected Primary Health care Facilities in Nafada Local Government Area. The data from this source formed the baseline of what the situation was and present an opportunity to do a situational analysis of maternal and infant health outcomes in Nafada LGA of Gombe State.

Also, the methodology employed descriptive statistics using bar charts to portray the increment or otherwise of variables like ante-natal attendance uptake and their relation to the food basket intervention and how this intervention led to a behavioral change relating to intake of nutritious meals among pregnant women.

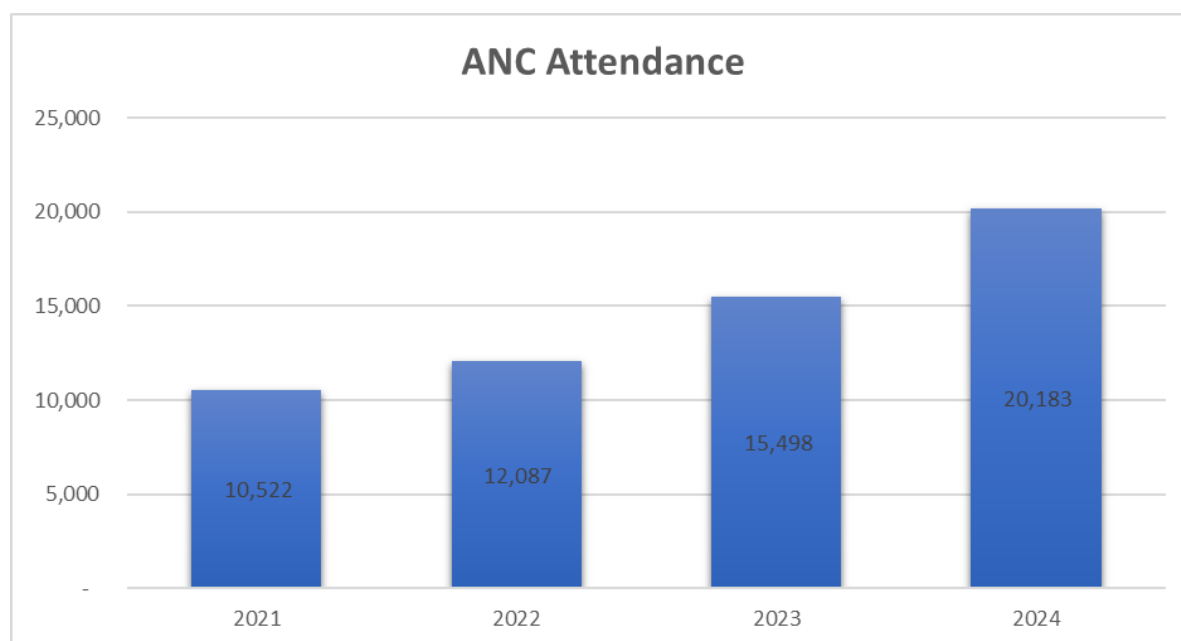
Results

Table 1: ANC attendance in Nafada LGA from 2021-2024

S/N	Year	ANC Attendance
1	2021	10,522
2	2022	12,087
3	2023	15,498
4	2024	20,183

Source: dhis2 2021-2024

Figure 1: ANC attendance in Nafada LGA



Source: Dhis2 2021-2024

Discussion

Over a period of 4 years, 2021-2024, results obtained from ANC attendance in health facilities in Nafada LGA among the women who were beneficiaries of the food basket intervention showed a significant increase in ante natal attendance. Data showed marked increase with 10,522 women attending ANC in 2021, while in 2022, a total of 12,087 attended ANC signifying a 14.9% increase in attendance. Also, in 2023, there was significant improvement in ANC attendance with 15,489 women attending ANC, indicating 28.2% increment. In 2024 had a total ANC attendance of 20,183 representing an increase of 30.2%.

Conclusion

From the administrative and desk reviewed data, it can be inferred that the food basket intervention is largely responsible for the increase in the percentage number of attendance of ANC services in Nafada LGA. Furthermore, evidence from this study show that with the increase in ANC attendance, pregnant women demand for services from the health facilities prompting governments to make the effort of providing these services thereby leading to an increase in supply side drive. Access to a nutritious food basket can improve the nutritional status of pregnant women, which is crucial for a healthy pregnancy and infant development.

Improved nutrition and increased antenatal care attendance can lead to a reduction in adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as low birth weight, preterm birth, and maternal mortality.

Recommendations

- i. There is a need for government to increase food basket intervention in Nafada LGA and expand to other LGAs.
- ii. Pregnant women should be sensitized through behavioural Change Communication (BBC) to attend ANC, as it has the unintended consequence of driving demand for provision of health services by the government
- iii. Further research is needed to explore the sustainability of the food basket intervention

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