

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Family
Empowerment
Media



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Every two minutes, a woman dies from complications of pregnancy or childbirth. Seventy percent of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2020, Family Empowerment Media was founded to meet one of the most cost-effective, neglected opportunities in global health. We enable informed family planning through clear, engaging, and accurate radio campaigns. Radio airwaves can carry life-saving information to people who might not otherwise hear it, and our campaigns are regionally tailored to meet our listeners' real-life concerns.

In 2021, we launched in northern Nigeria. Working with the Kano State Ministry of Health, we ran our first pilot. An external survey on contraceptive use in Kano saw a 75% increase (among all women) between February 2021 and January 2022. In 2022, we ran a nine-month campaign and expanded to new states. In 2023, we developed our capacity to implement across larger regions. We conducted 1,500 interviews to better understand our listeners. We received encouraging cost-effectiveness evaluations. And we took concrete steps toward international expansion.

When Ken Scheffler and I co-founded FEM, we aimed to reach 30 million people with life-saving information in ten years. In the three years since founding, we have already reached 32 million. Some were reached through short campaigns testing whether we could reach their area. And we can! I now think we will reach 50 million by 2030 in Nigeria alone.

We are months from launching a randomised controlled trial (RCT) of campaigns in eight states. Meanwhile, we'll continue our expansion work. We will be prepared to scale rapidly should the RCT demonstrate that our impact is as strong as current evidence suggests.

None of this would be possible without our funders. Your support empowers women and men to achieve their own family planning intentions, and helps create a future in which no woman has to die from complications related to unwanted pregnancies.

On behalf of the women and men who've received life-saving information from our campaigns, and all who work on FEM's projects... thank you.



Anna Christina Thorsheim

Anna Christina Thorsheim

CO-FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 IN REVIEW



Expansion in Nigeria

We conducted 1-2 week test campaigns in seven new states, establishing our ability to work widely across three campaign regions in Nigeria.



Arewa: Saving More Lives in Kano

We launched a nine-month campaign on Arewa Radio in Kano, repurposing previously aired content in our most cost-effective campaign yet.



Partnerships Blossoming

We strengthened bonds with our Nigerian partners, signed MoUs with Ministries of Health in three new states, and gained important funding partners.



Formative Research

We learned more about the people we seek to serve in thirteen states, speaking to nearly 1,500 women and men about their barriers and drivers to birth spacing.



New Countries and Topics

We researched new campaign locations and topics, closing the year with a request for applications from NGOs wishing to co-implement with us in five sub-Saharan countries.

OUR IMPACT IN 2023

15m million
listeners

2.4 million people reached in long campaigns, 12.6 million reached through 1-2 week test campaigns

26k new users of
contraception

An estimated 26,900 people empowered to achieve their family planning intentions

62k couple years
of protection

An estimated 62,600 years of protection from unplanned pregnancy gained

124 lives saved
(equivalents)

An estimated 124 lives saved (or equivalents in disability adjusted life years gained)

Updated Sep 2026, to reflect our current cost-effectiveness modeling, externally validated by Rethink Priorities.

2023 IN DEPTH



Long Campaigns, Saving Lives



“

Everywhere in Kano, even in neighboring states that the radio frequencies reach, people are listening to our campaign, they are listening to our jingles, they are asking questions, they're making calls.

Dr Tukur Mansur Muhammad, iDevPro Africa,
FEM's partner in North Nigeria

”

In spring 2023, we completed our first nine-month campaign. Airing on Freedom Radio in Kano State, it reached ~2.4 million listeners. It featured our first serial drama, following the stories of three families for eight weeks.

This campaign was well-received by men and women in our target population. Our team received an Award for Excellence from a national youth organisation.

Academics Mike Law and Laura Schummers are evaluating the impact of this campaign using DHIS2 data.

In July, we launched a second nine-month campaign in Kano, on Arewa Station. Running through February 2024, it reaches ~2.3 million listeners in new and rural populations. This campaign expands the impact of content previously produced for northern Nigeria, eliminating content production costs.

Both campaigns feature Q&A shows, first-person narratives, and shows with doctors and religious leaders, dispelling misconceptions, and explaining the benefits of birth spacing.

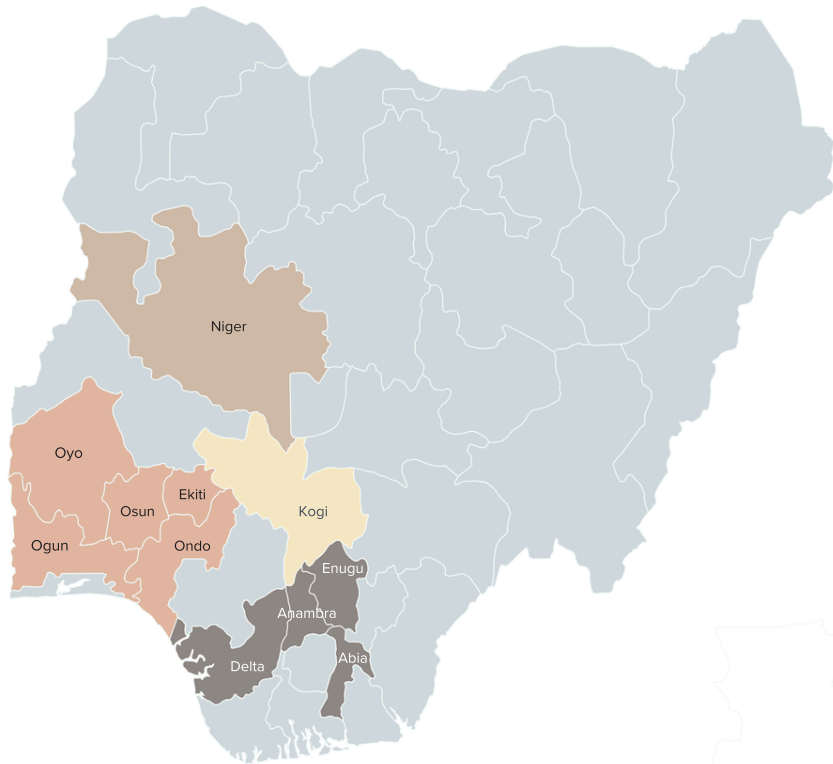
2023 IN DEPTH



Expanding our Impact in Nigeria



Above: Kabiru Abdulkareem, FEM's research and process manager, speaks to stakeholders. **Right:** State colour groupings indicate partners; Kogi was reached with a fourth organisation with whom we did not continue a partnership.



At the end of 2022, we completed proofs of concept in three new Nigerian states: Ondo, Kogi, and Anambra. These projects included 1-2 week campaigns reaching ~6.6 million, as well as focus groups and a stakeholder workshop.

This year, we tested our capacity to air content more widely. We ran 1-2 week campaigns reaching ~12.6 million new listeners in seven new states (Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Abia, Delta, Enugu, and Niger). This project established that we can co-implement with our our partners

beyond their home states.

We design content for three linguistic and cultural campaign regions:

- **the North**, where Hausa is mainly spoken and Islam is the dominant religion,
- **the South East**, where the Igbo language and Christianity predominate and
- **the South West**, where Yoruba is the most common language and there is a mix of Islam and Christianity.

2023 IN DEPTH



Research: Understanding our Audience



and blocks people who'd like to plan their families from using contraception. Our research revealed that many have misinformed fears about its effects.

One woman in Oyo shared, "There was a woman that did not want to get pregnant, and she was told to go for a family planning. After some years, her stomach started swelling. They tried to [help her] but that later killed her."

A woman in Anambra named a common fear of IUDs being lost: "Some say they put [the IUD] in and later it disappeared..."

Formative Audience Research

We conducted 176 in-depth interviews and 1,314 surveys with women and men in thirteen states, including health workers. We asked questions about drivers and barriers to contraception, media consumption, role models, and beliefs about childbirth spacing.

In addition to interviews, we conducted 13 mystery-client visits: research participants attended medical facilities as clients seeking reproductive health care, and reported on their experience.

We want to know both what motivates

The most commonly reported barriers related to side effects, such as the fear that contraception can cause infertility or cancer.

The most common motivation was caring well for children. Many women also named a desire to lower their stress and workload.

2023 IN DEPTH



RCT Preparation: Understanding our Impact



FEM's Lia Boldt and engineer Ibrahim-Jamilu Dahiru examine the technology UNITRONIC designed to identify and replace radio content, enabling RCT.

Evaluation Tech Innovation

Almost all past radio campaign evaluations were limited to designs that fail to isolate the effect of particular programmes from others. (These are pre-post or geographic exposure-based observational designs.)

To solve this challenge, we and our partner UNITRONIC developed a technology that identifies when our content is on air and replaces it with unrelated content. This enables us to randomise listeners into control and treatment groups, and run an RCT.

This year, we achieved a 97% replacement rate for 5 consecutive weeks with the third version of our evaluation technology, and manufactured 75 units.

Meet our Academic Partners



Dr Margaret McConnell - Assoc. Prof. Global Health Econ, Harvard Chan School - Principal Investigator or co-PI on 5+ RCTs



Dr Belinda Archibong - Asst. Prof. Economics, Columbia University - researches public service access in Nigeria



Dr John Marshall - Asst. Prof. Political Science, Columbia University - Principal Investigator on 10+ RCTs



Dr Dylan Groves - Asst. Prof. Political Science, Lafayette College - leads radio programme assessments in Africa

Our RCT will Answer:

- How do our campaigns impact contraceptive uptake?
- How do our campaigns affect attitudes toward family planning?
- Does impact persist a year later?

2023 IN DEPTH



Our First Steps to Impact in New Countries

We spent time researching our growth and how we can most effectively save and empower lives in the next five years. Our next steps? In 2024, we'll launch a pilot on a new health topic, and a family planning pilot in a new country.

Health topics - Charity Entrepreneurship (CE), the think-tank which incubated FEM, completed in-depth research on the most promising intervention ideas in mass media. Using their work as a launching pad, we are exploring campaigns on **intimate partner violence, child survival, and perinatal health.**

Countries - We selected **DRC, Chad, Niger, Ethiopia, and Uganda** from a review of African countries with populations of 20+ million. These countries were chosen based on family planning need, cost-effectiveness, and potential feasibility. We reviewed NGO applicants who would like to co-implement proofs of concept with us. We will select three locations in which to conduct exploratory campaigns to learn more about the opportunity and challenges of implementation.



EVALUATIONS



Founders Pledge, charity evaluator, estimated FEM's work in northern Nigeria to be 22x as effective as unconditional cash transfers, when considering the impact on maternal health – in a [research report](#) on mass media (summarised [here](#)).



Rethink Priorities conducted a [research project](#) on our work. They think previous models may underestimate our cost-effectiveness and that we may be as much as 60x as cost-effective as unrestricted cash transfers.

Foundation Partners

We're grateful for contributions from the foundations below, and from foundations and individuals not listed here. Thank you for making our impact possible.

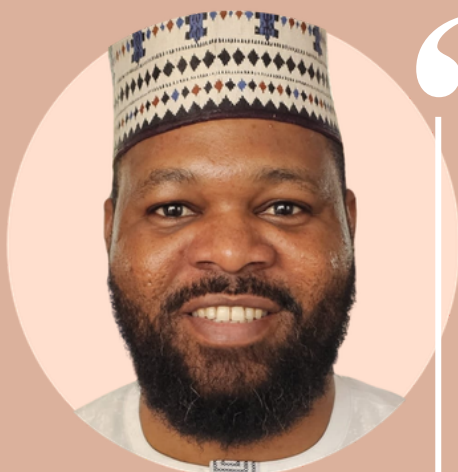


THE FEM TEAM



Back Row: FEM staff Kabiru Abdulkareem, Marion Seguin, Lia Boldt, and Usman Isyaku, and co-implementing partner Dr Charles Omeh

Front Row: Partners Dr Ireti Adesida, Samira Zakirai, Damilola Oluwadahun, FEM staff Harmony Hart, partner Dr Mansur Tukur Muhammad, FEM's director Anna Christina Thorsheim, partner Chidubem Ibeh, and FEM staff Tolulope Oyekanmi



“

This effort to create awareness for people to know where to access family planning, and why it is important, is, for me, a calling that I will never stop working on.

Dr Tukur Mansur Muhammad, iDevPro Africa,
FEM's partner in North Nigeria

”

THE FEM TEAM



“

I like the process, the intentionality, of trying to find out the values of our audience and their actual needs. For me personally it's been a huge learning experience. It's not enough just to put content out there, there is a process that should be involved so the content meets the right target audience and then there can be a change.

Damilola Oluwadahun, Rhealyz Africa,
FEM's partner in South West Nigeria

”

“

I strongly believe that family planning is the strongest tool for the elimination of poverty worldwide.

Dr Charles Omeh, Parkers Mobile Clinic,
FEM's partner in South East Nigeria

”



“

I know of a woman who had a very bad experience having so many children, I think she had six babies in six years. And eventually she had a ruptured womb and her womb had to be taken out. I think what we're doing is really very impactful. I'm really happy that we're changing people's perceptions of family planning.

Usman Isyaku,
FEM's Head of Research

”

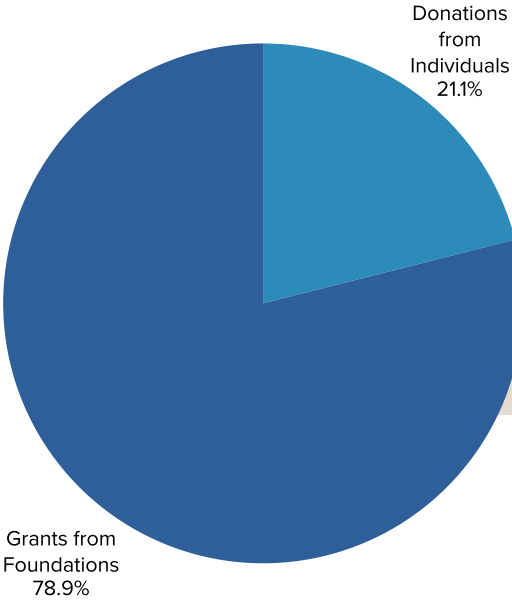
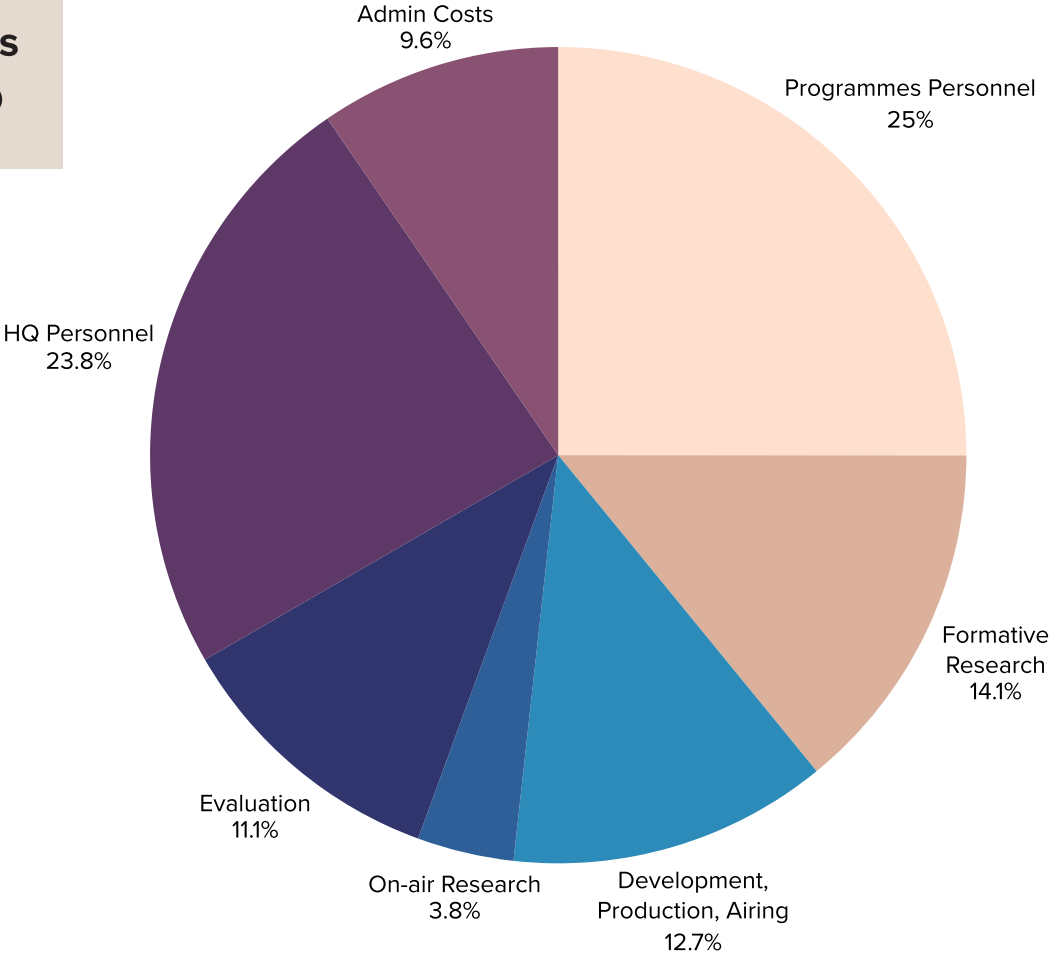


FINANCIALS: 2023

2023 Expenses 600,993 USD

Three legally independent entities constitute the project 'Family Empowerment Media.'

This financial snapshot depicts the project as a whole.



2023 Income 2,682,718 USD

Income is significantly higher than expenses due to fundraising for the RCT.



Family
Empowerment
Media



www.familyempowermentmedia.org