



Kick Out Meningitis: how football transformed community knowledge in northern Nigeria

In Yobe State, Nigeria, outbreaks of meningitis are common. Limited awareness and cultural beliefs mean that meningitis symptoms are often ignored or misunderstood until it's too late. Families rely on traditional remedies, and discussions about meningitis are rare. Recognising this gap, CoMO member [Roadmap for Women and Youth Development \(RAWYOD\)](#) launched the Kick Out Meningitis project using the CoMO World Meningitis Day 2025 Advocacy Fund. The goal was to spread life-saving awareness and change behaviours through creative community-driven activities such as sport, performance and dance.

The project

Running from August to October 2025, the project combined house-to-house outreach, educational entertainment activities and a football tournament to engage communities in two local government areas. RAWYOD also trained twenty “meningitis

champions”, selected for their strong community reputation and communication skills. These champions became vital to the campaign, visiting over 4,500 households to share information on symptoms, prevention and the importance of early treatment.

Organisation

Roadmap for Women and Youth Development (RAWYOD)

Background

Youth-led non-profit organisation that aims to protect women, youth and children's rights

Location

Nigeria



The football tournament was the project's centrepiece. During halftime, meningitis champions delivered health talks to the audience while banners and jerseys carried key meningitis messages. This creative approach ensured that even those who

avoided traditional health meetings were reached in an environment they loved. Sixteen youth teams competed, attracting thousands of spectators.

Complementary activities included cultural dance performances in markets and schools, town hall meetings with traditional leaders and community dialogues to address myths and vaccine hesitancy.

Impact and outcomes

The project reached:

- 10,876 people through the football tournament.
- 10,345 people via educational entertainment activities.
- 4,565 households through door-to-door sensitisation.
- Over 5,000 listeners through radio jingles.

These efforts led to measurable longer-term improvements in knowledge and behaviour. Pre- and post-engagement quizzes showed increased understanding of meningitis symptoms and prevention. Health workers have started reporting families seeking care earlier.

Stories of change

Behind the statistics are powerful human stories. Aminu Adamu, a youth champion, shared:

“Before the project, I only knew meningitis as a sickness that kills quickly. After RAWYOD trained us, I learned how to explain symptoms and prevention clearly to my community. The football tournament helped us reach people who never attend health talks. Today, many families now recognise early signs and seek care quickly.”

In Jakusko, community leader Alhaji Musa Babayo recalled:

“Our community rarely discussed meningitis and many believed it was caused by spiritual forces. The town hall meeting changed that. Survivors shared their stories and people understood that meningitis is real and preventable.”

One success story illustrates the project’s life-saving potential. During the football event, a young man learned about meningitis symptoms. When his brother developed a high fever and neck stiffness, he insisted on seeking medical help immediately. The boy



was diagnosed early and treated successfully. This project didn’t just advocate for meningitis awareness, it even saved a life.

The role of the Advocacy Fund

This project would not have been possible at this scale without the World Meningitis Day Advocacy Fund. It enabled RAWYOD to produce culturally appropriate educational materials, organise large-scale events and train champions effectively. As RAWYOD noted, the fund transformed a local initiative into a high-impact campaign, amplifying reach and improving engagement.

Looking ahead

RAWYOD plans to sustain momentum through self-funded activities and support from the FIFA Foundation. Future initiatives will continue house-to-house outreach and football tournaments, aiming to reach over 10,000 individuals.

Further resources

 <https://rawyod.org/>

 [Facebook page](#)

Contacts

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The Advocacy Fund offers a unique platform to amplify your organisation’s impact, showcase your capacity, and connect with global meningitis advocates. Your initiative could be the spark that inspires change, uplifts communities and leaves a lasting legacy in the fight against meningitis.

Kachalla Bukar Mustapha, Executive Director

