

Tackling trachoma in a tough environment

Over the last decade, conflict has meant that running rural outreach eye clinics in Nigeria has been increasingly challenging. CBM are present in four states of Nigeria – see map below – three of which are located in the north eastern region where there is ongoing political instability. This causes many difficulties when it comes to providing medical treatment.



Travel routes are disrupted, and the supply of clean water or electricity is often disturbed. When fleeing violence, people tend to group together for physical safety, but this means that infectious diseases can spread easily from person to person. Despite the conflict, the joint population of the four states where CBM works is 20 million, and conditions like trachoma are threatening to steal the sight of thousands of people. **They need help, before it is too late.**



Trachoma is a bacterial infection of the eyes, often spread by flies, or person-to-person contact. Repeated infections lead to scarring and turning of the eyelids inwards until the lashes scrape the cornea causing blindness.

Trachoma disproportionately affects people who are poor; which is aggravated by poor hygiene, a lack of clean water and sanitation and the impossibility – for most people living in poverty and conflict – of affording healthcare.

Notably, the infection is most prevalent amongst women and children, who are often at home together during the day, meaning the disease can spread quickly through contact. In the same way, trachoma spreads quickly in crowded conditions, such as those experienced by refugees and families sharing bedding.

Mal. Hafizu Rabiou is a Community Health Worker in Kano State, Nigeria, West Africa. Here he speaks about why he is involved in our work to eliminate trachoma; a disease threatening to steal the sight of thousands of our fellow Nigerians:



"I have a diploma in Community Health and an advanced diploma in Health and Social Science Management. I work on the Health and Development Support Programme (HANDS).

I had always wanted to help my community in any way that I could by finding solutions to the many health challenges we have. Since this work is about helping people, I decided I would be part of it.

I enjoy doing the work: giving health education and giving people medicines for conditions including trachoma. I also reach my community members and educate them on the dangers of dirty environments."

The work of Mal. Hafizu Rabiou's team relies on the help that friends like you can give, through CBM, to find men, women and children in remote areas who need sight saving surgery, antibiotics and advice on facial cleansing to prevent re-infection.

You've helped us to achieve so much – but there are many more who need your help

From April 2018 to March 2019, CBM's work in two states has contributed to:

- 2,635 patients receiving trachoma eyelid surgery to save their sight
- Training of 14 trachoma surgeons and 28 surgery assistants. An additional 13 surgeons received extra training so more people can receive operations and exemplary care
- Three new Project Supervisors to coordinate trachoma outreach activities, ensuring that those in the most remote places find out about and reach help
- Conducting three outreaches to deliver surgery and other treatment
- 1,372 people receiving trachoma case-finder training, meaning that community teams know how to identify and refer people who need treatment
- 382 patients having eyelash epilation, which removed eyelashes in the short term to prevent further scraping of the cornea and manage pain

Despite the achievements we have been able to make thanks to the generosity of CBM supporters, there is so much more to be done if we are to address the enormous backlog of people who need surgery.