

Medical students’ role in improving access to safe abortion care in Nigeria

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Background: Nigeria is described as a “youthful population” with 43% of her population being between the ages of 0- 14 years and 33% within 10-24 years of age¹. The burden of SRHR problems amongst Nigeria's youthful population is high. Unsafe abortion disproportionately affects youths and adolescents due to several factors including lack of knowledge and access to safe abortion care. The role of medical students in bridging the deficit of information and access to regarding sexual reproductive health and rights including safe abortion care is yet to be explored in Nigeria.

Objective:
To describe the process evaluation of the RCOG-Making Abortion Safe - Nigerian Champions Network collaborations with the Nigerian Medical Students Association (NIMSA) to build their capacity and improve their understanding of a rights-based approach to abortion and post-abortion care in Nigeria.

Methodology:
Process evaluation was conducted using structured observations, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and activity logs along the following themes: fidelity, knowledge of medical students on abortion and other SRHR related issues, values about abortion, established collaborations/partnerships, medical outreaches/advocacy related activities, possible enhancers, and barriers to achieving intended project objectives.

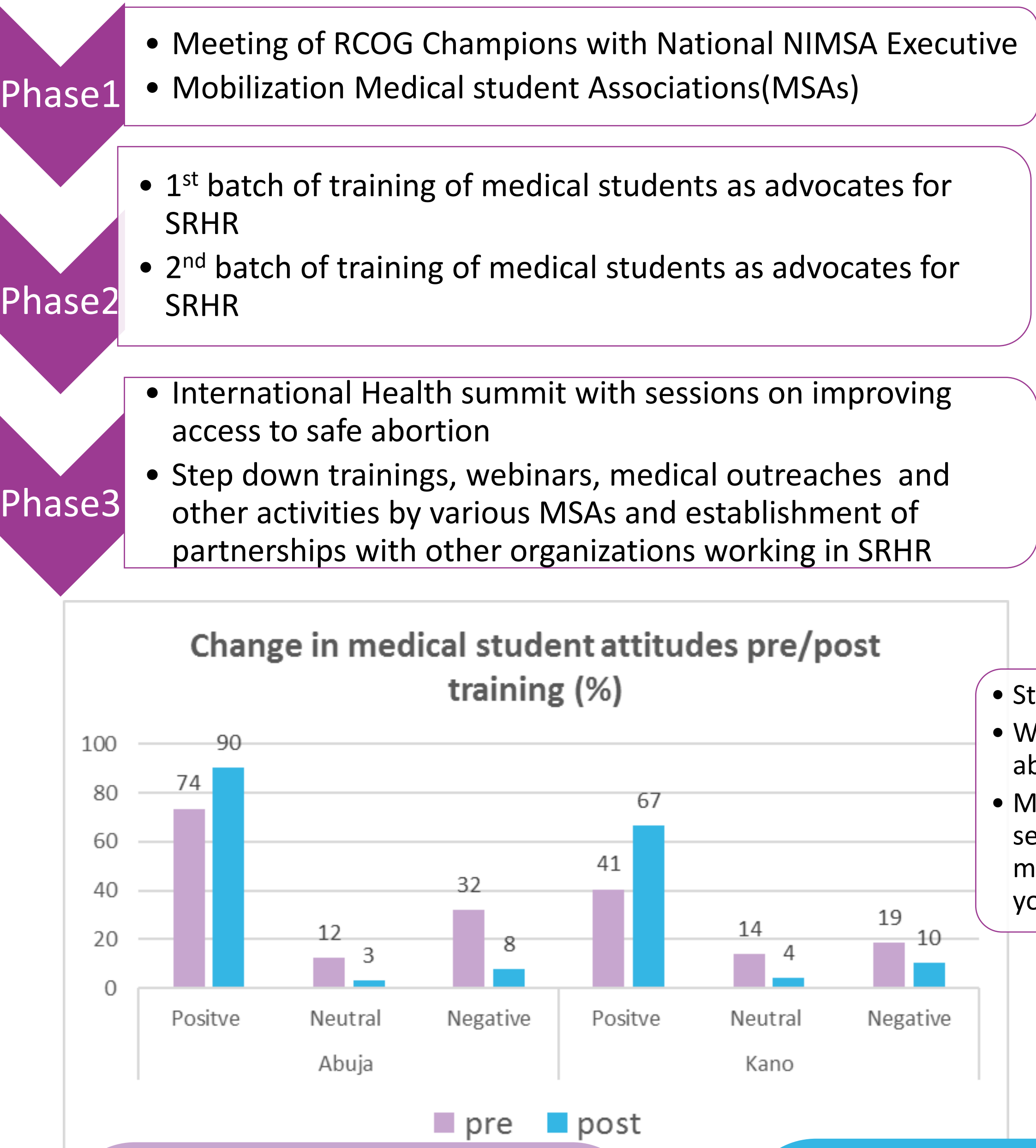
Training workshops:
Three days in-person training workshop on the role of medical students as advocates for SRHR with emphasis on safe abortion care and values clarifications on abortion were conducted at 2 separate workshops venues(Kano and Abuja) for 37 medical students from 14 medical schools in Nigeria . Pre and post-tests as well as a 21 items from the Stigmatising Attitudes, Behaviors and Actions Scale (SABAS)² on issues relating to abortion were used to evaluate participants knowledge and change in values regarding abortion respectively after the workshop.

- Results**
- The overall mean pre and post knowledge tests showed marked improvement in scores with a mean pretest and post test scores of 68.1% and 87.1% respectively and range of 36.7%-83.8% (pretest score) and 75.9%-98.7% (post test score).
 - Following the training students had more positive views on abortion with biggest shifts in attitudes seen away from believing a woman needs her husband's permission in Abuja (-47%) and abortion being available to girls to enable them to remain in school in Kano (+67%).
 - Training and presentations on improving access to safe abortion, contraception, and medical students as advocates for SRHR formed a key component of the NIMSA international Health Summit in September,2022. World contraception day and World Unsafe abortion Day were celebrated by NIMSA and two National webinars on burden of unsafe abortion and prevention were organized by NIMSA .
 - Two regional webinars and medical outreaches have also been conducted.
 - A partnership has also been established between the medical student’s association and three international NGOs working in reproductive health in Nigeria.

SRHR Champion
Godwin Akaba
facilitating student
activities at NIMSA



Figure 1:Phases of implementation of activities



Conclusions

Medical students have potentials of becoming future SRHR champions if provided with the necessary trainings and supports.

Medical Students involvement as peer educators and advocates for SRHR on University Campuses could be beneficial towards improving youths access to SRHR services including safe abortion care in Nigeria

The RCOG-MAS Nigeria Champions Network objective of collaborating with Medical Students Associations is on track towards realizing the intended outcomes.

Making Abortion Safe

RCOG's global initiative to advocate for women's health

Figure 2: Fidelity assessment components

