

TRANSLATING MEDICAL FLYERS FROM MODERN LANGUAGES INTO NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH FOR GRASS ROOT SENSITIZATION: STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN ACCURACY AND SIMPLICITY

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Abstract

The choice of an appropriate language for communication is a cardinal stage in social mobilization and particularly sensitization campaigns staged in rural Nigeria. In line with this, most health sensitization campaigns organized in rural Nigeria have been based on the utilization of vernacular and vehicular languages which theoretically have greater expansion in rural zones. Furthermore, translation/interpretation into vernaculars has often represented a strategy to ensure the success of these sensitization efforts. However, translating/interpreting from modern languages to vernaculars is often complex, demanding the translator to achieve both simplicity and accuracy; meanwhile, efforts to achieve the first (simplicity) often affect the latter (accuracy). Simplicity in translation often leads to a loss as part of the notional content of the source text is often left untranslated or “deleted”. This paper seeks to illustrate this phenomenon using the translation of some medical flyers from English to Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). The paper explores the limitations of the theory of translation by simplification showing how difficult it may be for technical and relatively scientific lexicons to be transposed in vernacular or vehicular languages.

Keywords: Indigenous Languages, Grassroots Sensitization, Accuracy, Translation by Simplification.

Résumé

Le choix d'une langue appropriée pour la communication, il s'agit d'une étape cruciale dans la mobilisation sociale et particulièrement dans les campagnes de sensibilisation organisées en milieu rural au Nigeria. Dans cette optique, la plupart des campagnes de sensibilisation à la santé organisées dans les zones rurales au Nigeria se sont appuyées sur l'utilisation des langues vernaculaires et des langues véhiculaires qui ont théoriquement une plus grande expansion dans les zones rurales. En outre, la traduction/l'interprétation en langues vernaculaires a souvent représenté une stratégie pour assurer le succès de ces efforts de sensibilisation. Cependant, traduire/interpréter des langues modernes vers les langues vernaculaires est souvent complexe, exigeant du traducteur qu'il atteigne à la fois la simplicité et la précision ; en même temps, les efforts pour atteindre la première (simplicité) affectent souvent la dernière (précision). La simplicité dans la traduction conduit souvent à une perte car une partie du contenu

notionnel du texte source est souvent laissée non traduite ou "supprimée". Cet article cherche à illustrer ce phénomène en utilisant la traduction de certains dépliants médicaux de l'anglais vers le pidgin nigérian (NPE). L'article explore les limites de la théorie de la traduction par simplification en montrant à quel point il peut être difficile de transposer des lexiques techniques et relativement scientifiques en langues vernaculaires ou véhiculaires.

Mots-clés: Langues indigènes, Sensibilisation de base, Exactitude, Traduction par simplification.

Introduction

Rural sensitization campaigns organized in Nigeria like in many Black African countries are bound to have robust linguistic components, given the fact that the choice of the appropriate (*vernacular language or dialect or indigenous language*) to use in such context has always been key to effective communication and mobilization. In effect, research has proved that, though a status symbol, English is hardly – nay, has never been – a vehicular language in rural Nigeria (Ugot 2010). An obvious implication of indigenizing the Naija language is that the orthography or writing system may be made complex to and consequently, resisted by the average user. It is somehow observable that the Press Orthography which is anglicized in nature is, for the moment, more popular than the SNO (Standard Naija Orthography). This can be seen in most if not all print media messages formulated in Nigerian Pidgin in the country, therefore many at the grassroots most often prefer communication in their vernacular languages or in Pidgin English, partly because of their low level of literacy as well as because Nigerian Pidgin English has since risen to the status of a lingua franca in all parts of the country (Inyang 2016, 2017).

In view of this, many Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and other civil society organizations involved in rural development projects have resorted to such strategies as multilingualism and translation into specific vernacular/vehicular and Pidgin English considering using concise language during their rural sensitization campaigns. Consequently, during their campaigns, these Non-Governmental Organizations and Government agencies most often conceived their strategic communications (flyers, billboards, information leaflets, and

radio/TV jingles among others) primordially in English before translating them into Pidgin English or in specific vernaculars, based on the visions, objectives or targets of their campaigns as well as on the specific grassroots they are covering. Thus, translation/interpretation into vernaculars has often represented an imperative and strategic action aimed at ensuring the success of these sensitization efforts (Enemaku 2001, Salawu 2003).

However, though indispensable, translating/interpreting from modern linguistic codes to vernacular/vehicular African languages has always been a very complex exercise. This complexity is highlighted by Adetugbo, particularly with respect to literary translation:

As a foreign language does not have a one-to-one correspondence with the native writer's native language, how much translation may the writer do from his native language into English language [...] And assuming that the writer's mastery of English language comes close to the English native speaker's [...] how far can he transfer wholesale his non-English experience into English language's mode of thought and expression? And how much can be conformed to the conventions of forms and style in English literature without falsifying the native experience he is relating. (Cited in Evuline, 2014).

As suggested in Adetugbo's remark, translating from modern languages to vernacular languages involves the herculean task of transferring a non-indigenous experience (notably pure scientific concepts) into the indigenous language's mode of thought and expression. Another difficulty involved in this typology of translation has to do

with the fact that the translator is compelled to achieve both simplicity and accuracy; meanwhile, efforts to achieve the first (simplicity) often affect the latter (accuracy). Therefore, Simplicity in translation refers to the process of conveying complex ideas, concepts, or messages in a clear, concise, and easily understandable manner, by minimizing unnecessary complexity, avoiding technical, or specialized terms or jargon terms that might confuse the target audience and ensuring that the translation is free from ambiguity; also by adapting the translation to the cultural context of the target audience, considering their values, norms and expectations (Inyang & Iwunze 2019). Simplicity in translation process often leads to a loss as part of the notional or ideological content of the source text is often left un-translated or subtly “deleted”, translators must balance the need for accuracy and ensure that the message is conveyed correctly and effectively. This paper seeks to illustrate this phenomenon using the translation of some medical flyers, from English to Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) otherwise called Naija (Inyang, 2016, 2018). The paper explores the limitations of the theory of translation by simplification showing how difficult it may be for technical and relatively scientific lexicons to be transposed in vernacular or vehicular languages.

Translation into Nigerian Pidgin Vernacular / English Vehicular Languages in Nigeria: A Linguistic Revolution

Translating into local languages for sustainable development projects as well as for rural sensitization campaigns is one of the manifestations of a strong linguistic revolution which for some decades now, is observed in Nigeria and which has relatively been favorable to Nigerian indigenous languages. In effect, it is more and more visible that many social and political institutions in the Nigerian Federation have these last years embarked on multiple types of cultural and linguistic activism in favor of indigenous Nigerian languages. According to Inyang (2016) Language associations such as the Naija Language Akamemi and the National Institute for Nigerian Languages have created to systematically promote the survival, use and expansion of Nigerian vernaculars and vehicular tongues in the

Federation. In line with this, laudable concepts such as education in mother tongue, the development of literature in vernacular languages, the effective integration of Nigerian indigenous languages in school curriculums and translation into vernaculars have seriously gained currency in the country.

Thus, translation into vernacular and vehicular languages have for some decades now been viewed as a working tool susceptible to facilitate the promotion of Nigerian languages, their development as well as education in them. Of recent, there have been countless movements to translate both literary texts and school textbooks into vernacular languages to enable teaching in local Nigerian languages. A case in point is Benue State Universal Basic Education Board’s initiative to translate science textbooks into Tiv, Idoma and Egede languages, in order to promote and institute teaching mathematics and other science subjects in these languages (*Premium Magazines*, 2017). Therefore, in tandem with this, there have been various efforts to translate the Nigerian Constitution into dominant national languages such as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, in order to facilitate socio-political movements such as participatory democracy and human right education among indigenous peoples who are not literate in English (Emanajo, 2003 & Egudu, 1999).

Translation into vehicular and vernacular languages has not only been notable in the academic and political domains since many Nigerian business enterprises have now resorted to translating some of their commercial messages (product package, and print adverts) into languages such as Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. More and more companies translate their commercial into Nigerian Pidgin English, this visibly to increase their base of customers. In his study titled “the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in Print Advertising”, Endong (2015) documents such efforts. He notes that translation into Nigerian Pidgin English in particular is central to the success of mass mobilization campaigns in urban as well as in rural Nigeria, given the tremendous expansion of the language. It is therefore logical that most rural mobilization campaigns organized

in Nigeria consider translation into vehicular languages such as Nigerian Pidgin English as an indispensable strategy and a condition for effective communication.

Translating for Rural Sensitization Programs: A Theoretical Perspective

Rural mobilization and sensitization campaigns from time immemorial, was organized in Black African countries including Nigeria have most often involved intra or inter lingual translation. One easily remembers that the early Christian missionary bodies which covered and penetrated specific areas of pre-colonial and colonial Africa saw themselves compelled to integrate translation/interpretation into their movements. Interpretation in this specific missionary context used to help bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps between the missionaries' messages and local idiosyncrasies thereby facilitating effective communication of spiritual messages as well as the massive conversion of various publics within African villages. Like early missionaries, most civil society organizations as well as government agencies today resort to translation as a very vital component of their intervention and mobilization campaigns in rural Africa. In Nigeria most specifically, translation has often permitted communication strategies initially designed in English to be transcoded and shaped in a way that will be understood by the grassroots masses. Most Non-Governmental Organizations and government bodies involved in sustainable development projects in the rural areas of the country have thus tended to translate their flyers, posters, information leaflets and billboard into local vernaculars or vehicular languages in a bid to render their communication as effective and fruitful as possible (Salawu, 2003).

A common practice observed in these translation efforts has been the adoption of various theories which have some strong connections with language simplification and pragmatism. It is in view of this fact that it will be helpful to analyze the act of translating into vernacular languages for rural sensitization programs within the framework of the popular – but arguable – theory of Translation by Simplification, a theory propounded as from 1950 by such international

non-governmental organizations as INADES-FORMATION (an inter-African development organization) and UNESCO.

As conceived by the two above mentioned bodies, translation by simplification could be performed in both intra lingual and inter-lingual context. In intra-lingual situation it entails translating by reducing the level of language in a way as to render the message comprehensible by semi-literate or people who do not have sufficient command of the language. This typology of translation by simplification could be illustrated by *Radio France Internationale's* "news in easy French" (*Journal en français facile*) which technically involves the translation of the content of normal edition of news shows over the station (Inyang, 2016). In the inter-lingual context, translation by simplification rather entails translating from European languages into indigenous African languages, revising the two superficial components of the target language namely vocabulary and syntax. As noted by INADES-INFORMATION (1986) simplification in this context has to do with the transformation of the two elements responsible for complexity of any language: vocabulary and syntax. Such simplification thus entails the reworking of the whole source-text message paying particular attention to the following principles:

- i. The style adopted in the simplified text should be correct
- ii. The style used in the simplified text should maintain the tone used in the source text
- iii. The easy language employed in the simplified text should be as close as possible to spoken language
- iv. The meaning and logical arrangement of clauses should be graded
- v. The temporal relationships should be restituted
- vi. Trivial and extremely informal expressions are to be proscribed
- vii. The rhythm and euphony of the source-text should be respected in the target text

According to Seleskovic and Lederer (1984), interpretative method, the translation by simplification paradigm involves the extraction of the message contained in the source text and its

subsequent re-expression in the target language. The re-expression here, is done like in oral expression context. The paradigm could thus be said to have three steps: analysis, simplification and restructuration. An illustration of simplification could be seen in the following example given by INADES-FORMATION (1986): “illiteracy is a violation of human right” which is translated according to the theory as follows: “if you wish your brother to be a man in future, teach him how to read and write”. The source text presented in this context is simple but some of the terms used in it (notably illiteracy and violation of human rights) are abstract. The terms are thus simplified in the target text through the process paraphrasing. The example given above shows that translation by simplification may involve intra-lingual translation as a primordial step. In other words, before re-structuring the text in the target language, its content is first of all re-structured in the source language.

It is important at this juncture to underscore the fact that the presence of technical and scientific terms in the source text may warrant additional (sub-)stages in the simplification process inherent in the translation by simplification method (Adila 2013; Ndhlovu, 2014). According to Ilboudo (cited by Adila, 2013), terminological simplification can help resolve translation difficulties emanating from technical and scientific terms. Such terminological simplification should be organized in three stages namely: terminological search, the sampling and the pre-test of neologisms.

- i. **Terminological search:** This task could be done in three ways (a) by consulting monolingual members of the community who is beneficiary of the translation, (b) by consulting members of the community which are both literate in the vernacular language (the target language) and are specialists in the area to which the scientific terminology under study belongs.
- ii. **Sampling of neologisms:** This stage occurs when the terminological search has enabled the collection of many terms. The sampling enables the translator to choose

the most appropriate term to refer to the scientific or technical term under study. Such sampling is guided by the following principles: (a) the chosen term should be in conformity with the structure of the target language, (b) the new term should notionally be adequate, in other words, it should closely cover the semantic sphere of the term to be translated thereby disabling mistranslations (of the term) (c) the new term should easily be understood and be acceptable by the members of the community which is benefiting from the translation and (d) the term should be as brief as possible.

- iii. **The pre-texting of the Neologisms:** here the translator does a pilot test to see if the new term satisfies the four criteria enunciated in the above-mentioned stage.

As earlier mentioned, translation by simplification has several weaknesses. This is despite its suitability in context where complex notions are to be transmitted to semi-literate or people who are exclusively literate in their mother tongue. The main weakness of the translation by simplification method lies in the fact that it sometimes creates rooms for the oversimplification of the source text message, a process which is never immune from notional and stylistic loss. Adila underscores some of the strengths and weaknesses of this paradigm when he insightfully notes that:

One wonders whether the simplification of the vocabulary and sentence structure used in the text does not affect the quality of the source text and language [...] A misogynous simplification often constitutes a transformation of the original message [...] It can equally be regarded as an attempt to belittle the target public. Some of the principle guiding translation by simplification are vague and confusing and even raise issues bordering the moral and ethical responsibility of the translator. An example is the principle stipulating that trivial and informal expressions should be proscribed. One is left to wonder if such proscription is normally supposed

to be within the latitudes of the translator. Does the translator have the right to omit certain parts of the text under the guise that it contains trivial expressions? By the way, what makes an expression trivial? Is such a principle not running contrarily to the golden rule of the translation by simplification paradigm which states that the translator

has no right to add or subtract something from the content of the text?

[My translation]¹

The imminence of notional loss in the context of translation by simplification will be illustrated in the subsequent portion of this discourse, through a critical analysis of several translations from English to Nigerian Pidgin English.

Analysis of the Translation of Selected Posters Conceived for Health Sensitization

Table 1: Translation Errors caused by simplification

Title of the Poster	No	Extract in SL	Extract in TL (errors)	Solution/Observation
Measles Sickness	1	Get your children protected from measles sickness	Give your pickin correct body guard against Measles sickness. .	Problematic use of metaphor
	2	Measles Vaccine is free, safe and saves life	Measles melecine na free, e good and dey save pickin life	Use of term with reduced semantic sphere
	3	Vaccinate all children from 9 months to 5 years against Measles at health facilities or vaccination posts near to you	Give all pickin wey don reach 9 months to 5 years melecine against Measles for di vaccination post wey dey near you.	Omission of terms
	4	Measles can be prevented with a vaccine which is free and available at vaccination posts [...]	You fit give Measles red card with the melecine (vaccine) wey e be free and e dey di hospital [...]	Problematic use of metaphor
VAS Vitamin A	5	Vitamin A Supplementation (VAS) is good for your child's eye sight and health .	VAS good for pickin eye and e go make am grow wel wel .	Notional loss

¹ On peut se demander si la simplification du vocabulaire et de la structure du texte n'appauvrit pas le texte source et la langue source [...] Une telle simplification misogyne constitue une transformation du message original [...] Elle peut également être perçue comme une infantilisation du public cible. Certains principes la traduction par la simplification semblent vagues et confus et posent même la question de responsabilité morale et éthique du traducteur. Par exemple, le principe

selon lequel sont à proscrire les expressions triviales ou trop familières est-il du ressort du traducteur ? Le traducteur a-t-il le droit d'omettre des parties du texte sous le prétexte qu'il comporte des expressions triviales ? Qu'est-ce qu'une expression triviale ? Un tel principe ne va-t-il pas à l'encontre de la règle d'or de la traduction par la simplification qui consiste à « ne rien ajouter au sens d'un texte et ne rien lui enlever » ? (p.107-108)

	6	VAS is available at the nearest health facility every six month during MNCH weeks.	VAS dey health center near u.	Syntactic reduction
	7	VAS is free.	Dem no dey collect money.	Abstractness is effectively surmounted
<i>MhSUN Advert</i>	8	Do you have fits	Abi you dey fall shake for ground	Notional loss
<i>Cross River State Free Health Care Programme for Pregnant women & children under 5 years</i>	9	[...] free	Make una no pay money	Abstractness is effectively surmounted.

The analysis presented in this section of the paper is the result of a critique of Pidgin English translations of 4 strategic communications used by some Government agencies to sensitize rural publics in Nigeria (Images in Appendix). The strategic communications bordered on such issues as immunization, distribution of curatives and hygiene and sanitation imperatives. Though translation criticism is not limited exclusively to the negative side of a translation, the present work focuses particularly on how the use of simplification in a translation process could affect the source language message. This is so as the focus of the paper – as enunciated in the introductory part of this discourse – is to see the extent to which simplification in translation could be compatible with fidelity to the source text. The thesis considered from the onset is that translation by simplification creates a situation in which one needs to strike a balance between accuracy and simplicity. Meanwhile, efforts to achieve the latter often affect the former (accuracy).

Table 1 below provides several instances where accuracy was affected in the course of translation. As shown in the table, one way by which Pidgin English translators sought to simplify the message for rural masses was to choose simpler vocabularies which, in terms of semantic sphere, are “unfortunately” not equivalent to the terms used in the source text. Egregious examples include instance No 2 and 5. In the first instance (No 2), the translator uses the term “Measles melecine” as an equivalent of

“Measles vaccine”. It should be underlined that the Pidgin term “melecine” has a larger semantic sphere compared to “vaccine”. “Melecine” means drugs or any substance used in curing sicknesses. This is somehow different from vaccine which is used as preventive and which could be associated with a proactive approach to dealing with sickness. Similarly, in example No 5, the English term “child’s health” has a larger semantic sphere compared to “e go make am grow wel wel” (which exclusively makes reference to child’s growth). The source text makes allusion to the medicinal virtues of VAS which could enable the child be in good health and not only to grow in good health”. The examples cited here illustrate the fact that by wanting to simplify the translators are sometimes tempted to reduce the semantic spheres of the terms given in the source text.

Another questionable technique of simplification used by translators have been to change abstract terms to concrete ones, sometimes by using metaphors which could rather be complex for the readers of the source text. Good examples are given in instances 1 and 4. In example No. 1, the translator translates the expression “get protected” by “give correct body guard” visibly in an attempt to overcome the abstractness of the source language text. Although stylistically remarkable, this technique gives birth to a relatively ambiguous coinage as it subtly personifies “Measles” and may conjure physical danger. In other words, some Pidgin users may think the Measles immunization campaign is all

about getting protected against a concrete physical threat. In example No 4, the same scenario occurs with the translation of “Measles can be prevented” by the phrase “give Measles red card” (which literally could mean “brandish a red card against Measles”). It goes without saying that this translation is inspired by approaches to refereeing football matches and may easily be understood by connoisseurs of football practices. However, “Measles” is here again personified, and such a personification may be source of ambiguity. Besides, using the metaphor of “red card” to mean prevention could relatively be obscure for a public not versed with football refereeing. The faulty assumption made by the translator here is that all his reader (target text readers) are automatically versed with football terminologies or vocabularies.

Furthermore, one underlines the use of simplification techniques consisting in reducing sentences from a syntactic point of view. This is seen in examples No. 3 and 6. In example No. 6 more precisely, this reduction causes a serious omission which really affects the source text message. In effect, the phrase “every six months during MNCH² weeks” is totally omitted in the translation meanwhile this segment of the instruction is important. In example No. 3, the term “health facility” is similarly omitted in the translation. It may difficult to really capture the motivation of the translators in these two instances – that is the justification for their translational choices. However, it remains certain that their model of simplification reduces the notional content of the source text message.

It is important to underline that, though simplification – as used in the translations under study – has not always affected the notational content of the source text message. In some instances, it has rather help translator surmount translation problems bordering the abstract nature of terms. For instance, in examples No. 7 and 9, one easily sees that the abstract term “free” is surmounted by a form of simplification – or rather

paraphrasing – which enables the target text to be more comprehensible to an average Pidgin user.

Conclusion

The choice of an appropriate language – for communication – is a cardinal stage in social mobilization and particularly sensitization campaigns staged in rural Nigeria. In line with this, most health sensitization campaigns organized in rural Nigeria have been based on the utilization of vernacular and vehicular languages which theoretically have greater expansion in rural zones. Furthermore, translation/interpretation into vernaculars has often represented a strategy to ensure the success of these sensitization efforts. However, translating/interpreting from modern languages to vernaculars is often complex, demanding the translator to achieve both simplicity and accuracy; meanwhile, efforts to achieve the first (simplicity) often affect the latter (accuracy). Simplicity in translation often leads to a loss as part of the notional content of the source text is often left un-translated or “deleted”. This paper has illustrated this phenomenon using the translation of some medical flyers from English to Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE).

The paper has explored the limitations of the theory of translation by simplification showing how difficult it may be for technical and relatively scientific lexicons to be transposed in vernacular or vehicular languages. It has illustrated various ways in which translation by simplification can cause notional lost and thus lead to infidelity to the message of the source text. It therefore appears that translation by simplification is a double edge sword which, on one hand, can enable the source text to be transcoded in a way that semi-literate will fully understand and on the other hand, lead to misinformation that may, in some sense, reduce the effectiveness of rural sensitization campaigns. May be the effectiveness of translation by simplification will depend on the model of simplification each translator chooses to use.

² MNCH stands for Maternal and New Born Child Health Week.

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APPENDIX

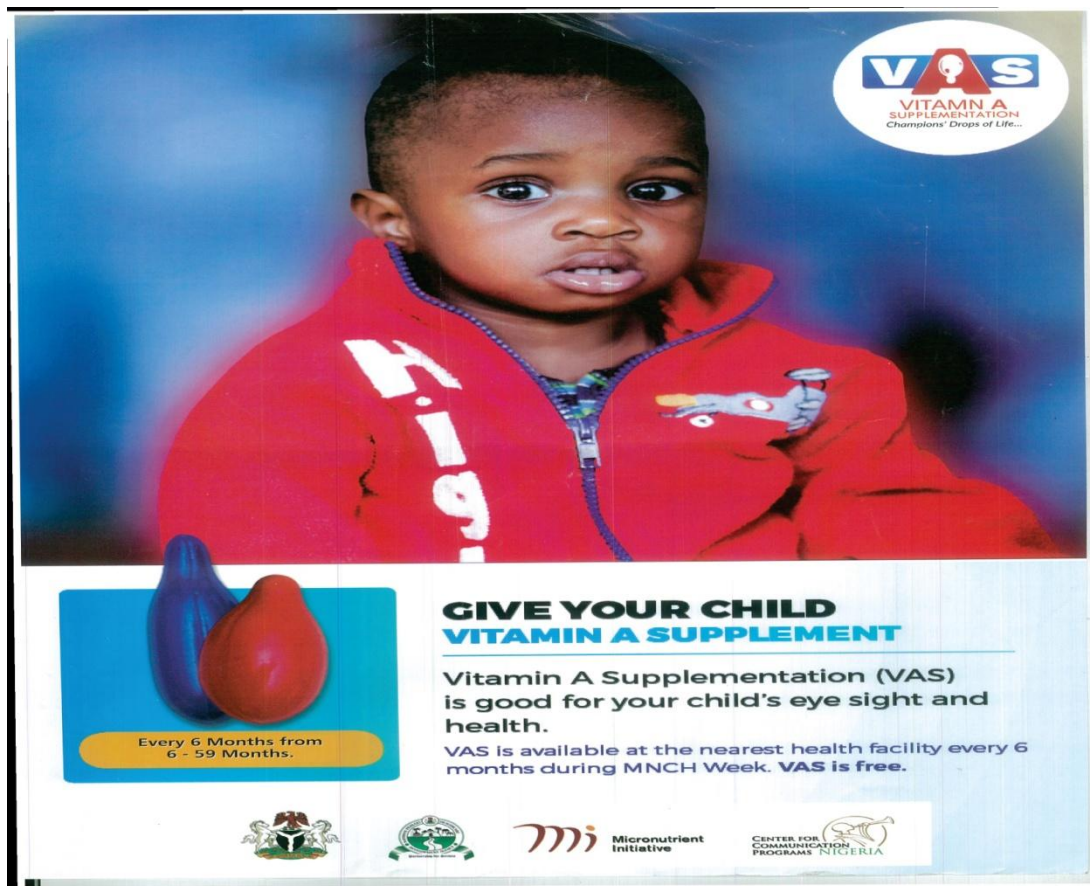
Images of Flyers used for Health Sensitization



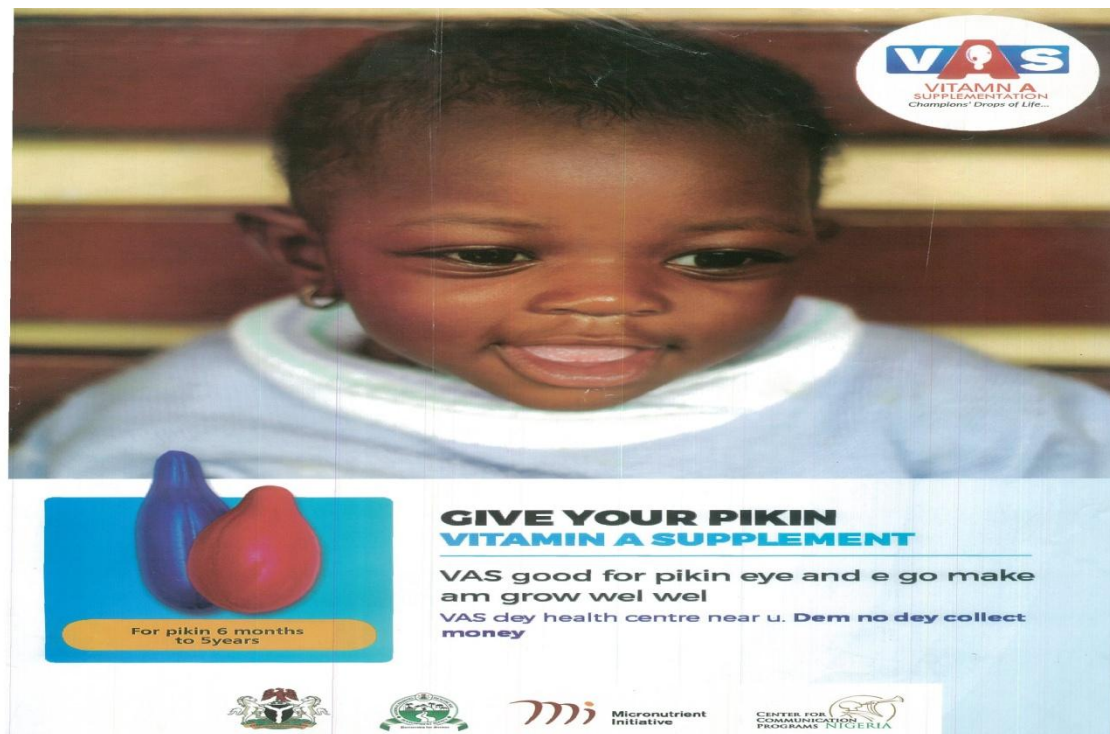
1. Measles Advert (English Version)



2. Measles Ad (Pidgin English Version)



3. VAS Advert (English Version)



4. VAS Advert (Pidgin English Version)



5. mhSUN Advert (English Version)

Destination Cross River
The Nation's Paradise

mhSUN
Mental Health Service Unit of Nigeria

- ⇒ **You get wahala for sleep?**
- ⇒ **To Chop be wahala for you?**
- ⇒ **You dey worry every time?**
- ⇒ **You get problem for thinking?**
- ⇒ **You dey quick tire when you do small work**
- ⇒ **You dey hear or see things wey another person no dey see or hear?**
- ⇒ **Abi you dey fall shake for ground**

Help dey for here oo

CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH

EPILEPSY PSYCHOSIS DEPRESSION

6. mhSUN Advert (Pidgin Version)

CROSS RIVER STATE FREE HEALTH CARE PROGRAMME FOR PREGNANT WOMEN & CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS

- ✱ **Free treatment** (Don com Oll Na for women wey carry babies and children wey never reach 5 years..)
- ✱ **Pregnant Women, make una go put name for hospital or Health Center . Go for check up till una born pikin.**
- ✱ **Mama and papa, carry una pikin wey never reach 5 years go Health Center or Hospital, make una no pay money for treatment oh!**
- ✱ **Parents, treatment for your children under 5 years is FREE. Take them to the Health Center or Hospital nearest to you.**
- ✱ **The Health Facility is open for 24 hours!**
- ✱ **Health Workers are available - 24 hours!**
- ✱ **Mothers deliver your babies in the nearest Health Facility.**

Cross River State Government through The Ministries for Social Welfare and Health de Support dis free Health Care.

- *No Pay for Medicine*
- *No Pay for anything*

Every service is FREE

Designed & Printed by Gamis Ventures, 21 Edgerly Road, Calabar

7. Cross River Free Health Care Advert (Bilingual)