



HEALTH REFORM FOUNDATION OF NIGERIA

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MR PRESIDENT

AN APPEAL TO MR. PRESIDENT TO SIGN THE NATIONAL HEALTH BILL

We congratulate you for securing the overwhelming mandate of the Nigerian people to lead the most populous country in Africa for a term of four years. Your promise to ensure Nigeria has a free, fair and credible election in 2011 has been fulfilled. Mr. President, we thank you. You have made several pronouncements on the Health of the Nigerian people especially mothers, newborns and children. In your blue print development agenda you clearly identified Health Reform as a priority by adopting the 8 priority areas of the National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP).

We believe you mean well for Nigeria. Your body language indicates to us that you can be trusted. Nigerians are looking up to you for better health for all. You promised Nigerian mothers and children, during the AU Conference last year to ensure better health. You reiterated the same promise during the UN General Assembly in September last year in New York. You have put quality health in your agenda for the next four years as evidence that you are serious about the health issues. Mr. President, we believe the passage of the National Health Bill by the outgoing National Assembly is a good opportunity for you to realize your dreams about better health for the Nigerian people. What remains, your Excellency, is to have the Bill signed. This is one area we believe you are really interested in and we believe it is the logical next step in realizing your dream.

Mr. President, we do not need to remind you that Nigeria is off track in the achievement of health related MDGs. There are fears that Africa and indeed the world cannot achieve the MDGs if Nigeria does not. But like you, we are optimistic that Nigeria can still come on track in its quest to achieve the MDGs. We understand that **55,000 women** die as a result of child birth and that close to **one million children** die annually from largely preventable causes. Most of the reasons why our children die are illnesses that are preventable. With strong Primary Health Care System, all these deaths will be a thing of the past. If the Bill passed by the National Assembly is signed into law immediately, Nigeria can start to reverse the reasons why our mothers and children are dying and be on track to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President, we appeal to you to ensure that the Bill is signed immediately and that you put in place a strong Implementation plan to ensure that the hopes of Nigerian mothers, newborns and children are not dashed. By ensuring that happens, your Excellency, you will be doing for Nigerians, what no Head of State in Nigeria has done for Nigerians in a long time. We know you are already charting Nigeria's path to greatness. As far as health is concerned, signing the National Health bill immediately is the next logical step.

Your Excellency, the National Health Bill, if signed and properly implemented, will confer five key benefits on the weak Nigerian Health System and will accelerate Nigeria's efforts towards the attainment of the MDGs. The benefits are:

- 1. Equity:** The Bill guarantees fairness in the allocation of resources or the treatment outcomes among different individuals or groups
- 2. Efficiency:** The Bill will allow Nigerians to obtain the best possible value for the resources used.
- 3. Access:** The Bill allows Nigerians to have access to the health services they need by removing or reducing financial and physical barriers.
- 4. Quality:** properly implemented, the law will improve quality of health Services in Nigeria.
- 5. Sustainability:** There is robust provision for coordination, financing, expenditure tracking and community participation which will ensure sustainability.

We thank you for your transformatory agenda to put Nigeria on the path to greatness and pledge our continuous support and involvement.

With assurances of our highest regard,

Signed

For and on behalf of Nigerian Health Reform Coalition Group

Dr Ben Anyene

Hajia Ramatu Usman

Mrs Felicia Sani

.....**Better Health for All Nigerians**