

NIGERIAN HEALTH REVIEW

Background & Introduction

There have been concerted efforts to initiate and sustain health sector reforms in Nigeria over the past five years or more. Having commenced the Health Reform process, there is now a need to measure whether the initiatives are having the desired effect. There is also a need to establish a method for conducting annual reviews of the reform initiatives that are planned for the future.

HERFON seeks to be a leading think tank organization in the area of Health Sector Reform. One of its core objectives is to monitor and critically appraise the health sector and generate evidenced based information for Policy formulation and implementation. The implementation of the Annual Health Review Project is therefore a step towards achieving this objective.

The “Health Sector Reform Programme 2004 - 2007” states under thrust 1 (Improving Stewardship Role of Government) that there is the need by government to conduct an Annual Health System Performance Review. Hence this project by HERFON will act in support of the FMOH towards achieving this objective. Other countries such as South Africa and India have Reviews published by NGOs while Ghana, Tanzania and others publish government Reviews.

The purpose of the Nigerian Health Review (NHR) is to provide credible and critical snapshots of the broadest possible spectrum of the whole health system of the nation and make available a comprehensive document that annually monitors changes and challenges in provision of equitable and accessible health care in the country. It highlights progress and best health practices in the country and promotes changes that will improve and set future agenda for better health care for the people of Nigeria.

This first edition focuses on aspects of the **Seven Strategic Thrusts** of the Health Sector Reform Programme (HSRP) and reflects where Nigeria is on the achievements of the MDGs.

Process for the Production of the Book

A broad spectrum of stakeholders were consulted during a preliminary baseline assessment survey and it was collectively agreed that it was mandatory for an independent Review Advisory Committee (RAC) to be established in order to steer the process of the review in the right direction and to supervise the Review Process with professional expertise.

The Review Advisory Committee comprise of Prof. Lucas Adetokunbo, a renowned public health physician as its chairman. The membership of the Committee consists of representatives of development partners; multilateral and bi-lateral agencies, representatives of Commissioners of Health, FMOH, a social science academic, a public health academic and Executive Secretary of HERFON.

The Authors and Reviewers were selected from a wide range of academics and practitioners who are experts in their fields. The Authors had freedom to write and the Reviewers were independent experts.

Advanced copy of the Health Review was sent to the FMOH before the final printing and publication. This was to give allowance for inputs and comments, although did not necessarily affect content of the Book; but added as an addendum since HERFON wishes to maintain its independence.

Highlights of this Edition

The chapter on “**History of the Health Sector in Nigeria**” gives a broad overview of the structure, administrative patterns and trends of critical components of the health sector in the three periods of Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial. The growth, in the post-colonial period, of a parallel orthodox private health care service with minimal formal functional interaction and relationship with the public service is discussed.

The chapter on “**Stewardship Role of Government**” appraised the role of the Nigerian Authorities with particular reference to the formulation of health policies, legislation, and deployment of information and communication technologies (ICTs) amongst others. It was observed that the influence of all the tiers of government over health care provisioning is confined at the moment to the provision of publicly funded health services. It was therefore proposed that the government stewardship should extend well beyond publicly funded health services to include the involvement of the private sector.

The chapter on “**National Health System and its Management**” reveals that the poor institutional arrangements, defective functional relationships and management mechanisms of the Nigerian health system constrained optimal functioning and performance of the system. The poor performance of the national health system therefore partly reflects a lack of clarity or consensus about which level of Government is responsible for what function.

The “**Child Survival**” chapter reiterates that the health status of the Nigerian child is far from desirable and the determinants of childhood mortality could be at the distal, intermediate and proximal levels. Four groups of preventable or easily treated diseases account for about 90% or more of childhood morbidity and mortality: malaria, diarrhoea diseases, acute respiratory infections and vaccine-preventable diseases. The intervention programmes in child survival in Nigeria to a large extent have not made the expected impact given the amount of funds and resources injected into it hence in the last ten years; little progress has been made in the area of childhood nutrition status. This chapter therefore postulates that Nigeria should reposition itself for the challenges of improving child survival indicators.

The chapter on “**HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis**” reveals that, Nigeria has only recently begun to understand and to respond to the potential impact of HIV/AIDS in the country. Nigeria’s epidemic is characterized by one of the most rapidly increasing rates of new HIV/AIDS cases in West Africa, accounting for nearly 10 percent of the HIV/AIDS burden in the world, with 4 million of its citizens living with the infection and it remains a major health and developmental challenge to Nigeria as it’s also greatly contributes to a significant increase in the nationwide prevalence of Tuberculosis. There is therefore a growing recognition of the urgent need to take action to combat the impact of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis as various efforts have been undertaken with challenges.

The chapter on “**Maternal Health in Nigeria**” highlights that Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the developing world and this translates to 10% of women dying from complication of pregnancy and childbirth in Nigeria whereas it accounts for 2% of world population. There can therefore be no doubt that maternal health is a critical

issue in Nigerian economic and social development, for which the government must take more positive and affirmative action.

The chapter on “**Access to Quality Health Care Services and Infrastructure**” addressed one of the most challenging issues that must be focused in alleviating health situation of Nigerians. Access to quality health care services and infrastructure especially for the poor, remains a global problem and should be addressed with careful planning. How this could be achieved is discussed in this chapter.

The chapter on “**Community Awareness and Consumer Empowerment**” observed that Nigeria health system has witnessed an increase in activities and programmes aimed at improving the awareness and knowledge of the population in recent years. The proportion of the population exposed to health issues through the mass media has increased over time and awareness about many health issues have increased. This chapter suggests that systematic efforts and coordinated response to the existing performance gap regarding community involvement, including the dimensions of participation, ownership and empowerment; is largely lacking.

The chapter on “**Public Private Partnership and Coordination of Development Partners**” recognizes the need for a collaborative approach to service delivery and indeed a system of ensuring that the private sector is fully engaged in service provision. It states that this can only be attained through a realistic partnership arrangement with private sector actors as well as development and humanitarian agencies. The chapter recommends ways through which this can be achieved.

The chapter on “**Monitoring and Evaluation of the Health Sector**” reveals that Monitoring and Evaluation is a major determinant towards the achievement of the objectives of National Health Policy, Health Sector Reform Programme (HSRP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in reducing poverty. Thus, this chapter examines the existing National Health Management Information System (NHMIS) in terms of its response to make available appropriate health information for the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of health sector reform programme in terms of its context, elements, institutional framework, the main challenges for health system performance assessment and its progress to date.

The chapter on “**Health Care Financing**” reviews the financing function as performed by the national health system in Nigeria based on (a) Revenue collection mechanism - how equitable and efficient? How much has been collected? How much could have been collected? (b) Pooling - the solidarity principle based prepayment mechanisms to ameliorate financial stress on the population (c) Purchasing - what the contributions have been used to buy. We also discuss the issue of cost containment as part of financing health care.

The chapter on “**Human Resources Management for Health**” *identifies* insufficient capacity in *Human Resources Management for Health (HRH)* as one of the key barriers to scaling up health services in Nigeria. HRH development in Nigeria will require several actors other than those in the health sector, working together towards a common purpose. But most importantly, it requires the cooperation between Federal and State Ministries of Health and other health care providers, universities, other educational institutions, and professional associations.

The chapter on “**Social Determinants of Health**” postulated that individual health is a function of various factors in the social setting and that acting upon these forces provides a more effective and efficient way of guaranteeing not only personal health but the health

of all members of the society. Factors such as urban-rural migration, unemployment, education, gender inequality, lack of money, transportation, distance to health facility, cultural inhibition, inability to make informed choices and the need to obtain permission from some authority figure such as the husband in the case of some married women are critical. Thus, this review stipulates that various factors need to be managed if the health of the population is to be improved and the opportunities for national development and growth are to be realized.

The chapter on **“Traditional Medicine Practice in Nigeria”** identifies the significant role of traditional medicine practice in meeting the health-care needs of the majority of Nigerians. But the major challenge in its utilization in Nigeria lies in the un-standardized nature of the practice. Practically every practitioner prepares his own remedies without reference to any formulated universal standards. Therefore, to uphold and enforce international sanctions when and where necessary, there is need to evolve policies on the sustainable use of and benefit-sharing from the exploitation of traditional medicine resources at the national level and there is also the need for legislation on access to bio-resources. It is strongly suggested that on traditional medicine and practice, the principle of upholding what is beneficial, rejecting what is harmful and being neutral on what is neither harmful should be promoted.

The chapter on **“Issues in Health Research in Nigeria”** highlights the lukewarm attitude of Nigerians towards health research. Health research is not appreciated and it is poorly funded; thus the culture of utilizing data generated to take informed action, make good decisions or for sound policy formulation is generally lacking. Consequently, the goals of good health, health equity and social and economic gains for our populations are missed.