



## NIGERIA'S NATIONAL HEALTH BILL POLICY SUMMARY

### IMPLICATIONS FOR RMNCH

#### NIGERIA'S NATIONAL HEALTH BILL: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Nigeria's poor health indicators mirror the struggling performance of its health care system. The lack of health legislation, inadequate and sustainable funding of primary healthcare, and healthcare for the poor, the rural dwellers, and other vulnerable groups have long been identified as core issues inhibiting efficient and high quality health care delivery in Nigeria. To address these gaps health advocates pushed for the enactment of a health law to provide the necessary impetus to regulate and manage the industry in a holistic manner.

The journey to enact a health legislation began in 2004, when the National Health Bill was first introduced as an executive bill to the national assembly. The bill has stayed through several national assemblies, revisions and attempts at passage. However, in 2012 the Bill was reintroduced and with sustained and concerted efforts from policy champions in the Legislature, executives, and other health advocates within the donor community, development partners, CSOs and organized private sector, the Nigeria senate passed the National Health Bill on February 19, 2014. The House of Representatives followed suit and passed the bill in June 2014. After harmonization of the Health Law passed by the two houses, a "clean copy" was transmitted to the President for his assent. The Bill was signed by President GoodLuck on December 9, 2014.

#### THE BILL CONTAINS 7 PARTS:

- Part I - Responsibility for health and eligibility for health services and establishment of national health system
- Part II - Health establishments and technologies
- Part III – Rights and obligations of users and healthcare personnel
- Part IV – National health research and information system
- Part V - Human resources for health
- Part VI - Control of use of blood, blood products, tissue and gametes in humans
- Part VII – Regulations and miscellaneous provisions



Photo Credit: Mark Tuschman

The Health Law makes provisions for additional funding for primary health care and minimum health care packages for all Nigerians and includes focus on key RMNCH issues. It also provides for vulnerable groups such as children, women, elderly and persons with disabilities to be exempted from payment for health care services at public health establishments. It recognizes and makes provisions to “ensure that children between the ages of zero and five years and pregnant women are immunized with vaccines against infectious diseases.” The law further recognizes and provides for the establishment of village health committees to enhance community participation and ownership in health care delivery. Also, the law recognizes the importance of the availability of skilled human resources for health and makes provision for the recruitment, training, and professional development of health sector workers.

It is hoped that when this health law is fully implemented it will revamp high quality health services with a focus at the primary health care level, where over 70% of the population still lacks access to basic health services. Women and children under five will have access to routine immunization and free health care services, provided by skilled personnel in an environment that protects both the user’s and the provider’s rights. Overall, proper implementation of the law will help accelerate Nigeria’s progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and improved RMNCH outcomes.

## ABOUT CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE

Champions for Change saves lives in Nigeria by empowering local leaders and organizations to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health through advocacy, education, storytelling, and strategic partnerships.

Champions for Change leverages a program model developed by its sister initiative, Let Girls Lead, which has contributed to improved health, education and livelihoods for more than 3 million girls globally since 2009.

Champions for Change and Let Girls Lead’s model drives change through the passage of national laws, implementation of programs, and distribution of funds to ensure access to quality healthcare, education, and economic opportunity. Champions for Change and Let Girls Lead are based at the Public Health Institute, a leader in global health and development for over 50 years.

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