

Report of a Two-Day Workshop on the Promotion
of Maternal Health for Wives of Governors of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria held at the State
House Banquet Hall, Abuja 29 -30 April, 2008

Organised by

Office of the First Lady of the Federal Republic of
Nigeria



In Collaboration with



United Nations Population Fund

Contents

Background	3
Day One of Workshop	3
UNFPA Representative’s Opening Remarks	3
Good Will Messages	4
Highlights of Technical Presentations on Day One	5
General Discussion (Day one)	6
Day Two of Workshop	10
Highlights of Technical Presentations (Day Two)	10
General Discussion	11
The Grand Premiere of the Movie “Freedom in Chains”	13
Conclusion	14

**Report of a Two-Day Workshop on the Promotion of Maternal Health for
Wives of Governors of the Federal Republic of Nigeria held at the State
House Banquet Hall, Abuja 29 -30 April, 2008**

Background

This stakeholders meeting was organized by the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to sensitize the wives of State Governors on the high rates of maternal mortality in Nigeria and to work with them to develop states-specific action plans that will contribute to addressing maternal health issues in their states

DAY ONE OF THE WORKSHOP

Attendance

The meeting was chaired by the First Lady of the Federal Republic, Hajia Turai Yaradua. In attendance were the Wife of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan, Wives of State Governors or their representatives from the thirty six states, the Ministers of Information, John Odey, Women Affairs, Hajia Saidatu Bungudu and the Minister of State for Education, Hajia Aishatu Dikku. Also in attendance were the ministers of State for Petroleum, wives of Service Chiefs, wives of senators and the wife of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation. The wife of the FCT Minister, wives of members of the House of Representatives and some technical staff of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and states' ministries of Women Affairs also attended the workshop. The Representative of UNFPA, Dr. Sidiki Coulibaly and the staff from the UNFPA Field office were also in attendance.

Opening

The opening prayers were said by the wife of the Borno State Governor, Mrs. Ali Sherif and the wife of the Minister of State, FCT, Mrs. Udoedehe.

UNFPA Representative's Opening Remarks

The Representative of UNFPA, Sidiki Coulibaly, started his opening remarks with the famous UNFPA signal quote: "Every body counts and no woman should die giving life" He indicated that the workshop was about equity and empowerment, self-preservation of a nation and giving equal chance for people to live decently and escape hardships and not to die untimely. He said that maternal mortality can be prevented and that in some European countries, maternal deaths were unheard of. He cited current statistics of maternal deaths in Nigeria which he said was as high as 3000/100,000 in some parts of Nigeria, indicating that on the average 800 women for every 100,000 live births die annually in Nigeria i.e. about 32 women daily and posed some thought provoking questions: "Why the senseless deaths? Why do we accept the sorrows?" He also spoke about the mandate of UNFPA which is about saving

lives especially of the most vulnerable groups. In doing this, he explained UNFPA collaborates with the government and also advocate to it. He also talked about the challenges of VVF, cervical cancer and GBV. He called on the first lady to coordinate these efforts as a worthy ambassador. He charged participants to take action to assist the people of Nigeria noting that everything had to be done so that no woman dies giving birth. He also advised participants to discuss frankly and meaningfully and hoped that at the end of the workshop a clear work plan shall emerge to guide the Wives of Governors in making positive contributions to stem the tide of high maternal mortality in Nigeria.

Goodwill Messages

Minister of Women Affairs- Hajia Saudatu Bungudu, in her goodwill message acknowledged the efforts of the First Lady in coordinating the efforts of partners to promote maternal health in Nigeria noting that improved maternal health was good for national development. She informed the audience that tradition, culture, ignorance and discrimination against women were at the centre of the problem. She observed that discrimination against women existed every where despite the fact that Nigeria was signatory to a number of international documents and treaties on the prevention of discrimination and subjugation of women. Speaking on the role of Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA), she informed the audience that the ministry has contributed to building the capacity of TBAs and women groups and was determined to promote women's reproductive health in all its ramifications especially in ensuring that women's rights were respected. She noted however that the main challenge was the lack of data and basic infrastructure and called on the government and the private sector to work together to address this.

Hon Minister of State for Education, Hajia Aishatu Dikku expressed concern about the alarming statistics on maternal mortality in Nigeria attributing this to poverty and the low level of education of women. She lamented the dearth of female teachers in Northern Nigeria which she said was a result of the pervasive attitude of discouraging girl child education noting that the male dominated educational system in the North does not augur well for the advancement of women. She was delighted that the workshop objectives were in line with the Government's 7 point agenda.

Her Excellency, the First Lady of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua while declaring the workshop open said "it is my expectation that this two- day workshop will be educating as well as empowering and that each of us will return to our states with a renewed impetus to make the death of mothers in our communities a thing of the past". She further charged wives of state governors to provide critical leadership for Local Government chairpersons and their wives to ensure that this initiative benefits every stratum of society.

She also spoke about her ambulance service project which will help to reduce delay in the communities especially for pregnant women in accessing emergency obstetric services. She expressed worry about the alarming maternal health statistics: 800 women death per 100,000 live births, with wide regional disparities. Mrs. Yar'adua said 'as a mother and goodwill ambassador on maternal health, I shall not relent until child and maternal mortality is reduced to the barest minimum".

The First Lady stressed that there is need for training and retraining of medical personnel indicating that the emergence of skilled professionals will help in promoting maternal health. She canvassed for communities to form Association of Hospital Friends since government cannot do it alone; She urged the well to do in society to learn to give back to society, by becoming members of this association in order to help the poor and vulnerable patients.

The First Lady appreciated "the partnership that UNFPA has cultivated with her Office in implementing this noble venture" and look forward to further result oriented collaboration.

The Technical session for the day was heralded by a drama presentation on VVF by Traditional communicators from Katsina which mirrored the maternal health issues and challenges in the country. This provided an insight into the issues to be discussed and set the tone for the two-day workshop.

Highlights of Technical Presentations

The Presentation on safe motherhood was given by **Dr. Galadanci, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist** from Aminu Kano University Teaching Hospital, Kano. Dr Galadanci informed the audience about the high rates of maternal mortality in the country which is one of the highest in the world. She gave a break down of the regional variations in the country where the northern states were shown to have rates as high as 1500. She also gave reasons why women die from conditions which she said were wholly preventable alluding to social and economic conditions which cause delays in accessing maternal health services. She also discussed maternal morbidity making special reference to VVF.

In her recommendations, she stressed the need to generate political commitment, ensure that maternal health was free, advocacy for adequate budgetary provisions to ensure that essential medicines and equipment are always available. She also advocated for investment in girl child education, compulsory primary and secondary education, the training, deployment and retention of midwives and improvement of health care infrastructure.

Prof Pauline N. Otti, a consultant to UNFPA presented findings from the Thematic Evaluation of UNFPA's 5th Country Program in which she described the current status of maternal health in the UNPA supported states. The data presented showed that while 59% of women attended antenatal services only 30% return to deliver in hospitals. She was concerned that the seemingly better antenatal attendance statistics does not translate to deliveries at the hospital.

She described reproductive health as a life time concern for both men and women, asserting that women will remain the focus of reproductive health since the burden of ill health affects women more than men. Therefore, "ensuring equity and empowerment of women will remain a fundamental prerequisite to effective maternal and child health", she enthused. She advocated for stronger voices from their Excellencies to facilitate establishing and supporting initiatives to empower women as users of services.

A documentary on maternal mortality reduction, the efforts of government and NGOs, and the role of UNFPA in saving lives followed. The documentary highlighted seven major causes of maternal mortality and what can be done to address them.

General Discussion

Dr. Hadiza Galadanci was invited to moderate and facilitate the discussion session for the day. In her introductory remarks, she charged the participants to come up with concrete suggestions on how to address the maternal health challenges enumerated in the various presentations.

Her Excellency the Wife of the President counseled nurses and doctors to be skillful in the performance of their jobs citing examples of how mistakes from doctors have resulted in prolonged hospitalization and even death of some pregnant women. She stressed the need for training and retraining of medical personnel as only skilled professionals can help in promoting maternal health. She advised on the need for all hands to be on deck especially in the provision of social welfare services in hospitals emphasizing that there should be deliberate efforts to make resources available in our hospitals to assist indigent women "Government cannot do everything", she advised.

She canvassed for the formation of Association of Hospital Friends and urged "well to do people" in society to learn to give back to society, by becoming members of this association in order to provide help to vulnerable patients. She called on donor agencies to continue to assist and pledged to work closely with them on any viable initiative aimed at promoting maternal health.

The Wife of the Vice President, pleaded with the Nigeria Medical Association to ensure that there are no quack doctors and nurses in the system. She also decried the attitude of some hospitals insisting on payment before the

provision of services even to mothers in labour. She appealed to Nigerian women to try to save money during the pregnancy months for use during delivery.

The Wife of the Senate President stressed the need for retention of nurses in the public service by improving their condition of service so as to reduce the brain drain where the best of our nurses are leaving the country for greener pastures abroad.

The First lady of Imo State then opined that efforts should be sustained on creating awareness on the role of men in promoting maternal health especially as it pertains to decision making, that women must under no circumstances be waiting for men before deciding on seeking medical attention. She counseled on the need for families to have less number of children and that men should not subject their women to have many children because of the attendant health risk to women.

The First Lady of Delta State informed that Delta state has started a free treatment program for pregnant mothers but lamented that nurses still demanded money from patients especially in the remote communities. She also advocated for the retraining of traditional birth attendants as a way of dealing with acute shortage of qualified birth attendants. She also expressed concern about unemployment of trained nurses who now survive through employment by pharmacist who pay ridiculous wages or by opening road side medicine stores.

Ebonyi State First lady called on the government to enact legislations on uniform standards of health care delivery at the national and states' level. The Abia State first lady reported on the ambulance service the state was providing and the provision of cell phones in health centers to improve communication.

The Kaduna State First lady reported that there is free medical care for women and children under 5 years of age in her state and free and compulsory primary education. She was worried however that the free treatment program was being abused as some mothers go to clinics with children who were not sick to collect drugs which they keep at home for future use. She was concerned about the poor attitude of health workers to their patients and advocated for a change of attitude.

The First Lady of Kwara State stressed the importance of advocacy, the retraining of TBAs, maintenance of health care records and requested UNFPA to explore the possibility of partnering with her state. She concluded by asking that all hands must be on deck as the Government cannot do it alone.

Osun State First Lady appealed to men to help women during pregnancy and child birth.

The First Lady of Rivers State urged for team work towards an improved budgetary allocation to maternal health issues. She informed the audience about what the Rivers State Government has been doing to improve health care delivery in the state. This includes: free HIV/AIDS treatment, free maternal care, free registration for antenatal services, free emergency care for the 1st 24 hours, manpower development for nurses and doctors, establishment of model PHC centres in all wards, rebuilding secondary health care centres, rural posting allowance and free nursing education upkeep allowance and encouraging the girl child to do science subjects in schools.

The Minister of State for Education informed the audience that her ministry will continue to provide the policy direction while the states have a lot to do with implementation of programs. She implored the first lady to invite the governors for dialogue for increased allocation of funds to maternal health and education issues in their states. She advised wives of Governors to advocate for free primary education and recommended to the State ministries of health to pay rural posting allowances to attract and retain health workers for rural communities.

The representative of the first lady of Ondo State wondered why more nurses and doctors were not invited to the meeting, she called for free maternal services in the country and urged that more emphasis should be placed on family planning. She threw more light on why health workers sometimes collect fees in spite of the free treatment policy. This she said was due to lack of supplies which the government was unable to provide in the hospitals. She recommended that health supervisors should be appointed to supervise and monitor the operations of health care facilities especially at the local Government level.

A representative of Women and Youth Foundation informed the gathering about the initiative of the First Lady in providing community friendly ambulances in 12 states to assist in carrying pregnant mothers to the hospital. He also spoke about their collaboration with the Nigerian Medical Association, the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria and the National Council for Women Societies to make available free safe motherhood delivery kits. He also spoke about plans to introduce a micro-credit scheme for women.

The Minister of Women Affairs advised health workers to emphasize on community nutrition and on educating people about local food sources that provide adequate nourishment for mothers. She urged their Excellencies to ensure that their offices were well equipped and staffed to carry out their

activities and to ensure that the Commissioners for Women were carried along in their programs.

Responding to this, the First Lady remarked that it was important that the offices of wives of Governors were provided basic working tools and equipment to facilitate their work noting that even her office was not adequately equipped and staffed to make her work easy.

A Senator's wife from Taraba then spoke on the need to sensitize religious leaders and the legislature on their role to ensure that early marriage is discouraged and outlawed.

A wife of a senator from Bayelsa in her contribution said that women were disadvantaged right from birth; she called on the legislature to pass laws on the rights of female children to education.

A participant from Enugu State commented on the need for a sustainability plan for maternal health programs and the setting up of an institutional framework and an agency to deal with maternal mortality issues e.g. infrastructure, human resources etc

The Moderator, Dr. Galadanci in her response attempted to address key issues raised during the discussion session. She reiterated that it was unacceptable for health care workers to collect money from patients where services were free and charged that the State ministries of Health need to adequately monitor this and put adequate checks and balances in place.

She also harped on the need for an implementing plan for free treatment to ensure that there is clarity about the treatment package and how to mobilize the needed resources to fund the free treatment program.

She informed that TBAs have been found incapable of saving lives when there is a complication thus the need to deemphasize their direct involvement in deliveries. Instead TBAs can be used for community education but not for delivery. She advised that the emphasis should instead be on the training of community midwives. The Moderator emphasized the importance of nutrition in health education and health promotion and advised health workers to use every available opportunity to educate their patients on this. She also informed that the Child Rights Act which has already been passed addresses issues of education for the girl child. She then thanked everyone for the active participation and wished that Her Excellencies were able to carry forward the recommendations from the workshop.

At the end of the day's proceedings, a Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting was convened consisting of one technical person from the delegation of each of the Governor's wives to work closely with the program officers of UNFPA. The

TWG discussed the priorities of the wives of Governors in each state and resulted in the development of an action plan.

DAY TWO OF THE WORKSHOP

The Second Day of the Workshop commenced with a presentation by Traditional Communicators from Osun State dramatizing on issues of female genital cutting and this was followed by a documentary on Cancer.

Highlights of Technical Presentations

Flagging off the technical session for the day was a presentation on Cancer by **Dr. Osinubi from the Federal Ministry of Health**. Dr. Osinubi described the process of cancer detection by visual inspection through the use of Lugol iodine or 5% acetic acid. She said that the process is simple, cheap, painless, convenient and faster and community health workers can be trained on its use at the community level noting that the method can be used to complement the Pap smear method. She explained that the principle involved was that acetic acid and lugol iodine were capable of denaturing the proteins in the cervical area in such a way as to show cancer lesions. She however noted that the main disadvantage of the method was the possibility of wide inter-observer variations, sometimes resulting in misdiagnosis.

Immediately following this was a presentation by **Dr Bello, a Radiation Oncologist, with the National Hospital, Abuja** in his paper said that of all cancers, breast cancer is the leading cause of death in Nigeria and enjoined NGOs, the media and religious organizations to intensify efforts in the campaign against cancers. He discussed the diagnosis, associated factors to breast and cervical cancers and the need for early diagnosis noting that when diagnosed early there is a very good chance that complete cure can be achieved. He revealed that cervical cancer is second only to breast cancer among the common cancers afflicting women in Nigeria. He cautioned that the situation was becoming alarming because of the link between the prevalence of cervical cancer and HIV/AIDS; he recommended that cervical cancer should be included as one of the opportunistic diseases needing an urgent attention in the national HIV response. He said that screening through Pap Smear Test has brought a change in the epidemiology of cervical cancer and has reduced the incidence rate by 60-90 and death by 90%. He urged all the states as a matter of urgency to create screening Centres in their states, provide Ultrasound machines and mammography and include cancer treatment in National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) list.

In her presentation on Obstetric Fistula, **Dr. Idoko of UNFPA** said that Obstetric Fistula has been identified as the most debilitating and devastating maternal health problem in Nigeria. More than two million women are affected world wide and most of these women are in Africa and South Asia, "Nigeria

accounts for 40 per cent of global incidence with about 800,000 women living with Fistula in the country” said Dr. Lucy Idoko. She said prolonged obstructed labour, small birth canal, early child bearing, malnutrition, poor maternal health services, violence against women and poverty are among the major related factors. She highlighted the role of UNFPA within the Global Campaign to eliminate fistula to include prevention education, treatment and rehabilitation of fistula patients, manpower training and plans to establish a National Fistula Hospital. Dr. Idoko said that obstetric fistula was wholly preventable. The most needed and recommended interventions are increasing knowledge and awareness of the public on the condition, education of girls i.e. free and compulsory primary to secondary education including vocational training. Other recommendations included elimination of early child bearing, universal access to Emergency Neonatal and Obstetric care, promotion of reproductive health and rights and economic empowerment of women especially in poor household.

The final presentation of the day which was on Gender Based Violence was made by **Mrs. Raheemat Momodu of UNFPA**. She highlighted the current statistics and associated factors and elaborated on how violence in families can be curbed. She informed the audience that one in every three woman is abused and on in four during pregnancy and that violation of the rights of women was widespread. She also informed the audience that UNFPA is working to make Nigeria a violence free society and is open to collaborate with their Excellencies on programs to curb the menace. According to her, UNFPA has made efforts to empower women to speak out against GBV, and to get help when they are victims of it. The UNFPA strategies to end GBV include: to strengthen advocacy on GBV, advocate for women empowerment in partnership with national networks and to integrate messages on the prevention of GBV into projects.

General Discussion

A consultant to UNFPA, **Professor Oti** was invited to moderate the discussion session. While introducing the session, she remarked that the issues of gender-based violence, VVF and cancers were serious maternal health challenges for which concerted effort by their excellences was required. She asked for frank and focused discussion of all issues within the short time available.

Some of the notable reactions during this session were as follows:

An appeal by the First Lady for increased advocacy to policy makers and sensitization of the public on cancer screening because it is sometimes confused with family planning in some states. She also wanted to know the cost of HPV and Dr. Galadanci explained that it was possible for the cost to be reduced to as low as 20 dollars through partnership with some international agencies such as GAPI

The First Lady of Nigeria also spoke about her initiative to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with M.D. Anderson Cancer Centre in US to establish a National Cancer Centre in Nigeria. She identified lack of shelters or waiting homes for patients awaiting chemotherapy as a serious gap and called on wives of governors and other well meaning Nigerian to assist in addressing this.

Reacting to the presentation on Gender Based Violence, the First Lady appealed to all Nigerians to adopt zero tolerance to all forms of violence against women and to work for the eradication of traditional practices that are harmful to women's reproductive health. She called on legislators to make laws to ensure stiffer punishment for rape, noting that light sentencing of offenders was a source of frustration to ongoing campaigns to end gender-based violence.

To ameliorate the sufferings of VVF patients, the First lady of Nigeria advocated for shelters and waiting homes for VVF patients awaiting surgical interventions which should be fashioned after what she did in Katsina State when during the period her husband was the Governor of the State.

Speaking on the dangers associated with early marriage, the wife of the Vice President called for massive campaigns against early marriage and advocated for quality maternal health care at all levels of health care in the country.

The First Lady of Kwara State called for more training for health workers on management of cancer.

A Commissioner called for clear policy direction for the federal and state governments on the management of cancer

The minister of State for Education called on the FMWA to strengthen its counseling units to be more responsive to victims of GBV.

A Women Affairs Commissioner advised on the need to revive the National Council for Women Societies to be better positioned to respond to complaints of GBV.

A representative from FCT Administration (FCTA) stressed the need for a coordinated implementation of the provisions of the Child Rights acts in all parts of the country.

The IPAS Director canvassed for more political will and proposed a five year marshal plan to address maternal health issues.

The Wife of Secretary to the Government of the Federation wanted to know the cost of fistula repairs and Dr. Idoko responded that it was free in the project areas while some teaching hospitals not supported by the Fistula project may charge about N 40,000.

The moderator, Professor Oti thanked Her Excellency, the First Lady of Nigeria for all her contributions at the workshop and for performing her role so well as the Goodwill Ambassador on Maternal Health. She also expressed her appreciation to the wives of Governors and all participants for the lively contributions and hoped that their Excellencies would carry forward the recommendations from the workshop.

Launch break was announced immediately following this and when the meeting reconvened in the evening, it was time for the Grand Premiere of the movie "Freedom in Chains."

The Grand Premiere of the Movie "Freedom in Chains"

The high point of the program in Day 2 was the Grand Premiere of the Movie, "Freedom in Chains" which is the product of collaboration between Nolly Wood Concepts Promotion Limited and UNFPA. The one hour and twenty minutes movie brings to the fore instances of discrimination and violence against women as seen through the experiences of three key actors: Eliza, Hassana and Tricia.

Before the movie was shown, there was a musical interlude and a thrilling performance by a renowned Nigerian comedian popularly called Princess. The Nolly Wood team was introduced to the audience amid cheers before the Grand Premiere.

The Representative of UNFPA in his introductory remarks to the Premiere spoke about the significance of the movie as a medium to sensitize and educate the public on the dangers of gender-based violence. He thanked the first lady for her support to the project and for her presence at the Grand Premiere. He also thanked Hollywood Concepts Promotions Limited for the excellent and productive collaboration with UNFPA

Speaking at the evening occasion which marked the end of two days of deliberations by wives of Governors, the First Lady said that Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human right abuse in the world. Gender Based Violence is sustained by a culture of silence. The First Lady said 'we all owe humanity especially our children the responsibility to break this harmful silence which has provided comfort and haven for perpetrators. We all need to act now as individuals and collectively to ensure no woman, man, boy or girl is abused or violated because of his or her gender and because of discrimination under the guise of culture or tradition" .

Gender based violence reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses wide range of human rights violations, including sexual

abuse of children, rape, domestic violence and several harmful traditional practices. Hajia Turai said any of the abuses leave deep psychological scars, damage the health of women and girls in general, including their reproductive health, and in some instances results to death.

Conclusion

At the end of the two days of highly stimulating and productive deliberations, it was obvious that the workshop was a vital learning and enlightenment opportunity on maternal health for all the participants. The action plan summarizes the conclusions and recommendations from the workshop.