



Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFON) and International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC)

Report of the interactive Session with the Senate Committee on Health for improved financing and oversight of Immunization in Nigeria

Month / Year: **May, 2012**

Final Approval

Report approved and signed off by the Programme Manager, Dr. Nkem Ene

Abbreviations and Acronyms

DFID	UK Department for International Development
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
HERFON	Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria

Hon.	Honourable
IVAC	International Vaccine Center
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
MHR	Member House of Representatives
NASS	National Assembly of Nigeria
PAFIN	Parliamentary Advocacy for Financing of Immunization in Nigeria
SCOHR	Standing Committees of the House of Representatives
SCOS	Standing Committees of the Senate
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health
LGA	Local Government of Area
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centres
MNCH	Maternal Newborn and Child Health

SECTION 2 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFON) a health policy advocate in collaboration with the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) of Johns Hopkins University USA organized an interactive session with the Senate Committee on Health. The interactive session was held at the National Assembly Complex (Senate Committee Room) on the 15th May, 2012. The aim was to obtain commitments from the Parliamentarians to become advocates and increase the oversight function to ensure improved financing for Immunization in Nigeria. This model of Parliamentary advocates is similar to what had been successfully undertaken by lawmakers in the British Parliament (All Party Parliamentary Groups)

The interactive session included power point presentations, brainstorming, questions and answers to facilitate understanding of the issues around immunization/vaccine access and financing in the country.

In the presentation, made by the Programme Manager, Dr Nkem Ene, the advocacy roles and responsibilities as parliamentarians were defined to ensure vaccine security and accountability in Nigeria at all levels even down to their constituency levels and wards. They were chosen as ideal advocates because they represent individuals, families and community members and as such bear some level of responsibility to ensure that their people enjoy their right to life which includes the right to immunization (as immunization save lives). Secondly, through heightened legislative oversight Parliamentarians can ensure that both human and financial resources appropriated for immunisation are judiciously utilized.

In conclusion, therefore, she called on the Senators to be the Champions who will be remembered for providing effective leadership to achieve **“better health for all Nigerians”** and pleaded for them to answer the call.

The Chairman Senate Committee on Health congratulated HERFON and IVAC JHU for this initiative, and concurred that the Distinguished Senators of the Federal Republic were the right people to be made Champions for Immunization since it falls under their purview to appropriate funds for improved health services.

At the end, the Chairman Board of Trustees of HERFON presented induction plaques to the committee members and promised that HERFON will provide all the necessary technical support (technical briefs and reports) the committee may need in carrying out their oversight functions for the betterment of all Nigerians.

SECTION 3 – MAIN REPORT

Introduction/background

Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFON) a health policy advocate in collaboration with the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) of Johns Hopkins University USA organized an interactive session with the Senate Committee on Health. The interactive session was aimed engaging Parliamentarians as advocates to increase the oversight function to ensure improved financing for Immunization in Nigeria. It was designed to nurture a cohort of parliamentarians as advocates for sustainable vaccine security through adequate budget appropriation of immunization funds which will contribute significantly to a reduction in child mortality. Vaccine security is a potent means of improving child survival and can be achieved through adequate, timely and uninterrupted financing of vaccines. Nigerian parliamentarians are in a unique position to effectively advocate for this best-buy public health intervention on behalf of the most vulnerable citizens among their constituents. This model of Parliamentarian advocates is similar to what had been successfully undertaken by the British Parliament.

Objectives

1. To advocate for improved financing for immunization activities in the country.
2. To facilitate the reassignment of immunization from capital budget list to recurrent.
3. To make the Parliamentarians Champions / Advocates for Immunization
4. To establish a good working relationship with the lawmakers.
5. To support the Health Committee with technical materials for effective delivery of their oversight functions.

Approach / Methodology

The interactive session included power point presentation, brainstorming, questions and answers to deepen understanding of the issues around immunization/vaccine access and financing in the country.

Session Proceedings

Opening Remarks

Declaring the interactive session open, the Senate Committee Chairman, Distinguished Senator (Dr.) Dantong congratulated HERFON for their strategic efforts / engagement with various stakeholders in health to ensure quality and better health for all Nigerians especially as it relates to the health of women and children. He therefore wished HERFON well in all her endeavors and pledged that his committee will be open to collaborate with HERFON in delivering her mandate.

The Executive Secretary, Prof Erinoshio gave a brief history about HERFON and the IVAC/PAFIN project and what it is seeking to achieve. According to him given the abundant resources in the country, Nigeria's health performance is very low compared to other African Countries like Ghana, South Africa and so on. He therefore called on the Senators to use their position to better the life of every Nigerian. He also said that as Immunization Champions, the Senate Committee on Health should in their oversight function ensure that immunization coverage in Nigeria is increased and asked them to question relevant agencies and parastatals to report update on progress and challenges so that more funds can be appropriated for immunization activities.

Presenting to justify the need for increased immunization financing and accountability in Nigeria, the Programme Manager of HERFON, Dr. Nkem Ene said that according to WHO reports, India in 2011 had its first polio-free year, Gabon and Congo have also been polio free in the last twelve months. She also said that it is embarrassing to associate Nigeria with countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan in measuring levels of progress.

She also mentioned in her presentation that the following are the causes of low immunization coverage in Nigeria:

- Inadequate Government commitment and under-funding of programmes (especially at State and LGA Levels).
- Delay in the release of allocated funds for Vaccines sometimes result in stock outs.
- Inadequate access and funding of routine immunization services and limited funds are diverted to support more urgent polio eradication campaigns
- Poor supply chain and logistics management
- Socio- cultural and Religious Issues

Talking about the roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians to ensure vaccine security and accountability, she said that the Senate Committee on Health and other Parliamentarians are better positioned to lead and ensure vaccine access and accountability at all levels even down to their wards and constituencies. This is so because they represent individuals, families and community members and as such, bear some level of responsibility to ensure that their people enjoy their right to life which includes a child's right to immunization (as immunisation save lives). Finally, she added that through closer legislative oversight, Parliamentarians can ensure that both human and financial resources appropriated for immunisation are judiciously utilized.

In conclusion, she called on the Senators to be the Champions who will be remembered for providing effective leadership to achieve **“better health for all Nigerians”** and pleaded for them to answer the call.

Commenting on the presentation, the Chairman Senate Committee on Health, Senator (Dr.) Dantong, thanked HERFON for doing a great job and concurred that reduction in the incidence

of polio, will result to socio-economic benefit to Nigeria. He also assured HERFON that all the committee members are willing to be Immunization Champions. He then sought clarification to know why the immunization coverage in Nigeria was so low.

Responding to the question from the committee chair, the Chairman of Board Trustees of HERFON, Dr. Ben Anyene said that the low immunization coverage in Nigeria could be traced to policy, systematic, and service delivery issues. Nigeria over the years has been experiencing policy inconsistencies, lack of adequate logistics planning, and an inability to integrate Maternal, Newborn and Child Health services into Primary Healthcare Centres. He further explained that about eighty percent of the population lives in the rural communities and could access the integrated services in local Primary Healthcare Centres but sustainable efforts have not been made to make these services available and affordable to the vulnerable group.

He also congratulated the Committee for their efforts, support and involvement in the immunization activities in the Country to date.

Senator Dantong also asked why Ghana as a country is doing better than Nigeria in the area of immunization coverage. The Executive Secretary of HERFON responded that they are better because there is political support, consistency in policies and community participation and ownership. He also added that all hands need to be on deck to achieve better health for all Nigerians.

The Senate Health Committee Chairman also sought clarification on why the Immunization budget should be on recurrent list rather than capital. He was also of the opinion that making Health centres work for people to access Immunization may not work because people will not leave their work to go and access what they are not even sure of its efficacy.

Responding to the issue raised by the Senate Health Committee Chairman, Dr. Emmanuel Sokpo said that drugs are not good to be put under capital budget, but recurrent to eliminate intermittent releases and allow for a continuous flow of activities. He also added that substantial portions of the cost of vaccines are paid by donors, and that it has always been difficult for the Nigerian government to make her own her contribution in a timely manner. He believed that the refusal by some communities to access commodities and services in the facilities is due to loss of confidence. At the end, he charged the Senators to demonstrate their championing of these issues not just by speaking in public but also by action.

Another member of the Senate health committee, Sen. Sefiu Kaka, asked HERFON to put in tabular form the funding contributions for immunization in Nigeria showing various contributions made by the donors' community and the federal government. This he believed will inform their advocacy efforts and oversight function. He therefore supported the call for Immunization to be put on recurrent list because it is a continuously needed consumable. Senator Kaka said that

HERFON should discuss with FMOH and other relevant agencies to ensure that adequate budgetary provision for immunization activities in the country.

Senator Yau in his contribution thanked HERFON for their advocacy efforts and called on the traditional and religious leaders to mobilize their communities to participate in immunization services. Adding that community participation will create demand for quality health services in PHCs.

In his acceptance speech, the Chairman Senate Committee on Health congratulated HERFON and IVAC JHU for this initiative, adding that the Senate chambers and Senators are the right people to be made immunization champions since it falls under their responsibilities to appropriate funds for improved health services. He therefore assured HERFON that they will do their best to make Nigeria a polio free Nation.

Presenting the plaques to the advocates and champions for immunization (Senate Committee on Health), the Chairman Board of Trustees, pledged that HERFON will provide all technical support (technical briefs and reports) the committee may need in carrying out their oversight functions for the betterment of Nigerians.

In the closing remark, Senator (Dr) Chris Ngige thanked HERFON for this laudable initiative and promised that the Senate Committee on Health will assist HERFON to get the private sector to donate funds in support of and for the achievement of her mandate.

Next Step

- Continued engagement with Senate Committee on Health
- Follow up with the Committee on Health to ensure that immunization funds is moved from capital budget to recurrent
- Replicate the interactive session with the House of Representative Committee on Health
- Organize study tour for the parliamentarians for effective delivery of their mandate as the Champions for Immunization.

ANNEXES

In attendance

1. Sen. GyangDalyopDantong
2. Sen. Chris NwabuezeNgige
3. Sen. Sefiu Kaka
4. Sen. DanladiSankara
5. Sen. Babajide C Omoworare
6. Sen. Sahabi A Yau
7. SenPaulinusIgwe
8. Dr. Ben Anyene, Chairman Board of Trustees

9. Prof Lai Erinosh, Executive Secretary
10. Dr. Nkem Ene, National Programme Manager
11. Ms. Theresa Kaka Effa, Senior Advocacy Officer
12. Mr. Adewale Adeleye, Capacity Building Officer
13. Mr. Ifeanyi Iloba, Logistics Officer
14. Miss Kelechi Jombo, Logistics Officer
15. Mr. Nwankwo Ekene Innocent, Advocacy and Communication Officer
16. Senate Committee Clerk and Staff.
17. Media (Print and Electronic)



Chairman Senate Committee on Health, Senator (Dr) Dantong (2nd left) with other members of his committee, Senators Danladi Sankara, Chris Ngige, Sefiu Kaka and Sahabi Yau, at the interactive session for improved financing of immunization in Nigeria at the National Assembly on 15th May



The Chairman Board of Trustee of HERFON, Dr Ben Anyene (right) presenting a plaque to the Chairman Senate Committee on health, Sen. GyangDantong as a Champion for immunization in Nigeria at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012
The Chairman Board of Trustee of HERFON, Dr Ben Anyene (left) decorating Senator Dr. Chris Ngige as a Champion for immunization in Nigeria at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



(L-R)The Chairman Board of Trustee of HERFON, Dr Ben Anyene, Programme Manager, Dr Nkem Ene, the Executive Secretary, Prof Lai Erinosh, the Senior Advocacy Officer, Ms Theresa Effa and Capacity building Officer, Mr Adewale Adelede at the interactive session with the Senate Committee on Health. at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



(L-R) Senator (Dr.) Dantong, Senator (Dr.) Chris Ngige, Dr Ben Anyene decorating a member of THE Senate Committee on Health, Sen. Sefiu Kaka, as Champion for Immunization at the interactive session at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



The Chairman Board of Trustees of HERFON, Dr Ben Anyene decorating a member of Senate Committee on Health, Sen. SahabiYau, as Champion for Immunization in Nigeria. at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



Members of Senate Committee on Health listening keenly as the Programme Manager of HERFON, Dr Nkem Ene makes presentation at the interactive section. at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



(R-L) Mrs Theresa Kaka Effa, Dr. Emmanuel Sokpo, Prof Lai Erinoshio and Dr Nkem Ene at the interactive session with the Senate Committee on Health. at the National Assembly on 15th May 2012



Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFON)

Senate Committee on Health Interactive Session with HERFON on Parliamentary Advocacy for Immunization

S/N	Time	Activity	Facilitator
1	1.30-2.00pm	Guests arrive & Seated	
2	2.00-2.15pm	Formal Opening: - Opening prayers - Self Introductions	Committee Clerk
3	2.15-2.20pm	Welcome Remarks / Purpose of meeting	Senate Committee Chairman
4	2.20-2.25pm	Brief Statement	Executive Secretary, HERFON

5	2.25-2.45pm	Presentation	Programme Manager, HERFON
6	2.45-2.55pm	Question and Answer Session	
7	2.55-3.00pm	Call to sign up as Champions for Immunization	Senate Committee Chairman
8	3.00-3.10pm	Decoration of Champions for Immunization	BOT Chairman, HERFON
9	3.10-3.20pm	Statement of Commitment and Acceptance	Volunteer from Immunization Champions
10	3.20-3.25pm	Vote of Thanks	BOT Chairman / ES HERFON
11	3.25-3.30pm	Closing Remarks	Senate Committee Chairman
Photographs, Close-up media interviews and Departure			