



IS FAMILY PLANNING FUND NON-RELEASES UNDERMINING NIGERIA'S FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM TARGET ACHIEVEMENTS?



Many Advocates, One Voice



A myriad of challenges has been highlighted as preventing Nigeria from achieving set modern contraceptive prevalence targets including: stock-out of family planning commodities, leading to missed opportunities; high cost of accessing services, especially in the private sector, lack of adequate number of skilled service providers, poor infrastructure and lack of equipment needed to provide quality family planning services. Yet experts point to the solution which lies in the adequacy of financing for family planning. This brief aims to uncover the financing structure for family planning to decipher why despite funding efforts, Nigeria is yet to make significant progress towards mCPR targets for 2020.

THE FAMILY PLANNING FUNDING CONTEXT IN NIGERIA

Recall that the Nigerian Government in 2012 during the London Summit on Family Planning, committed to sustained financing for Family Planning, particularly the annual allocation of US\$4 million from the national budget to the fund for procurement of contraceptive commodities and then to achieve the national objective of a Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) of 36 percent by 2018 from a CPR of 15 percent in 2013. The Government of Nigeria then updated its commitment at the Family Planning Summit in London, UK on July 11, 2017. The Federal government's target of reaching 27% mCPR by 2020 was set.

Despite efforts by the Nigerian Government, there still exists a funding gap for Family Planning. Nigeria's Family Planning budget is typically composed of two different budget line items; one is the Counterpart funding to match grants from donors (UNFPA, the U.S. Agency for International Development USAID, UNICEF, & the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) and the other is government's funding to improve Family Planning services. To sustain upward trend for demographic dividends, Nigeria needs to be intentional with allocations and releases for the latter.

FAMILY PLANNING DISBURSEMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The creation of budget lines and allocation of fund for family planning activities had been a major stride in family planning financing in Nigeria over the years. Although there has been challenges associated to translating this effort into a viable means through timely releases of allocated fund. The table below shows the FP allocation and releases for the family planning between 2016 and 2020.

ALLOCATION TREND FOR FAMILY PLANNING IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's failure to meet the CPR national objective may be connected to its ability to meet its financial commitment through its annual budget to Family Planning.



Two Budget Lines identified with Family Planning under the Federal Ministry of Health; ERGP25112207 and ERGP25115182. These were specifically identified for Budget Year 2018, 2019 and 2020 under the following budget captions

TABLE 1 BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO FAMILY PLANNING TREND BY THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Year	Budget Code	Budget Caption	Amount
2018	ERGP25115182	Counterpart funding to match grants from UNFPA, USAID, BMGF & UNICEF	2,400,000,000
	ERGP25112207	Improve family planning services through contraceptives use interventions and counterpart funding	1,200,000,000
2019	ERGP25112207	Improve family planning services through contraceptives use interventions and counterpart funding	300,000,000
2020	ERGP25112207	Procurement and distribution of family planning commodities through counterpart funding to UNFPA	1,200,000,000

Source: Budget Office of the Federation

It is important to note that only in 2018 did the two Budget Lines – (Counterpart Funding to Match Grants and Improve Family Planning Services) received funding, this was the reason Family Planning received a cumulative N3.6 billion in 2018. Observe from table 1 above that Counterpart funding line of N2.4 billion was left out of the budget of subsequent years. In 2019, instead of the N1.2 billion that was committed for “Improve family planning services through contraceptives use interventions and counterpart funding”, the budget was cut to N300 million, this was a massive 75 percent reduction, now allocation was made to the “Counterpart Funding to Match Grants”. Typically, the funds are used to finance the national contraceptive forecast supply plan which includes commodities purchase and logistics.

TABLE 2 PROPOSED 2021 DRAFT

CODE	BUDGET LINE	REVISED 2020 ESTIMATE	PROPOSED 2021
ERGP25158195	Scale Up of Implementation of The National Family Planning Programme Through Capacity Building of Critical Human Resource for Health And System Strengthening	Nil	44,638,658
RGP22150350	Strengthening National Support for Young Women & Men in the Areas Of Youth Health Issues and Reproductive Health	Nil	30,000,000
ERGP30150324	5-Day National Sensitization/Advocacy Programme on Rape/Domestic Violence and Other Sexual Reproductive Health Issues	Nil	30,000,000
ERGP25143462	Procurement of Kits and Commodities for Community Health Influencers, Promoters and Servicers (Chips) And Operationalization	Nil	954,922,500
Total			1,059,561,158

Source: Budget Office of the Federation

In the proposed 2021 draft shown in table 2 below, new lines have been introduced for Family Planning. Although the proposed allocation falls short of the commitment by 11.7%.

Despite the fluctuations in allocations for family planning which may suggests low prioritisation to Family Planning by the FGON, fiscal years 2018 and 2019 had full releases. One may be tempted to laud the government's efforts. But these releases were not timely, for example, the 2019 funds were released in March 2020, while the 2020 funds are yet to be released.

In December 2019, the FMOH communicated to UNFPA that it had recommended that the FMOF release the 300 million naira allocated in the budget and will follow it up with 900 million naira from FMOH Service Wide Vote to meet the 2019 commitment. As of March 3rd

2020, the 300-million-naira was released with a promissory to advance what should have been in the budget (that is 1.2 billion naira) was made.

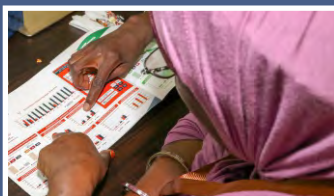
From the 2019 budget cut of 75 percent from the NGN1.2Bn approved, the NGN 300,000,000 funds released for the purchase of Family Planning commodities in 2020 created a funding gap. The impact was significant for the amount available for Family Planning commodities. In the 2020 Budget, the same Budget Line was repeated but without reduction in what was proposed, hence N1.2 billion was approved. But till date, no releases have been made and Mr President has presented the draft 2021 budget to the National Assembly.

YEAR	AMOUNT ALLOCATED	PERCENTAGE VARIANCE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	RELEASES	PERFORMANCE
2017	NGN 966,124,051	↑29.50%	NGN915,000,000	94.7%
2018	NGN 1,2,000,000,000	↑24.30%	NGN1,2,000,000,000	100%
2019	NGN 300,000,000	↓75%	NGN300,000,000	100%
2020	Commitment for the inclusion of N900,000,000 (75%) shortfall from 2019 to be released from the service wide votes	-	-	-
2020	NGN1,2,000,000,000	↑75%	-	-
2021 (proposed in draft budget)	NGN1,059,561,158	↓11.7%	-	-

If funds are allocated, why are releases not forthcoming or delayed? It may be worthwhile to observe the official process of releases to find the answers to this question.

THE PROCESS OF FUNDS RELEASE IN NIGERIA TO MDAs

Federal government typically releases funds based on the available revenue for the fiscal year. The releases are in batches and runs throughout the year. Regarding capital budget, these are mostly released every quarter of the year. For instance, if N800 million is allocated as a total capital budget for a Ministry or Agency, it is expected that it would in lumpsum be released in four batches. Although there are instances where funds might either be lower or higher than the expected release threshold for the quarter. But for this example, the expected threshold for N800 million quarterly will be N200 million.



The amount to be released to the Ministry, Agency and Department (MDAs) is approved by the Federal Ministry of Finance and the payment is made by the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation. This means that it is the Accountant General's Office that releases or credits the MDAs based on the amount approved by the Ministry of Finance.

When funds are released in lumpsum to the MDAs, they set their priority, assessing which projects are more critical. The received fund is then allocated based on various priority. It is important to note that there may be specific situations where the fund released for a particular project. Then in that case, the fund will be used in that respect. The

implication is that it may then be difficult to track releases for specific programs since it isn't full releases, pin pointing what was released before the end of the budgeting cycle maybe futile.

There are instances where little or no fund is released for the running cost or Capital budget for MDAs, when this happen the MDAs will usually apply/write formally to the Federal Ministry of

Finance for fund approval. If the feedback is that the fund has been approved, then the proceed to the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation to see what was delaying the release of the fund. It is often quoted colloquially that, to ensure fund releases, the MDAs must have strong working relationship with Federal Ministry of Finance and Office of the Accountant General of the Federation.

This means the Ministry of Health has to apply for the funds and be ready to receive it with the procurement plans documentations already done. The Ministry of Health may not have applied for these funds. Even if they have applied, they may not have made all the necessary arrangements for procurement prior to awaiting the funds. The importance of this for late applications is that it would affect the absorptive capacity of the Ministry since they may soon have to retire the funds at the end of the cycle. But all of the releases expected is ultimately dependent upon the availability of funds.

HAS THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH MADE THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR COUNTERPART FUND RELEASE FOR FAMILY PLANNING?

Key informant interviews were leveraged from the Budget Office of the Federation and the Federal Ministry of Health for this segment to ascertain if the application has been made by FMOH.

The FMOH has made applications for the funds allocated in the budget to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has released 50% of total funds to all MDAs as at September 2020. This is the ministry's highest releases so far with expectation for more releases in the coming month. This means that on a scale of preference, FMOH has chosen to fund areas/programs it deems as priority.

CONCLUSION

The importance of funding healthcare and particularly Family Planning in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. With our current state of population size in ratio to our human capital development index, it is now imperative that government needs to invest and urgently in Family Planning for the benefit of sustainable development and growth for the country. The recent non releases of family planning funds and the low priority accorded to family planning may undermine family planning programming for Nigeria.



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Facilitating Participatory Development



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