Family planning (FP) is an integral part of every individual, community and country’s existence and development. It optimizes an individual’s and family’s physical, psychological and social wellbeing and imparts a country’s social and developmental existence positively. Alone and at maximum utilization, it has the potential of reducing maternal mortality by 30% which is huge considering the multiplicity of causes and factors associated with maternal mortality.

The existence of a fully functional family planning unit at the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) and the presence of a budget line for FP in Nigeria are commendable proofs that the country takes FP services seriously. Over the years, the FP Unit, working in tandem with partners, has successfully coordinated FP activities and concerns and are able to come out yearly with realistic budgetary estimates for FP in the country to fund FP activities both from the demand and supply sides. FP budget allocation and release have been fair given the country’s numerous challenges but can be improved upon in terms of fund size and promptness of release.

In 2018, both FP line items received budget allocation but only one of the line items received allocation in 2019. This is a sharp contrast to financial and political commitments made by the Government of Nigeria for family planning.

FP national need projections for 2020 is about twenty million US Dollars ($20m) (cf 2019 projections of...). Out of this, $4m is expected from the government (N1.22b) as budgetary allocation. N20m of this expected fund from the government is for capacity building, monitoring and supervision activities while the rest (N1.2b) is for commodities. N300m (US$832,355) was released in February 2020 and the balance of N920m is expected soon (a letter to that effect was requested by the Hon Minister of Finance and Budget Planning and has been written by the Hon Minister of Health).

The ministry expects a UNFPA commitment of $10m, DFID commitment of $4.2m and some yet to be identified contribution from the USAID. The USAID contribution may be in kind as they did last year by donating $5m worth of commodities. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation contributes also in different ways.

As stated earlier, there is a definite government commitment and action. In the past and current year, this has been strengthened by the very favourable disposition of Champions like the Hon Minister of Finance. The Honorable Minister of Finance, it would be recalled, was among the Nigerian Delegation when the country renewed its commitment to improving the contraceptive prevalence rate in London in 2017. This underscores the importance of critical stakeholders being involved in FP decision and promotion events both nationally and internationally so they can have a sense of ownership, duty and responsibility and so bring to bear their influence. Government commitment of $4m for the year, however, is a far cry (20%) from the projected $20m needed. FP’s potential for aiding and sustaining development of the country should give it priority position during budgeting. Such an important contributor to the health of individuals
Planning and execution of programs in line ministries are disrupted and at best made difficult and more expensive because they can no longer be made to leverage on related programmes with which they were planned.

It is a show of lack of political will when budgetary allocations for FP are delayed. This decreases the respect the international organizations and community has for the country who were promised improved CPR. Donors also get discouraged and redirect their resources elsewhere to the detriment of the country. This generally retards development with the consequent ills of unemployment, high illiteracy rate, increased crime rate and youth restiveness.

Family Planning must be ongoing to be effective. Thus its place in the budget needs to shift so it can be among recurrent expenditures for which funds are released as at when needed while waiting for the completion of budget inputs, approval and assent. Related to this, the budgetary allocation must be increased in such a way that contributions from international organisations feed the lesser proportion of projections of family planning needs for any year.

The role of champions who advocate for FP budgetary allocations and early release must be recognized and harnessed. Such champions should be identified and urged to ceaselessly weigh in to effect prompt budget release. FP stakeholders must be sensitized continuously as often as they assume such roles. The engagement of civil society groups will especially raise the advocacy voices of stakeholders.

Many Advocates, One Voice

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