



## AS THE UK GOVERNMENT BEATS A RETREAT ON ITS COMMITMENT TO SAVE NIGERIAN LIVES, IT IS NOW TIME FOR OUR FINANCE MINISTER TO STEP IN



Former UK Prime Minister, Mr David Cameron at the London Family Planning Summit



Minister of Finance, Mrs Zainab Ahmed with MWAN President, Dr Minnie Oseji when she led the MWAN-PACFaH@Scale project Team to an advocacy visit in March 2021

On 11 July 2012, the then Prime Minister of the UK of the ruling Conservative Party opened the London Summit with a 14-minute speech pledging the UK government's commitment to safe motherhood by expanding access to modern contraceptives. **"British aid alone will save the life of a woman or girl in the developing world every two hours"** emerged as the tagline of the 2012 London Summit. To save women's lives, the UK government pledged financial support for contraceptive procurement to enable women to have healthy timing between births in countries with high maternal mortality rates. Nigeria was one of these countries. Between 2012 to 2020, the UK government pledged and paid into the Nigeria FP commodities basket fund a total of 21million pounds for the procurement of FP commodities. UK government support contributed to saving the lives of millions of Nigerian women who would otherwise be unable to delay pregnancies and be at risk of maternal death.

Fast forward to May 2021, the same Conservative Government which pledged to save lives of women in the developing world has beaten a retreat from this commitment, signaling that the UK will no longer be paying the annual £3 million into the basket fund for FP commodities of Nigeria. Nigerian women could only expect one-fifth of this sum for 2021, with no certainties about future funding. So, Nigeria is facing an 80 percent cut from the UK government's contribution to the procurement for FP commodities. This is coming at a time when families are increasingly unable to meet the out-of-pocket expenditure for commodities, consumables and logistics support.

Several experts in the Nigerian maternal health space have questioned the timing and merit of this decision. This is because the withdrawal of family planning funding in Nigeria will undoubtedly have a harmful impact on the UK government flagship Lafia health project, a project with FP as one of the three most significant components. In addition, financial savings gains may well lead to programmatic failure for the UK.

While the 23 civil society organizations of the Partnership for Advocacy in Child and Family Health at Scale project, join with the maternal health community of Nigeria to call on the UK government to rethink this ill-timed and harmful decision to Nigerian women, we also recognize the opportunity in the moment for the Nigerian Government.

The decision of the UK government to cut funding for maternal health comes at a time when the Federal of Nigeria has launched a new Family Planning Blueprint (2020-2024) on 12 October 2020. The Blueprint is Nigeria's roadmap for safe motherhood through the healthy timing offered by modern FP commodities. The Blueprint is a clear and operational document with targets, performance indicators, and an accountability mechanism for CSOs to track and assess implementation performance. But to implement the Blueprint, substantial cash backing is needed. Cash backing will ensure adequate commodities and equip health workers with the skills and practices to provide quality services. In an advocacy visit to the Federal Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN), a leading CSO partner in the Partnership for Advocacy for Child and Family Health at Scale project, the Minister on 26 March 2021, advised State Governments to play their part in order to access funds for Maternal and Child Health care including family planning through the Basic Healthcare provision fund. With the UK government's reduced financing of commodities, the Nigerian Government must prioritize adequate funding for family planning. This is a golden moment for to Government to keep its promise of delivering maternal health for Nigerian women of reproductive age. With the UK stepping back and beating a retreat, Nigerian health sovereignty is the true moment to benefit the nation's women.

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project