

PAS PARTNERS PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA TO HOST POLICY DIALOGUE ON RI FINANCING

20th January 2022



The Partnership for Advocacy in Child & Family Health at Scale (PACFaH@Scale) holds a panel on discussion **"SUSTAINING ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION (RI) FINANCING BEYOND THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES"**

At the 2022 Paediatric Association of Nigeria Conference (PANCONF 2022) Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria



Time: 11AM

Date: Thursday, 20th January 2022

Invitation link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89604053439>



Introduction

PAS collaborated with the Pediatric Association of Nigeria today to host this panel session in a policy dialogue style to discuss with policy makers in the presence of practitioners the milestones, challenges and opportunities of routine immunization financing within the context of the COVID19 and the PHCs.

Session title: Sustaining Routine Immunization Financing Beyond the context of COVID-19: Opportunities and Challenges.

Panelist: Dr. Hamza Abubakar, The Executive Secretary Kaduna PHCDA; Dr. Tijjani Husseini, The Executive Secretary Kano SPHCMB; Dr. Ibrahim Dangana, The Executive Secretary Niger PHCDA; Dr. Benedicta Adejola, representing The Permanent Secretary Lagos PHCB.

This session was moderated by Dr. Shina Ogunbiyi Maj. Gen. (rtd) mni representing the civil society voice as the Project Director of the Alumni Association of the National Institute (AANI-PAS).

Brief Session Background

Financing for Routine Immunization (RI) amongst other essential health services became topical for losing prioritization in 2020 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also witnessed many states revise their budgets downwards due to the dwindling crude oil prices and to accommodate for COVID-19 intervention funding. Also as a consequence of the onset of the pandemic, some essential health services including RI were reportedly disrupted in some states due to the lockdown, redistribution of human resources for health and in some cases insecurity. A review of the 2021 RI budget performance showed varying levels of releases. The Kaduna State government allocated N200 million in its integrated budgeting system for counterpart funding for RI, it released 100% of the total allocated fund to RI, for Kano State, out of the N380 million allocated, it released 37% and in Lagos State, out of the N301 million, only 30% was released. In Niger State, out of the N15 million allocated there were no releases. At the national level, the Federal government of Nigeria allocated N139 billion and released 96% in 2021. Kano, Kaduna and Niger states signed Health MOUs with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, what is the status of this MOUs and so far, does these MOUs help the states be more accountable? The National Strategy for Immunization and PHC system strengthening (NSIPSS) 2018-2028 has been operational and approaches its midpoint, will Nigeria be pausing and reflecting on how far and how well we have performed? How would the demand seeking behavior for routine immunization and PHC services be described at state level? Besides from, Kaduna state, Lagos, Niger and Kano made varying levels of releases in 2021, what are some of the challenges to full and timely releases of Routine Immunization funding? What are other challenges to RI financing experience? What are the opportunities for improvement? These are more were explored during the session.



The Executive Secretary Niger State PHCDA Dr. Ibrahim Dangana noted that financing RI must always take into consideration the associated costs that strengthens the service delivery. The state looks to take over financing in a few years. To promote accountability, the state has clear milestones aligned with the Health MoU signed with the BMGF. The demand for RI services isn't low in Niger state and the issues of resistance has been relegated to the background. The challenges of financing RI is not specific to Niger state, but funding logistics and cold chains has presented its own challenges to the state. With the financial decentralization, the local government now has more control hence the local government must be targeted with advocacies. The BHC PF is an opportunity for RI financing.



"Niger state seeks ownership to RI financing in the next three years"
 Dr. Ibrahim Dangana

"The Health MoU has improved Kano state's progress and accountability"
 Dr. Tijjani Husseini



The Executive Secretary Kano State PHCMB Dr. Tijjani Husseini noted that Kano is one of the more successful states with RI financing, thanks to the tripartite MoU with BMGF and the Aliko Dangote Foundation. Kano is making significant progress with RI coverage since 2018 increasing its coverage by 50%. Because of the structure of the MoU, there has been more accountability because of the high level participation in the reviews occurring six monthly. Kano is not different from other states when it comes to demand for services and access for services. We have been able to institute community engagements to drive demand. There has been challenges with timely releases of funds but some of this gaps have been filled by partner efforts.

The Executive Secretary Kaduna State PHCDA Dr. Hamza Abubakar noted that support from partners like PAS has aided them in their work in the state. He noted that for RI to be efficiently delivered there are a lot of things that go into the process – logistics, cold chain storage etc and herein lies the challenges especially at local levels. Kaduna state has maintained 15% allocation for health but there have been issues around cash backing. We have invested in health education to drive immunization but availability of HRH has affected efforts. RI is the responsibility of Federal, state and Local government and we cannot continue to rely on external funding. We have to ensure that LGA takes responsibility. Partnerships through the Health MoUs has supported this process. Despite all these, at the service delivery levels, we need to integrate service delivery for efficiency. Verticalization of services may set us back. Kaduna state has always been the first to provide their counterpart fund for the PHC MoUs and will continue to do this.



"Integrating services has helped Kaduna state save costs and increased efficiency in service delivery"
 Dr. Hamza Abubakar

"Lagos state is exploring domestic funding for RI"
 Dr. Benedicta Adekoja



The representative of the Permanent Secretary Lagos State PHCB Dr. Benedicta Adekoja noted that Lagos has the highest demand for RI services and this was further increased with the COVID-19 vaccine drive. The health seeking behavior in Lagos is high. Since 2019 RI services dwindled from 80% to 70% in 2020 due to the disenfranchisement of mothers due to the drive for COVID 19 vaccination. We have identified that health education has to increase to drive demand back up. The challenges with RI financing is evident, but with our tax system we are looking to drive domestic resource mobilization. The local governments don't believe in financing RI services and provide these services for free. There needs to be more engagement at LGA levels. The opportunities for us is that the private sector can be more involved in the ramping up of RI financing for Lagos state. Lagos state has encouraged scorecard assessments to help identify areas where they are underperforming.

The chairman of the session noted that it made economic sense to plan for financing for RI. Perhaps if policy makers were made accountable for deaths, it may spur them to perform more efficiently.

The states speaking on RI opportunities in their states noted that;

1. Niger state noted that they have already started implementing the BHCPF and have started disbursing N300,000 to all PHCs in the state to help support their delivery. He also thinks advocacies to LG will aid efforts.
2. Kaduna state noted that the LG provides opportunities even if we consider only operations. Integrating services will increase efficiency at that level.
3. Kano state noted that laws should be enshrined to show in clear terms who is responsible for what so the LGA will be guided. Work planning at all levels is important to guide the implementation process eg the RI Plans with clear specifications on financing needs.
4. Lagos state noted that we must look inward for generating funds to fill the financing gaps. Judicious expenditure of funds is another important opportunity, government must look to realistic in its planning and expenditure for services.



Group photo of panelists, session chair and moderator of the session

Conclusion

PAS is expanding accountability of national and state level RI planning and implementation through active CSO dialogue and participation, also through CSOs holding government account to make adequate allocations for vaccination with timely releases.

Media links

- [NTA News: Immunization funding - stakeholders brainstorm on challenges & opportunities](#)



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