



HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH GROUP: SHAPING NIGERIA'S ROADMAP TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Nigeria currently has some of the worst health outcomes in the world, due in part to the poor state of primary health care services, which are characterised by a lack of coverage, especially in rural areas, inadequate health facilities and high out of pocket payments. The 2014 National Health Act (NHAct), which sets out a legal framework for the provision of health services, has the potential to transform health care provision in Nigeria and, through the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) to extend primary health care to all Nigerians. As such, the NHAct has become synonymous with the country's roadmap to Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The NHAct is currently at a critical stage where guidelines are being developed for its implementation in concurrence with a review of Nigeria's 2004 National Health Policy, the draft Healthcare Financing Policy and the National Strategic Health Development Plan (2010-2015). As part of this process researchers from Health Policy Research Group (HPRG) at the University of Nigeria are playing a prominent role, enabled by their reputation as experts in the field of health financing and policy and trusting relationships with both health policymakers and civil society organisations.

ASSISTING IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Professor Obinna Onwujekwe is the co-chair of the Healthcare Financing, Equity and Investment sub-committee of the Technical Working Group for the Operationalisation of the NHAct. He is also supporting the Healthcare Financing Unit of the Federal Ministry of Health to develop plans for UHC, and leads the team responsible for developing the National Healthcare Financing and Equity Policy and Implementation Strategy. Since the completion of the NHAct, the Committee has been tasked with producing guidelines for managing the BHCPF and making healthcare purchasing decisions such as what health services should be made available to all citizens and who should be exempt from payments.

UNDERPINNING RESEARCH

As part of the RESYST governance research theme, researchers developed an accountability framework for implementing the BHCPF, which encompasses mechanisms for strategic planning, strong and transparent monitoring and supervision systems and systematic reporting. The framework was developed based on interviews with key stakeholders involved in implementing the Fund at national, state and local government levels.

A policy brief that contains the framework and recommendations for improving accountability was shared at a dissemination meeting and discussed with members of the sub-committee on Healthcare Financing, Equity and Investment during their regular meetings. By feeding directly into discussions regarding the formulation of guidelines for the BHCPF, the research has potential to improve how the Fund is implemented and help to ensure that money flows to primary health care services as intended.



CONVENING POLITICIANS, ACADEMICS AND ACTIVISTS

As well as directly contributing to policy discussions, the policy brief has also been shared with civil society and health advocacy organisations in Nigeria, including the Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFON), Nigeria Health Watch and the Health Sector Reform Coalition, with members including Save the Children, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Nigeria, and the Nigeria Medical Association.

HPRG are playing an important role in coordinating meetings and providing a platform for academic, policy and advocacy organisations to come together and discuss the NHAct and UHC in Nigeria. One example is the South East Health Summit in September 2015, which brought together more than 800 policymakers, health workers, development agencies, programme managers and others to discuss the need to reform the health system towards achieving UHC in the region.

Through these activities, HPRG is striving to maintain the focus on health system reform and UHC in Nigeria at a crucial time when funding shortages and political change threaten the ability of the government to fulfil its promise of health care for all.

Publications and resources

Uzochukwu B, Onwujekwe O, Mbachu C, 2015 **Implementing the Basic Health Care Provision Fund in Nigeria: a framework for accountability and good governance** <http://resyst.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/Nigeria-accountability-brief>