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REPORT:

SUSTAINABLE CONVERSATIONS 3.0: Challenges of Effective Service Delivery in the Nigerian Public Health care Administration.



ThistlePraxis Consulting Limited recently hosted the third edition of Sustainable Conversations, a Thought Leadership Breakfast Series on Sustainable Development with the theme: **Public Health: Tackling Challenges for Effective Service Delivery.** The event, which took place on Saturday, November 10, 2012 at Radisson Blu, Anchorage Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos; brought together policymakers, experts and stakeholders in the sector and allied industries with an underlying aim of engaging, understanding, interrogating and supporting the road map towards achieving sustainable primary health care in Nigeria.

The discussants present at the event were professionals with local and international experiences. The Lead discussant was the Honourable Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Health, Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate. Other discussants included: Dr. Jide Idris, Commissioner of Health, Lagos State; Dr. Mrs. Angela Oyo-Ita, Commissioner of Health, Cross River State; Fola Laoye, Chairman, Hygeia Group; Dr. Adesina Fagbenro-Byron, South-West Regional Coordinator, DFID. Dr. Akudo Ikemba, CEO, Friends of the Global Fund Africa (Friends Africa), moderated conversations.

This edition was held in partnership with *Friends of the Global Fund, Africa* (Friends Africa) and *Insight Health Consulting Limited*.

Some of the resolutions and key discussion points are summarized below:

Background Presentation

1. Growth in GDP does not necessarily translate to better health outcomes. So, concrete steps must be taken to improve health care even with increasing GDP.
2. Implementing existing policies like the National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP) and the National Health Bill conscientiously will result in better health outcomes.
3. Other factors that will lead to desirable health indices are: improving health insurance coverage; identifying and supporting change agents within the health system; learning from best practices elsewhere; promoting accountability by involving communities in the running of health facilities; providing complaint systems; strengthening education and regulation of

professionals plus using Information Technology e.g. mobile phones to improve data collection, accountability, supply chain, etc.

Lead Discussant

1. The 'Saving One Million Lives' Initiative, which was launched by President Goodluck Jonathan in October, 2012; a programme that has been described as an ambitious and comprehensive scheme; is aimed at overturning Nigeria's grim health indicators. The scheme comprises four key elements, which are: the provision of basic services (logistics and Human Resources), the prevention of non-communicable diseases; clinical governance (improving the quality of care) and unlocking the private sector market potential. The fourth factor is the most transformational element. For instance, when people go to places like India for medical care, they go to private facilities. Hence, the importance of developing Nigeria's health care so as to make the country a medical tourism destination cannot be overemphasized.
2. The Minister's is 'a talk less and do more' approach to ensure that health indices are drastically improved in a few years whilst the Federal Ministry believes in the value of engaging stakeholder networks; frequent meetings may result in talking more about the issues than finding solutions to them.
3. Nigeria has the most qualified professionals, administering her health ministry and actively operating in the industry in comparison to countries with better health indices that have less qualified personnel. This expertise must reflect on indices through efficiency and effective implementation of policies.
4. The Federal Government is committed to attracting and retaining private investments in the Health sector in order to encourage health tourism in the country as most countries where Nigerians migrate to offer better private health services whilst their public facilities grapple with similar issues as Nigeria.

Other Discussants and participants

1. Health is not just about drugs; but encompasses food, shelter and lifestyle. Information dissemination through public awareness initiatives plays a vital role in management and planning of resources for public health care administration as people need to be aware of basic

self-help and Do-It-Yourself tests for prevalent medical conditions.

2. An Integrated Management System (IMS) is required to tackle inadequate Human Resources. Therefore, it is superfluous to duplicate projects.
3. There is the need for efficient data collection and analyses because even when set targets in health programmes are met; it is difficult to see integrated data that would assist in reconciling accounts and making future projections. In other words, services must be evaluated and monitored by gathering adequate information.
4. Service delivery is most effective at the service window. Therefore, planning must strengthen the weakest link. In other words, the common man must be made the index of planning. Through a DFID pilot initiative at the Keffi General Hospital, a framework to reduce waiting time and streamline data processing systems was implemented. In specific case studies, service time was reduced from 3 hours to 30 minutes in the hospital and results were shared with the Federal Government for nationwide implementation.
5. Health care delivery is systemic. So, even the cleaner in the hospital must find his bearings in order to ensure optimal performance. Here, teamwork is the watchword for holistic service delivery. Teamwork can be explicated in ways that show that allowing small undesirable actions could bring untold consequences.
6. Processes, through which services are rendered, must be improved while maintenance and proper oversight should never be neglected. It is imperative to differentiate between clinical management and operational management. Needless to say, both must be mutually self-supporting.
7. The private sector commences its operations by looking at the market. When demand is not structured (i.e. when it is extremely fragmented or diversified), the process becomes complicated.
8. It is key to broaden access to health insurance. Service providers should have strategies to reach 100% rather than the top 5 - 30% of the population. Without large volumes, service will still be fragmented. Furthermore, it is vital to make health insurance holistic.
9. Per capita spend on health care and GSM (airtime) in Nigeria are \$62 and \$57 (US Dollars) respectively. Since spending on health care is limited, it should be used efficiently.
10. Mental health assessments ought to be differentiated from psychiatric care while vigorous public enlightenment campaigns must be mounted to sensitize the populace.
11. The trend, whereby donor agencies hoard information rather than integrating interventions, should be discontinued in order to ensure a consciously orchestrated sector-wide participatory approach. The insistence of donor organizations on sponsoring particular health facilities rather than a widespread distribution of resources to service points, where they are most needed should be discouraged immediately.

Editor's Note:

A Resource Paper developed from this event will be forwarded to the Federal Government through the Ministry of Health and will also be sent to all State Ministries of Health. It will also be widely circulated for concerted efforts at achieving the discussed objectives. To request a copy, please send an email to: sustainableconvos@thistlepraxisconsulting.com.