

**Civil Society Advocacy Meeting on Universal Health Coverage
in Nigeria
for the UN High-Level Meeting**

Meeting Report

Tuesday 30 July, Abuja, Nigeria

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Civil Society Advocacy Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in Nigeria for the UN High-Level Meeting

UN House, Abuja, Nigeria
Tuesday 31st July 2019



Group Photo: L-R (front row) – **Mr. Sherry Joseph** of IFRC/NRCS (1st, squatting), **Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje** of NUHCAG/AFRIHEALTH (3rd, in white), **Dr. Clement Peter** of the WHO (4th), **Mr. A. B. Sa’adu** rep. of Permanent Secretary MBNP (5th), **Gabriel Undelikwo** of UNAIDS (8th); and other participants at the Country Advocacy Meeting

INTRODUCTION:

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a global priority, important to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in low-and-middle income countries. There is a global commitment to achieve UHC. When all 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN) agreed on the SDGs in New York in 2015, they set out an ambitious agenda for a safer, fairer and healthier world by 2030. The goals include a broad array of targets across different sectors. The target to achieve UHC is a beacon of hope for a healthier world. The UN High-Level Meeting (UN HLM) on Universal Health Coverage will take place on 23 September 2019 during the

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) high-level week. This is a great opportunity for all universal health coverage (UHC) champions and advocates to make your voice heard and help mobilise high-level political attention globally and in your countries. The theme of the HLM-UHC is 'Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World.' This UN HLM will be the last chance before 2023, the mid-point of the SDGs, to mobilise the highest political support to package the entire health agenda under the umbrella of UHC and sustain health investments in a harmonised manner. To do this, it is critical to identify how the political declaration on UHC can add value to these efforts and set milestones towards achieving UHC by 2030.

UHC is defined as ensuring all people have access to the needed key promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services of good quality at an affordable cost without the risk of financial hardship linked to paying for healthcare services. According to World Health Organization (WHO), at least half of the world's population do not have full coverage of essential healthcare services. Furthermore, about 100 million of the world's population is still being pushed into extreme poverty (defined as living on 1.90 USD or less a day) because they have to pay for healthcare services. About 12% of the world's population (Over 800 million people) spends at least 10% of their household budget on healthcare services, which is capable of pushing them into poverty.

The demand for this meeting was raised by Nigerian UHC Advocacy Group (NUHCAG), a coalition of civil society organisations in Nigeria. Technical facilitation and coordination of NUHCAG was provided by Afrihealth Optonet Association [NGO/CSOs Network]. NUHCAG made their request to the Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (CSEM) of UNHC2030, and International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Society (IFRC) followed up on their request. The West Africa Cluster office of IFRC coordinated with UNAIDS office in Nigeria and agreed to cohost the event along with WHO Afrihealth and Nigerian Red Cross Society.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Country Advocacy Meeting in Nigeria is to create a space for civil society and stakeholders to discuss domestic priorities for UHC and how to leverage the HLM on UHC to address key challenges in ensuring that we 'leave no one behind' in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide information about UHC, UNGA and HLM on UHC with an emphasis on its importance at the country level.
2. To present UHC2030 Key "Asks" and CSEM Priority Actions.
3. To discuss the key gaps and priorities to 'leave no one behind'.
4. To explore priority issues and actions for UHC, building on community-led evidence.
5. To provide civil society with a national level platform to advocate for an effective UN HLM that results in ambitious national commitments to advance UHC.

6. To mobilize political leadership for high-level government representation and concrete commitments at the HLM, and influence the overall outcome of the UN HLM on UHC; and
7. To improve awareness of the Health civil society on the HLM, UHC2030 and CSEM for improved UHC policy development and implementation including accountability mechanisms.

JUSTIFICATION:

Nigeria’s health indices still remain unbelievably poor and frightening over the years with antenatal coverage below 65%, skilled birth attendant below 42% and poor service delivery at our Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities. Impoverishing out-of-pocket expenses by households remains the major source of health expenditure, rising from 64.6% in 2003 to 76% in 2017, as a percentage of Total Health Expenditure (THE). Since the National Health Insurance Scheme was set up in 2005, less than 5% of the population has been covered by any form of health insurance. Nigeria still lags behind in ensuring health equity.

In consideration of all the above indices there is a need to institutionalize UHC as an intrinsic agenda towards the achievement of SDG3 that relates to good health and wellbeing. The country advocacy meeting becomes an imperative, justifiable and urgent action.

DETAILS OF DELIBERATIONS:

1. **Registration** of all the participants. There was a total of 34 participants- 26 participants were from the civil society, 5 from the UN (WHO and UNAIDS) and 3 from the Government (Ministry of Budgeting and National Planning and State Malaria Control Program).
2. **Introductory presentation** on objectives and expected outcomes by Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje, National Coordinator, NUHCAG.
3. **Goodwill Messages by:**
 - **Ministry of Budget & National Planning (Federal Government of Nigeria):**
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP) **Mr. Ernest A. Umakhikhe** – represented by the Director, Social Development, Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP) **Mr. A. B. Sa’adu**; presented a goodwill message on behalf of the Government of Nigeria. He appreciated NUHCAG, IFRC, WHO, UNAIDS and AFRIHEALTH for their efforts in bringing together this group to discuss. He referred to CSO involvement as a paradigm shift in health care access in Nigeria and assured of government support to achieving UHC. *“As a government, collectively we commit to ensure everyone in Nigeria has access to health care”*, emphasised **Mr. A. B. Sa’adu**, Director, Social Development, MBNP
 - **WHO country representative:**
Dr. Clement Peter, the acting WHO Representative, Nigeria, thanked all those involved in organizing the Civil Society Advocacy meeting. He emphasized that access to quality healthcare is a right of the citizens, and the government is responsible to provide care. The government cannot do it alone; there is a need for CSOs to make government

accountable. *“We cannot achieve UHC if everyone in the family cannot access health care services.” Dr Peter stressed.*

- **Afrihealth Optonet Association:**
“The efforts to achieve UHC should prioritise reviving and strengthening public health systems to provide health services to all who need them and protect populations from impoverishing health care costs” Dr Uzodinma Adirieje, National Coordinator, NUHCAG; and CEO/National Coordinator, Afrihealth Optonet Association (CSOs Network)
 - **NRCS:**
“Universal health coverage cannot be achieved and sustained without increasing the awareness of the general public, especially, with the heightened security situation in certain part of the country.” Dr. Ibrahim Juma Ibrahim, Head of Health, Nigeria Red Cross Society national hq.
- 4 **Presentation by Mr. Sherry Joseph** of IFRC about Mission, Objectives and Activities of **UHC2030 and CSEM.**
 - 5 **Presentation by Dr Moses Ongom** of WHO on UNGA, HLM on UHC, implication of CAM, role of CSOs and country data on UHC.
 - 6 **Comments, Questions and Answer Session:** Participants contributed to the subjects/ discussions and also sought/received clarifications from the presenters - Dr. Adirieje, Mr. Sherry and Dr. Moses
 - 7 **The six key 'Asks'** for HLM on UHC were adopted after exhaustive deliberation anchored by **Hauwa Abbas** and **Yetunde Orungbamade.**
 - 8 Participants broke into 5 groups to provide answers to a particular section of the **National UHC questionnaires and additional questions.**
 - 9 **Brain Storming session:** Anchored by **Mrs Lizzy Igbine** and **Loretta Ahuokpeme.** Participants discussed how to use UHC2030 and CSEM to advocate to the government and other stakeholders in Nigeria.
 - 10 **Resolutions, Prayers and Commitments by the CAM:**
The civil society at this session:
 - i. Resolved to, and respectfully request **His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari**, GCFR to personally attend the UN HLM on UHC to be held in New York on 23rd September 2019 and personally present Nigeria’s commitments to UHC2030;
 - ii. Adopted the global UHC2030 ‘Key Asks’ adopted by the UN; AND hereby request the Federal Government of Nigeria to:
 - a) Ensure political leadership beyond health by committing to achieve UHC for healthy lives and wellbeing for all ages as a social contract;
 - b) Leave no one behind by providing equitable access to quality healthcare service to all people in Nigeria, with financial protection;
 - c) Increase public financing for health to provide the necessary financial protection that supports healthcare-seeking behaviours;
 - d) Improve involvement of CSOs and citizens, transparency and accountability at all levels by establishing multi-stakeholders mechanisms for engaging the whole of society for a healthier world; and

- e) Invest heavily and continuously in Health workers, including community health workers.
- ii.
- iii. The NUHCAG and Nigeria Civil society commit to collaborate with Government in achieving actions, transparency and accountability towards achieving UNC2030; and to:
 - a) Hold regular periodic national and subnational UHC stakeholder consultations/ meetings;
 - b) Organize and facilitate/support periodic expanded stakeholders reviews of Nigeria's UHC achievements and challenges; and
 - c) Collectively continue to strategise towards achieving the 2030 targets for UHC in Nigeria.

Closing remarks were given by **Dr. Ibrahim Juma** and **Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje** on behalf of the NRCS and AFRIHEALTH respectively, while **Mr. Ahmad Rufai Abubakar** gave the vote of thanks on behalf of NUHCAG.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/METHODOLOGY:

NUHCAG shall identify key UHC stakeholders in Nigeria and synergise with them using advocacy, mobilization,, partnerships/collaborations, evidence-generation, capacity development and monitoring; in order to achieve the objects and targets of UHC2030 in Nigeria.

OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING:

1. Completed country level UHC needs assessment (Questionnaire)
2. Articulated UHC2030 'Key Asks' for Nigeria was prepared for presentation to the CSEM Secretariat;
3. CS and stakeholders understood the CSEM Priority Action;
4. Official CS UHC commitment recommendations for government were agreed upon;
5. Participants committed themselves to continuous dialogue with, and support civil society national consultations on 'Achieving the UHC' in Nigeria within the next 12 months and on annual basis towards 2030;
6. CSOs were sensitized about their roles in the forthcoming UN HLM on UHC and achievement of the objects of UHC2030;
7. Civil Society unanimously agreed to work with the Federal Government and Stakeholders to achieve the objects of UNC in Nigeria;
8. Nigerian Government assure of its commitment to support the civil society advocacy meeting and achievement of UHC2030 targets in Nigeria;
9. It's agreed that civil society/NUHCAG representatives should be included in Governments' official delegations to the HLM; and
10. Official CS UHC commitment recommendations for government.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

1. At short notice, 22 leading CSOs and CSO networks/coalitions were mobilized from all regions of the country with the support of the CSEM, UNAIDS, WHO and IFRC to organize the Nigeria civil society advocacy meeting. Nigeria was not included in the initial CSEM plan for this type of advocacy events.
2. Nigerian CSOs spoke with one voice in demanding that the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) makes realistic commitments at the HLM based on our country needs.
3. Country specific challenges, data and information were reviewed and deliberated upon.
4. The six global UHC2030 key 'Asks' were adopted.
5. Country specific civil society Plan of Action (PoA) was developed and adopted.
6. Civil Society committed its members/NUHCAG to support, work with and hold FGN accountable to their commitments after the HLM (e.g. using Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) as a review of progress towards Nigeria's UHC commitments)

PLAN OF ACTIONS (POA)

Nigeria UHC CAM Meeting 2019				
S/No	Key Action Points	Responsible Person(s)/Group/ Organisation(s)	Timeline	Comment
1	Ensure CSO is included in the representation at the HLM	Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje/NUHCAG Abuja based members	August	
2	Engage with the FMOH and Foreign affairs to gather information concerning the forth coming HLM	UNAIDS, WHO NUHCAG Abuja based members	August	UN to raise the topic during the UN briefing to the HLC delegation from Nigeria.
3	Identify with other CSOs advocating for UHC for a harmonised and more coordinated advocacy, to speak with one voice	Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje/NUHCAG Abuja based members	August wk 1	
4	Present the adopted communique to the identified stakeholders and push for the President to lead Nigeria delegation to HLM, and personally present Nigeria's commitment on UHC (Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Budget and Planning, Health, Chief of Staff, NHIS, NPHCDA, ALGON, Governor's Forum, National Council on Health, National Council on Planning, Secretaries to the Federal and State Government)	Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje/NUHCAG	August	NUHCAG to ensure state inclusion
5	Request that the 7 commitments of CSOs are inputted into the National commitment on UHC	Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje/NUHCAG Abuja based members	August	This should also be cascaded to the state level
6	Continuously engage with Governments, MDAs, UN, partners, multilateral agencies and stakeholders to organize civil society national consultations on 'Achieving the UHC' in Nigeria within the next 12 months and on annual basis towards 2030	Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje/ NUHCAG/ Afrihealth Optonet Association/ Red Cross	Ongoing	

CONCLUSIONS:

A successful civil society advocacy meeting was held at UN house in Abuja on 30 July, 2019. There is a lot of follow up work to be done towards UCH2030 in Nigeria as identified and recommended action.

NEXT STEPS:

- Activate our post CAM plans.
- Need to quickly commence targeted advocacy towards achieving our aim towards HLM.
- Plan for active regional and state level advocacy.
- Plan for a National UHC consultation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Annex

Press Release 30 July, 2019

Press Conference 31 July, 2018