



**CAMPAIGN TO SAVE AFRICAN
WOMEN FROM PREGNANCY-
RELATED DEATHS- (“SAVE”)**

“Evil prevails if good men [and women] do nothing” (Burke E)

24th October 2011

Dear Supporter/Friend,

National Health Bill.-The intrigues!

Permit me to share with you a brief of the lingering crises that had raised so many contending issue among health care Bodies and Association in Nigeria, regarding the passage of the National Health Bill .

The National Health Bill was signed into law in 2010 by the National Assembly after angry market women association,NGOs and other pressure groups protested at the National Assembly against it delay, which has lingered for about seven years.

The Bill as the Nigerians law requires, was passed to president Goodluck Jonathan Immediately for his assent.

President Goodluck Jonathan, whose assent is currently delaying the passage of the bill is the third president dealing with the bill. The Importance of this bill in the health of women and children cannot be over stretched as the bill will refocus the attention of the Federal Government towards improving maternal and infant Health in Nigeria through proper funding mechanism, define, streamline and provide a framework for the standardization and regulation of health services in the country.

The bill also seeks to spell the right and duties of health care providers, health workers, health Agencies and users, as well as serve as a guide in the development, promotion and formulation of National health.

The Bill also dwell on issues like the rights and duties of users and health care personnel, Health establishment, control and the use of Blood, Blood product, Tissue and gametes in human, National health research etc.

It should be noted that Nigerians has not had any major legislation on issues pertaining to health and a strategic mechanism towards financing health care.

The Bill also proposes a minimum of 2 percent of the consolidated revenue to be used to fund primary health care. It also makes available resource for training health care personnel at primary facilities, drugs, equipment and health care maintenance to ensure that the children and women get free medical treatment.

The assent of this bill will make it possible for accident victims in an emergency to get free medical treatment.

The NHB would be strategic for the reduction of maternal Mortality, by making primary health care accessible to rural women, who currently accounts for about 70% of Nigerian population. The current statistics of maternal deaths is alarming as only about 35% of women get access to primary Health Care Facilities, The rest of women deliver themselves or attended to by quarks. No doubt Nigeria has the highest rate of MMR and second only to India (Statistically however Nigeria has the highest rate of MMR in the World).

Funding primary care will get healthcare personnel back to rural areas, there by increasing the percentage of women who have skilled care during pregnancy delivery.

Despite all the advantage and the benefits of the accents of this bill by Mr President, There exist a whole lot of confusion, accusation and counter accusation among the various professional bodies in the Health Industry.

While many Nigerians have praised the bill, other health professionals under the aegis of Assembly of health care professional Association and union (AHPAU) had threatened to disrupt healthcare systems and embark on industrial action, if the bill is signed into law by Mr President. According to the AHPAU Section 1, subsection 1, Section 8 Subsection 1 and 2 and section 9 subsection 1c of the National Health Bill overtly or covertly usurp or infringes on the specific legal and statutory functions of various professionals. Regulatory councils and boards in the health sector. the Groups also condemns the power given to medical Doctor and frowns at the preservation of the executive Chairmanship of the national tertiary Hospital Commission for Doctors Alone and the composition and tenure of the proposed federal capital territory primary Health care Board confers too much power on the Ministry of Health.

The Nigerian medical Associations have completely disagreed with the assertions of AHPAU. The NMA believes the bill will make way for the creation of 38 agencies and only two of this agencies will be preserved exclusively to medical Doctors, In an interview session between Joseph okhogenun/Ibukunoluwa Kayode (The Guardian reporters) and Dr Ejike Oji the country director of IPAS (also medical doctor) claims that the major beneficiary of the Bill are the Nurses and Pharmacists since about 60% percent of the health budget will be used in funding Primary health care

facility/personnel(mostly Nurses) and purchase of Drugs which is the domain of pharmacist.

In as much, we accept the opinion and issues being raised by the several professional health bodies as germane, we implore all parties to dialogue and resolve amicably without unnecessary delay and power play which will have a rippling effect on the increasing numbers of Women and Children who are victims a dilapidated infrastructure and weak health policy which will hopefully be addressed by the National Health Bill if accented to by Mr President.

We would be happy to receive feedback on this issue abuja@sweetmotherinternational.org.Its our hope that you join in this debate thereby making it an issue of public concern thus facilitating the resolution of the current deadlock and fast track the accent of this bill By Mr President within the shortest possible time.

Thank you for the time and have a fulfilled day.

Yours Sincerely,

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