

13<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Key Contact: Professor Oladimeji Oladepo  
Cell: +2348033263302 OR +2348054556623  
Email: [oladepod@yahoo.com](mailto:oladepod@yahoo.com)

## **HOW TO MAKE HEALTH MARKETS WORK BETTER FOR POOR PEOPLE**

A conference on the role of innovators and entrepreneurs in improving the performance of private providers of healthcare is taking place at the Chelsea Hotel, Abuja from the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> January 2009. The conference will be followed by the annual meeting of the Future Health Systems Research Programme Consortium.

Improving health is vital for development which is why it is the focus of 3 of the Millennium Development Goals.

However, many countries are still grappling with the best way to strengthen health systems to ensure that mothers do not die in childbirth, children grow up strong and well and that we halt the spread of communicable diseases like HIV, TB and malaria.

The conference provides the opportunity to think seriously about how we can shape the health systems of the future so that they meet the needs of poor people. It brings together leading experts from Government, academia, the private and not for profit sectors.

The opening ceremony of the conference featured a statement from the Right Honourable Dimeji S. Bankole, Speaker of the House of Representatives, stressed the importance of the conference:

*“I truly appreciate the overall goal of this workshop which is meant to share experiences on innovative health interventions that benefit the poor and under-privileged segments of our population...I consider this discourse of utmost relevance in the overall strive to deliver affordable, accessible, qualitative and all-encompassing healthcare through a complementary multi-stakeholder partnership...Initiatives such as conceptualised by this workshop are important to us in the House of Representatives, and we look forward to informed inputs that would arise from this workshop.”*

The conference has allowed Nigerian health experts to share their experiences and engage with interested observers from Uganda, India, the UK and US.

Professor Oladimeji Oladepo, Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Ibadan presented on research that is being conducted with patent medicine vendors. He pointed out that as they are a major source of malaria medication in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas, they are key to ensuring access to appropriate malaria medication and insecticide treated nets.

Malaria accounts for 25-35% of child deaths in Nigeria and is a major cause of poverty. Currently many people use cheaper, ineffective anti-malarials.

Other speakers stressed the importance of:

- Thinking creatively about how Government can work with the private sector and communities to regulate the health sector,
- Using existing professional and social associations and networks to ensure that health care providers offer a quality service,
- How low cost technologies can make health care more affordable and
- Learning from other countries about what works and how it can be adapted to the Nigerian situation and building on local innovations.

The conference is being hosted by The School of Public Health at the University of Ibadan. It concluded with the presentation of an action plan for taking forward a health intervention in Nigeria.

**NOTES FOR JOURNALISTS:**

- Professor Oladimeji Oladepo from the School of Public Health at the University of Ibadan is available for interview on any areas related to this meeting. We also have spokespeople from the US, UK, Uganda, India and China who are happy to assist with any questions that you may have.
- Future Health Systems is an international Research Programme Consortium funded by the UK Department for International Development and led by Johns Hopkins University in the US. It has partners in the US, UK, Nigeria, Uganda, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and China. The Nigerian partner is the School of Public Health at the University of Ibadan.
- You can find out more about Future Health Systems on our website [www.futurehealthsystems.org](http://www.futurehealthsystems.org).