

15th January 2009

**INNOVATIONS ON MARKETISED HEALTH SYSTEMS
FUTURE HEALTH SYSTEMS CONFERENCE
ABUJA, NIGERIA
12-13 JANUARY 2009**

The purpose of the Future Health Systems Research Programme Consortium (FHS) is to generate knowledge that shapes health systems to benefit the world's poor and to translate today's commitments to global health and development into sustainable improvements in health and reductions in poverty

On the 12-13 January 2009 University of Ibadan, an FHS partner, organised a conference in Abuja in order to bring together academics, policy makers, civil society and private sector innovators and entrepreneurs in order to share strategies for making health markets work better for poor people.



The conference was stimulated by FHS research and communications work on marketised health systems and University of Ibadan research into the role of Patent Medicine Vendors (PMVs) in improving access to appropriate, quality medicines for malaria and insecticide treated bed 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.

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 they are a major source of malaria medication in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas. Initial studies have found that most PMVs feel stronger government regulation is needed to reduce the availability of fake drugs, while nearly a quarter called for self-regulation through professional associations. Over 90 percent of PMVs thought it was a good idea to involve community members in monitoring the quality of drugs - a view echoed by government. As a result an intervention has been put in place in Oyo State to increase consumer knowledge and expectations for consumer rights, including the creation of effective regulatory partnerships for ensuring quality and affordability of drug supplies.

The conference provided an opportunity to share learning across a number of Nigerian projects on health markets as well as hearing from researchers from India, the United States, the United Kingdom and Uganda.

The conference stimulated considerable media interest - indeed a number of journalists attended the meeting and have had ongoing engagement with the University of Ibadan on this work. This led to 2 print articles in the Nigerian Tribune, coverage on NTA TV channel and a number of additional requests for interviews, including the Channel TV, with Professor Oladepo. The research team will shortly be appearing on ATM Express, a radio and TV phone in programme in Oyo State, to engage with interested community members.

MTN, a telecommunications company, is interested in understanding how mobile phone technology could be utilised in the roll out of programmes with PMVs.

The meeting was attended by a number of policy makers including:

- Honourable Dimeji S Bankole, Speaker of the House of Representatives represented by Honorable Dr Alaba Lad-Ojomo, Chairman of the House Committee on Health
- Hon Saudatu Sani, National Assembly
- Dr. Otoh Daniel, NPHCDA
- The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Health was represented by Dr Hussaini Adamu, Federal Ministry of Health
- Mrs A P Ugwa, Director Department of Planning and Statistics, Federal Ministry of Health was represented by Mrs M M Ayemuba, Federal Ministry of Health
- A B Amaeshi, NAFDAC
- Professor Babatunde Osotimehin Minister of Health was represented by Dr M Lecky, Department of PRS, Federal Ministry of Health

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

“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.”

Follow up from the meeting with policy makers has already begun. DFID staff members have expressed an interest in hearing more about how work with PMVs on malaria might be taken forwards in the Northern States. The Commissioner of Health has been in touch to talk about Mini Labs, a device that helps test the quality of malaria drugs. USAID could not attend but have contacted us to learn more.

You can find out more about Future Health Systems on our website www.futurehealthsystems.org.

Key Contact: Professor Oladimeji Oladepo
Cell: +2348033263302 OR +2348054556623
Email: oladepod@yahoo.com