

BEYOND THE LAW, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KANO STATE FREE MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTHCARE LAW IS KEY



Introduction

Maternal and child mortality is a heartbreaking reality that should never be accepted in any decent society. The Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED) firmly believes that no woman should lose her life while giving birth. Sadly, many women still perish during childbirth due to preventable causes. Experts emphasize that 95% of these deaths can be avoided with the right resources, timely intervention, and skilled professionals.

Numerous reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) highlight the alarming rates of maternal and child mortality in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, with Kano State standing out as a particularly dangerous location for women giving birth.

In response to this urgent situation, CHRICED, with the support of MISEREOR/KZE, has been actively engaged in efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality rates in Kano State. One of their primary strategies involves advocating for a legislative framework that guarantees sustainable access to free maternal and child healthcare services. Thanks to the collaboration of various civil society organizations, media outlets, community members, traditional leaders, and key government bodies, the legislation has been successfully enacted. This new law if well implemented, is expected to improve the quality of healthcare services, address funding challenges, and ultimately, save lives.

Overview of the Law

The Kano State Free Maternal and Child Healthcare Law, which came into effect on May 10, 2023, covers essential aspects of maternal and child healthcare services. It guarantees access to both ante-natal and post-natal care, highlights the importance of informed consent and decision-making in reproductive health issues, and upholds the right to safe motherhood. The legislation also sets out guidelines for pregnancy termination under specific circumstances and mandates the formation of a consultative council under the supervision of the Ministry of Budget and Planning. The law clearly defines the appointment, responsibilities, compensation, and composition of the council, which is

responsible for implementing and overseeing the law. Furthermore, the law addresses birth spacing and timing, protocols for assisted vaginal deliveries and caesarean sections, management of ectopic pregnancies, and provision of ambulance services. Its main goals include significantly reducing maternal and child mortality rates in Kano State, establishing a legal framework for the improvement of maternal and child healthcare, safe motherhood, and comprehensive childcare, and ensuring that women and children in Kano State have access to high-quality and comprehensive maternal and child healthcare services.

Kano State FMNCH Law Guarantees Health Rights and Promotes SDGs

The passing of the groundbreaking Free Maternal and Child Healthcare (FMNCH) Bill into law by the Kano State Assembly has positioned Kano as the pioneer state in Nigeria to implement such a law. This significant milestone has been met with widespread praise from civil society leaders and healthcare advocates who have tirelessly campaigned for enhanced maternal and child health services. The approval of the bill marks a crucial advancement in addressing the alarming rates of maternal and infant mortality in Kano State.

The FMNCH Bill gathered strong backing within the Kano State House of Assembly, showcasing a unified dedication to tackling essential healthcare requirements. The Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED), supported by MISEREOR/KZE, has been at the forefront of advocating for this legislation since 2014. Our endeavors encompassed thorough research, community involvement, media outreach, and persistent advocacy to underscore the pressing necessity for a legal framework offering free maternal and child healthcare

services in Kano State.

Prominent lawmakers, including the former Speaker of the House, Rt. Hon Hamisu Ibrahim Chidari, and other proponents of the bill, were lauded by CHRICED for their contributions. The Kano Emirates Council, particularly its Health Committee, also played a pivotal role in endorsing the bill. This collaborative initiative signifies a significant stride towards realizing constitutionally guaranteed healthcare rights and advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to maternal health.

The FMNCH legislation aims to substantially diminish maternal and child mortality rates by ensuring cost-free access to prenatal, postnatal, reproductive, and child healthcare services. It also upholds and advocates for the healthcare rights of women and children, underscoring the government's dedication to formulating effective strategies and funding schemes. This law is anticipated to noticeably decrease maternal mortality and child health issues, ensuring top-notch, secure, and efficient healthcare services for all patients.

Implementation of the FMNCH Law in Kano

The Kano State government has received widespread praise for its proactive approach and bold decision to enact the FMNCH bill into law. Right from the beginning, the government has shown a strong commitment to tackling the issue of maternal and child mortality in the state. This is evident in its healthcare policies and its impressive dedication to surpassing the 15% Abuja Declaration by allocating 16.4% in the 2024 budget. Despite these efforts, it is crucial for the government to ensure prompt disbursement of funds to provide efficient services that will help reduce maternal mortality in the state. Additionally, it is concerning that the increase in the health

budget has not translated into tangible benefits for the citizens, who continue to face challenges in accessing healthcare services.

In Nigeria, we have a history of creating well-crafted laws and policies that unfortunately end up being neglected or poorly enforced. The people of Kano do not want this to be the fate of the new law of free maternal and child healthcare in the state. To prevent this, civil society organizations, community leaders, traditional institutions, and all relevant stakeholders must unite to advocate for the full and timely implementation of the law, and to serve as catalysts for monitoring its implementation.



Public Hearing on the Kano State Budget



Advocacy visit to the Director Public Health & Disease Control



Advocacy visit to the Director General Hospital Management Board, Kano State



Advocacy visit to the Executive Secretary, Kano State Primary Healthcare Management Board



Advocacy visit to the Hon. Speaker Kano State House of Assembly



Advocacy visit to the Emir of Kano



A 2-day Legislative Retreat on Free Maternal and Child Healthcare Bill for Principal officers of Kano State House of Assembly

Conclusion and Recommendation

The passing of the FMNCH Bill represents a significant milestone in the advancement of maternal and child healthcare in Kano State. This legislation, which guarantees free access to essential health services, holds the potential to save lives and improve the overall well-being of mothers and children. As the implementation phase commences, it is imperative to prioritize ongoing advocacy, resource management, and accountability to fully realize the impact of this historic law. It is hoped that other states in Nigeria will follow Kano's example and enact similar legislation to safeguard and promote maternal and child health on a national scale.

Community members play a vital role in ensuring the success of the Free Maternal and Child Healthcare (FMNCH) law through active engagement and collective efforts. Their participation is essential in monitoring the law's implementation and providing valuable feedback on its effectiveness.

Moreover, it is imperative for the government to establish a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to effectively

track the progress of the law and evaluate health outcomes. This framework should encompass clear metrics, regular reporting mechanisms, and audits to identify areas for improvement and ensure the law's positive impact on public health and welfare.

Additionally, securing adequate funding and resources is crucial for the successful implementation of the law. The government need to engage in advocacy efforts targeting private sector stakeholders and international donors to ensure financial and material support. A well-funded implementation strategy is essential for sustainability, enabling healthcare providers to deliver the necessary services and ensuring public access to healthcare as mandated by the law.

Furthermore, the media should play a role in keeping the public informed about maternal and child healthcare delivery in Kano State. Continuous media coverage will raise awareness, maintain public interest, and hold authorities accountable for the effective implementation of the FMNCH law.

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Through their financial and technical support, we have been able to engage with local government officials, civil society organizations, and community

members to strengthen democratic processes, enhance transparency and accountability, and improve service delivery in local government areas. Their generosity has enabled us to provide training, capacity building, and advocacy support to empower citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes and hold their leaders accountable for their actions.

We are proud to have Bishöpfliches Hilfswerk Misereor e.V. and Katholische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe e. V. (Misereor/KZE) as our funding partners, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration to create positive change and improve the quality of life for all Nigerians. Thank you for your invaluable support and belief in our mission.



Fighting for Justice to Guarantee Peace...

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About CHRICED

Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED) is a Nigerian nonprofit, and a knowledge-driven platform of active citizens working for the promotion of human rights, rule of law, democracy, and accountability. CHRICED is registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). CHRICED is certified through equivalency determination by **NGOsource**, a project of **TechSoup** and the **Council on Foundations**, as equivalent of a United States public charity organization.

Vision

CHRICED envisions a democratic Nigeria where participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability are guaranteed for the well-being of citizens.

Mission

CHRICED is committed to the advancement of a democratic, representative, and inclusive political culture in Nigeria by mobilizing state and non-state actors to actively collaborate in fostering the rule of law, accountability, and responsive use of resources for the collective well-being of the people.

Civic education is our strategic vehicle for empowering citizens, in pursuit of this mission

CHRICED Thematic and Approach

With offices in Abuja and Kano, CHRICED is currently pioneering rights-based approach to tackle the decades-old marginalization, human rights violations, economic deprivation and social emasculation and other forms of historic injustices suffered by the indigenous people in Nigeria. CHRICED is addressing the crippling issue of maternal and child mortality in northern Nigeria. We are also intervening in the region to improve accountability in management of constituency projects and local government resources. Another key focus of our intervention has been to increase access to education for girls through strong community action, as well as to prevent the labour exploitation of vulnerable almajiri street children in Northern Nigeria. CHRICED program targeting marginalized youths, especially in the poor rural areas, has focused on promoting equitable access to economic and livelihood opportunities for youths in Nigeria. CHRICED also has experience in monitoring and advocating transparent and credible elections within and outside Nigeria.



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