

Communique: Coalition speaks tough on health corruption and accountability problems in fulfilment of Nigeria's health renewal plan



Nigeria's health sector is on the path of restoring confidence of citizens in its health system. Under the present health leadership, the Health Sector Renewal Compact (HSRC) recognises the importance of accountability as the glue that should firmly hold and drive its social compact with Nigerian citizens. To achieve this, the current leadership must pay attention to cutting-edge evidence that identifies accountability gaps in the health system, their effects on health service delivery and uptake, and how they can be addressed.

Stakeholders have been requested to support the current Nigerian health leadership's vision of entrenching an accountable and transparent health system. In response to this call, a coalition of health anti-corruption scholars, policymakers, civil society, and health and media practitioners has been established. This coalition known as the Health Anticorruption Project Advisory Committee (HAPAC) is driven by over seven years of research on accountability and corruption in the health sector across sub-Saharan Africa. HAPAC will deploy evidence-based information to support Nigeria's health leadership towards achieving an accountable health system.

On February 28 and 29, 2024 in Abuja, the coalition met to reflect on the findings from an ongoing study over the past 7 years on health corruption and accountability in Nigeria. The study was presented by the [Health Policy Research Group, University of Nigeria](#) (HPRG), and the broader Accountability in Action (AiA) Research Team drawn from prominent scholars within and outside Nigeria. As validated by HAPAC the seven crucial highlights from this study can be seen in the below infographic.

7 Highlights to note about HEALTH CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA (HAPAC, 2024)

1 Naming

There should be no substitute for using the term 'corruption' in the health sector whenever it should be used because the naming of an action could determine the urgency and extent of response.



2 PHCs are worst hit by corruption

There is a devastating occurrence of corruption in primary healthcare, with absenteeism, informal payments, and procurement and employment irregularities being the most prevalent and most damaging.



3 Informalities and discretions

Rules and regulations for primary healthcare are unclear, not communicated, and reportedly non-existent in some contexts. As a result, informal transactions and individual discretions dominate primary healthcare.

4 Human resource management

There is a poor commitment to supervision in the health sector, evidenced by the absence of provision of supervisory logistics and no plans for designated and effective in-facility human resource management.

5 Lack of patients' voice

Complaint mechanisms are lacking and ineffective, leaving health service users at the mercy of health providers and having no voice.



6 Structural defects

Structural failures in terms of lack of physical security for facilities, funding gaps, ineffective central medicines procurement, political protection of staff, digitalisation gaps, etc., contribute to health corruption.

7 Responsiveness by authorities

While there is willingness among horizontal actors like community members and media to challenge corrupt practices in health, responsiveness by health authorities is not optimal.

Therefore, HAPAC calls on the leadership of the health system to take concerns about the seriousness of the issues raised and mainstream them into the sector's accountability agenda. HAPAC has shown commitment by using evidence to point to what the fundamental problems are, firmly encouraging that these fundamental issues must be addressed squarely. Otherwise, any accountability structure leaving them out will be nothing but cosmetic.

Accountability priorities for HAPAC as regards the health sector emphasise three areas which are:

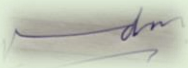
1. Basic Health Care Provision Fund
2. Human Resource for Health
3. Coordination of donors and donors' resources.

These three areas are critical for strengthening the Nigerian health system and ensuring value for every investment in it.

HAPAC will engage more with the government, leveraging evidence and experience to help achieve an accountable health sector that is transparent, people-centred, and corruption-free.

The three HAPAC accountability priorities will be pivotal to these engagements. To intensify HAPAC's chase of these priorities, the coalition will expand its network to include membership from the WHO, Finance Ministry, Public Complaints Commission, Consumer Protection Commission, Gates Foundation, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, and frontline anticorruption civil societies.

In all, HAPAC uses this opportunity to commend the current health sector leadership for rolling out the much-needed Health Sector Renewal Compact (HSRC), seeking consensus with Nigerian citizens in improving health indices on the road to Universal Health Coverage. Nevertheless, taking out the cogs embodied by corruption and weak accountability remains the most viable path to the fulfilment of HSRC for the Nigerian people.



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- ✚ Voice Against Corruption in Nigeria
- ✚ Voice of Nigeria (VoN)
- ✚ London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
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