

**Enhancing Maternal Healthcare through Private Sector Engagement and Digital Health
Solutions: A Rapid Assessment in Nigeria**

Simeon Christian Chukwu, Ibukun Ajeigbe

ACIOE Foundation, Nigeria

Name of Author: Simeon Christian Chukwu

Address of Author: ACIOE Foundation, Nigeria

Email Address: Simeon.christianchukwu@gmail.com

Phone Number: +2348025717782

Name of Co-Author: Ibukun Ajeigbe

Address of Co-Author: ACIOE Foundation, Nigeria

Email Address: i.ajeigbe@acioe.com

Phone Number: +2348039186619

Name of Co-Author: Innocent Isichei

Address of Co-Author: ACIOE Foundation, Nigeria

Email Address: i.isichei@acioe.com

Phone Number: +2347035793446

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Background:

Maternal mortality and morbidity remain a global public health concern and a critical challenge in Nigeria's health landscape. Nigeria's maternal mortality rate, estimated at 512 per 100,000 live births with significant disparities across regions and socio-economic groups, is far from attaining the Sustainable Development Goal of less than 70 per 100,000 live births. To address this gap, evidence-based advocacy is necessary to increase access to health financing and promote digital and data-driven health solutions for private sector integration in selected MSD for Mothers-funded states in Nigeria. To understand the private sector's role in delivering digital health solutions and private healthcare financing in Nigeria, a rapid assessment was conducted through the Maternal Health Advocacy and Communications (MHAC) project with funding support from MSD for Mothers.

Methodology

The rapid assessment employed a mono-method approach using qualitative methods to explore the assessment objectives. The qualitative assessment was conducted through focus group discussions with 52 Women of Reproductive Age (WRA), and 23 health workers (a total of 75 FGD participants). The qualitative interviews were also administered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to 24 key stakeholders in the maternal health space (Ekiti 7, Kaduna 5, Lagos 5, and 7 Implementing Partners at both state and national offices). Furthermore, in-depth interviews were also conducted with some private health care providers in Ekiti (4) and Lagos (2).

Findings

The assessment highlights key challenges and opportunities in Nigeria's private maternal healthcare sector. Private healthcare providers play a vital role but face limited access to sustainable financing, weak policy integration, and infrastructural gaps. Digital health solutions show promise, but their adoption is hindered by poor digital literacy and infrastructural limitations in rural areas. Stakeholders recommended policy reforms that recognize private providers, incentives for private sector participation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration and community engagement. An integrated approach combining policy alignment, digital innovation, equitable financing, and community-rooted advocacy is needed to bridge systemic gaps and reduce maternal mortality.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings suggest that Nigeria's private maternal healthcare sector has potential but faces significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness. To improve maternal health outcomes, it is crucial to address these challenges through policy reforms, increased investment in digital infrastructure and financing, and enhanced collaboration between stakeholders. By leveraging digital innovation, promoting equitable financing, and engaging communities, Nigeria can work towards reducing maternal mortality and improving the overall quality of maternal healthcare services.

Keywords: *Maternal Health, Advocacy, Communications, Private Sector,*