

Healthcare Federation of Nigeria 2025 Annual General Conference Communique

Theme: Expanding Access to Quality Healthcare: Transforming Nigeria through Innovation, Partnership, and Sustainability.



The 2025 Annual Conference of the Healthcare Federation of Nigeria (HFN) brought together key stakeholders from across the healthcare sector for a landmark event focused on shaping the future of healthcare in Nigeria. Held annually, the conference continues to serve as a national platform for catalysing partnerships, shaping health policy, and advancing collaborative action to improve healthcare delivery across Nigeria. This year's gathering was particularly significant as it coincided with HFN's 10th Anniversary—a milestone that reflects a decade of impactful advocacy, sectoral leadership, and strategic influence.

The two-day event attracted a wide range of stakeholders, including government leaders, policy makers, private healthcare providers, development partners, health economists, innovators, and professionals from across the country and the diaspora. Discussions spanned critical themes such as local manufacturing, financing reforms, system trust-building, diaspora engagement, reversing medical tourism, and the role of technology and policy in achieving universal health coverage (UHC). The conference served as both a forward-looking dialogue and a celebration of the private sector's evolving role as a key driver of healthcare transformation in Nigeria.



DAY 1:

Panel 1: Strengthening Local Manufacturing

This panel discussion explored the evolution, challenges, and opportunities in Nigeria's pharmaceutical industry, focusing on strengthening local manufacturing. Speakers emphasized the need to focus on strengthening local pharmaceutical manufacturing in Nigeria, exploring the historical context, challenges, and opportunities in the sector. Panelists provided insights on how the industry has evolved, its current struggles, and how Nigeria can leverage local manufacturing to reduce dependency on imported drugs.

Key Recommendations:

- **Facilitate Pharmaceutical Industrial Clusters:** To boost local drug production and reduce manufacturing costs, the government should facilitate the creation of dedicated pharmaceutical parks and industrial clusters. These hubs should co-locate pharmaceutical manufacturers, offer shared utilities, and provide tax and power incentives, modelled after successful examples in China, Dubai, and India. Such an ecosystem will encourage industrial collaboration and attract both local and foreign investment.
- **Revise the National Drug Policy:** The National Drug Policy should be urgently revised to reflect present-day pharmaceutical realities, market opportunities, and global best practices. Legislative and regulatory support is needed to strengthen enforcement, improve quality control, and reduce the circulation of substandard and falsified medicines across Nigeria.
- **Invest in Pharmaceutical Workforce Development:** A strategic investment in training pharmacists, scientists, and pharmaceutical engineers is needed to meet current and future demands. Legislators should support programs that promote industry-academia partnerships, practical internships, graduate training schemes, and continuous professional development. This will bridge the gap between theory and industrial readiness.
- **Strengthen Drug Distribution Oversight:** There is a critical need to eliminate unregulated distribution channels and enforce traceability mechanisms to ensure medicine quality and safety. Reforms must include better monitoring of open drug markets, licensing of distributors, and enhanced inspection regimes for drug supply chains.
- **Support Digital Distribution Platforms:** Legislative support is needed for the aggregation of online pharmacies and technology-driven distribution to improve drug accessibility and affordability. The government should promote the aggregation of licensed online pharmacies under a regulated framework. Technology platforms that enable digital inventory management, remote dispensing, and verified delivery systems should be supported with enabling regulations and digital health infrastructure.

Panel 2: Solving the Finance Dilemma: Adapting to Change

The panel explored innovative financing and distribution models to address the challenges and opportunities in the Nigerian healthcare sector. Panelists emphasized the need to rethink the financing landscape of Nigeria's healthcare sector in response to diminishing donor support and economic instability. Sector leaders discussed innovative models to attract investment, strengthen local financing mechanisms, and integrate public-private partnerships (PPPs) for resilient healthcare systems.

Key Recommendations

- **Optimize Healthcare Budget Allocation & Reduce Donor Dependence:** Increase public healthcare funding through improved national and state-level budgetary allocations. Prioritize domestic resource mobilization and innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., health bonds, pooled insurance schemes) to reduce over-reliance on donor funding and out-of-pocket spending.
- **Prioritize Demand-Side Interventions to Attract Investment:** Reform financing strategies to stimulate patient-side demand (e.g., insurance uptake, outcome-based reimbursements). Demand-side mechanisms provide predictable payments that attract private investments into supply chains, infrastructure, and services.
- **Allocate 5% of Banks' Profit After Tax to Healthcare SMEs (as Concessional Loans):** This is a recommendation for concessional lending, not donations. Banks should be encouraged—via CBN regulations or incentive schemes—to set aside 5% of PAT for low-interest loans to qualified health SMEs, enabling expansion and innovation in service delivery.
- **Expand State-Level Health Insurance Schemes for Broader Coverage:** Support and scale up state health insurance schemes to reach more Nigerians, especially in the informal sector. Use digital platforms, community outreach, and subsidized premiums to increase enrollment.
- **Reframe Healthcare as a Driver of Economic Growth, Not Just an Expense:** Federal Government should integrate healthcare into Nigeria's economic growth agenda. Recognize the sector's potential for job creation, productivity, and investment returns.



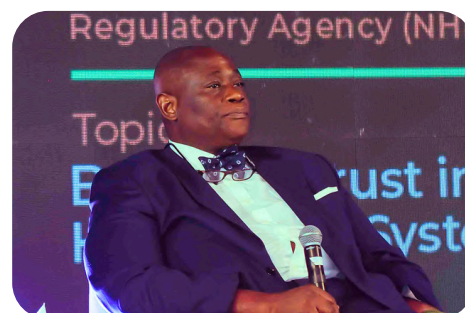
DAY 2

Session 1: Building Trust in Nigeria's Healthcare System

The discussion explored the foundational role of trust in achieving a responsive, effective, and people-centered healthcare system. Panelists delved into how trust is cultivated over time through transparency, accountability, and consistent service delivery. The conversation underscored the importance of regulatory standards, stakeholder engagement, and the use of technology in strengthening the health system's credibility and performance.

Key Recommendations:

- **Enforce Mandatory Health Insurance Provisions:** The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) emphasised the need to fully enforce the mandatory health insurance provision of the NHIA Act. Enforcement should be complemented with awareness campaigns and subsidies for the poor.
- **Implement Strategic Purchasing for Quality Care:** NHIA also emphasised the need for strategic purchasing to drive quality. This includes revising tariffs for services to reward facilities that deliver better outcomes, use safer practices, and improve efficiency.
- **Strengthen Licensing and Oversight of Health Facilities:** The National Health Facility Regulatory Agency (NHFRA) Committee stressed the urgency of implementing the National Health Act (2014) by ensuring all health facilities are licensed based on national quality standards. Oversight should include regular inspections, infrastructure checks, and transparent facility accreditation processes.
- **Scale Access to Healthcare for the Vulnerable:** The NHIA reported the successful enrollment of 2.5 million individuals under the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund (BHCPF) in collaboration with state governments. To expand access, NHIA recommends engaging private providers to reach more underserved and vulnerable populations.
- **Enhance Primary Care through GP Training and Incentives:** NHFRA recommended that the Federal Ministry of Health initiate a specialised General Practice (GP) training curriculum and develop a competitive remuneration scheme to make primary care more attractive and ensure clinical quality.



Panel 1: Leveraging Policy and Incentives for Universal Health Coverage

The conversation highlighted the central role of local governments, the importance of health insurance enforcement, and the need for stronger collaboration between public institutions and private players.

Key Recommendations:

- **Increase Health Budget Allocations and Improve Transparency:** Nigeria's per capita health spending remains far below the benchmark required to achieve UHC. Legislators and budget authorities must prioritise significant increases in annual budget allocations to the health sector at both the federal and state levels, ensuring funds are timely released and transparently monitored.
- **Boost Insurance Uptake Through Mass Public Awareness:** To increase enrollment and public trust in health insurance, the government should sponsor nationwide campaigns using mass media (radio jingles, billboards, TV ads), community town halls, and printed materials, similar in scale and visibility to the recent currency redesign public engagement.
- **Enforce Financial Autonomy for Local Governments:** To improve healthcare service delivery at the grassroots, the federal and state governments must enforce the Supreme Court ruling on financial autonomy for Local Government Councils. Direct funding to LGAs should be linked to national health goals, enabling more accountability for primary healthcare delivery.
- **Target Subsidies Using National Social Register (NSR):** To ensure equity in health financing, the government and implementing partners should leverage the National Social Register (NSR) and NIN databases to accurately identify vulnerable groups for subsidised enrollment under the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund (BHCPF).
- **Reframe Health as an Economic Growth Driver:** Healthcare must be framed as an economic contributor, not a cost centre. Advocacy to governors and state policymakers should focus on the return on investment (ROI) in health, linking better health outcomes to economic productivity, reduced poverty, and electoral success.

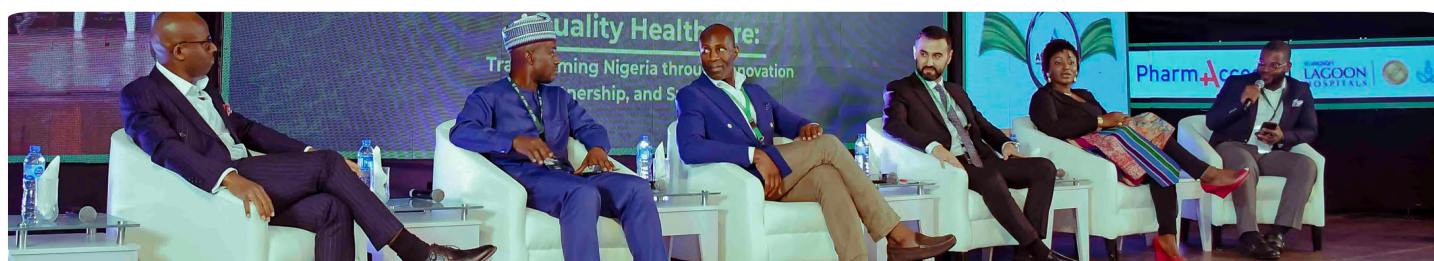


Panel 2: Leveraging Diaspora & Digital Transformation to build Nigeria's Medical Tourism Hub

Key challenges highlighted included the need to create a welcoming environment, modern facilities, and clear pathways for diaspora return and retention. Discussions also focused on telemedicine as a tool to improve rural access, reduce patient travel, and increase foreign exchange earnings, while stressing the importance of interoperable and multilingual EMR systems. Policy recommendations included establishing frameworks for cross-border care within ECOWAS, promoting Nigeria as a premium healthcare destination, and incentivising international accreditation (e.g., JCI, ISU, GCI).

Key Recommendations:

- **Facilitate Return and Integration of Diaspora Professionals:** To strengthen the national healthcare workforce, the government should actively support the return and integration of diaspora professionals. This includes streamlining licensure, promoting international training pathways, and reframing “Japa” as a strategic talent cycle that brings global expertise back to Nigeria.
- **Enable Cross-Border Healthcare Trade in West Africa:** There should be implementation of policies and bilateral agreements that simplify healthcare trade and professional movement within West Africa. Cross-border licensing and mutual recognition of medical credentials are necessary to expand service access and promote regional cooperation in health.
- **Develop Regional Telemedicine Frameworks:** Legislators should support the development of regional regulatory frameworks that permit licensed Nigerian doctors to consult across ECOWAS countries, both physically and via telemedicine. This will deepen diaspora engagement, reduce care delays, and build regional health system resilience.
- **Position Nigeria as a Niche Medical Tourism Destination:** The Federal Ministry of Health should identify and market niche health services (e.g., oncology, diagnostics, fertility, orthopaedics) where local excellence exists. Private providers should be supported by the Federal Government to invest in specialised care, create regional marketing strategies, and tap into the growing West African medical tourism market.
- **Support Hospitals to Achieve International Accreditation:** Hospitals and health facilities should be supported through policy incentives, financing, and technical assistance to achieve international accreditations like JCI and ISO. These certifications will enhance institutional credibility, attract diaspora and international patients, and position Nigeria as a trusted provider of high-quality healthcare.



Commissioner's RoundTable: Is Your State Ready for Tourism?

The Commissioners of Health from Imo, Ogun, and Lagos States shared their experiences as healthcare policymakers in Nigeria, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for medical tourism

Key Recommendations:

- **Adopt a Dual Health Strategy to Scale UHC while Positioning Nigeria for Medical Tourism:** The Federal Government should adopt a dual health strategy of scaling up UHC while building a competitive medical tourism industry. This requires domesticating the National Health Insurance Act (NHIA) across states, mandating enrollment, and embedding healthcare within the national economic growth agenda.
- **Implement Incentive-Based Workforce Retention Strategies:** To reduce healthcare worker attrition and improve service quality, states must expand training capacity, upgrade working conditions, and implement incentive-based retention strategies. This includes competitive salaries, continuing education, and housing or relocation support for rural postings.
- **Engage the Diaspora with Structured Digital Collaboration:** The government, through diaspora commissions like the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), should formalise frameworks to engage diaspora healthcare professionals and support the deployment of digital tools such as virtual case reviews, remote clinical mentorship, and knowledge-sharing platforms to build local capacity and close specialist gaps.
- **Invest in Modern Health Infrastructure:** States should prioritise capital investments in modern, well-equipped health facilities and specialist centres (e.g., oncology, cardiology, orthopaedics) to improve care outcomes and make Nigeria a destination for advanced medical treatment. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be leveraged where possible.
- **Expand Insurance Coverage Through Incentivised Private Participation:** Strengthening health insurance coverage requires the scaling up of enrollment through both formal and informal sector channels. At the same time, private sector providers should be incentivised to deliver services under public insurance schemes through timely payments, competitive tariffs, and inclusion in benefit packages. This will improve financial sustainability and efficiency in service delivery.

The HFN Annual Conference 2025 reaffirmed the critical role of the private sector in shaping Nigeria's health future. It concluded with a shared commitment to advancing universal health coverage, reversing medical tourism, and driving sustainable health sector reform through innovation, collaboration, and strategic investments in people, policy, and infrastructure.