

OVERVIEW OF THE NASARAWA STATE HEALTH SECURITY LEGAL REFORM PROJECT

BACKGROUND ON HEALTH SECURITY

Health security involves the proactive and reactive measures taken to mitigate public health risks. It includes actions to detect, prevent, respond to, and recover from health emergencies. Health Security is important as it provides key measures to a society, which include:

- **Proactive Measures:** Implementing strategies to prevent health crises before they occur, such as vaccination programs, surveillance systems, and health education.
- **Reactive Measures:** Rapid response and management strategies to address health emergencies as they arise, including quarantine protocols, treatment facilities, and emergency healthcare services.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for robust and adaptable legal frameworks to manage public health emergencies effectively. It exposed gaps in health systems worldwide and underscored the importance of international cooperation and compliance with global health regulations. The pandemic accelerated efforts to strengthen health security measures and improve preparedness and response mechanisms globally.

NIGERIA'S COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR) 2005

1. NIGERIA AS A SIGNATORY TO INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR) 2005

- Nigeria committed to IHR in 2005, an international legal framework by the World Health Organization (WHO).

- Obligates Nigeria to strengthen its capacity to detect, assess, report, and respond to public health risks and emergencies

2. CORE CAPACITIES FOR PREVENTING, DETECTING, AND RESPONDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH EVENTS

- **Prevention:** Implementing measures to avert health threats, such as vaccination programs, health education, and sanitation improvements.
- **Detection:** Establishing robust surveillance systems to identify health threats early, including laboratory networks and data reporting mechanisms.
- **Response:** Developing effective emergency response systems, ensuring rapid mobilisation of resources, and coordinated action during health emergencies.
- **Assessment and Reporting:** Regular monitoring and evaluation through self-assessment, joint external evaluations, after-action reviews, and simulation exercises to ensure compliance and identify gaps.

IMPORTANCE OF ROBUST LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN HEALTH SECURITY

- Strong legal frameworks are crucial for effective public health governance.
- They ensure structured, timely, and coordinated responses to health emergencies.
- Legal provisions support sustained public health initiatives and interventions.

WHY NASARAWA STATE?

Nasarawa State is located in the North Central Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The State faces multiple public health threats, including cholera, diphtheria, COVID-19, and Lassa Fever. It has a population of 1,869,377 and based on the NCDC Multi-Hazard Disaster Risk Assessment, the State has a high risk of frequent disease outbreaks.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (NCDC) and Resolve to Save Lives (RTSL) have selected the State as one of the pilot states for the legal reform project due to its proximity to the FCT, numerous public health threats, and the need to strengthen legal frameworks to support public health preparedness and response in the state.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR THE LEGAL MAPPING EXERCISE CONDUCTED BY NCDC IN 2023

- Nasarawa State’s existing laws inadequately address epidemic preparedness and response.
- Deficiencies in Health Security Governance and Legal Infrastructure.
- There are also gaps in One Health integration within the State legal framework and the absence of the legal codification of Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) in the State’s legal framework.
- Weak considerations for human rights protections during public health emergencies.

NASARAWA STATE LEGAL REFORM PROJECT

The project is designed to develop a comprehensive and systematic plan for legal reform and ensure alignment with International Health Regulations (IHR) and global best practices. It focuses on creating resilient legal frameworks capable of addressing current and future public health challenges.

One of the key components of the Project is the need for effective and collaborative Stakeholder Engagement. This means that the project must Involve key stakeholders at all levels, including state government agencies, federal agencies, healthcare professionals, and community representatives. Also, the project will support fostering partnerships amongst all critical and key stakeholders to ensure broad-based support and consensus on the legal instruments (either laws, regulations, or guidelines/protocols) of the State that would be developed, amended or repealed. Finally, it is hoped that the project would help key decision-makers prioritise inclusive decision-making, considering the perspectives of those most affected by public health emergencies.

PHASES OF THE SUBNATIONAL LEGAL REFORM PROCESS

Stakeholder Engagement Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identify and involve relevant stakeholders.▪ Support dialogue and collaboration amongst stakeholders to achieve consensus on the reform approach.
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Drafting and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a thorough review of existing laws. Draft new legal provisions to address identified gaps and align with IHR (2005).
Finalisation and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the draft law based on feedback from stakeholders. Advocate for the adoption of the new legal framework.
Presentation and Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present the final draft to key decision-makers. Facilitate the legislative process for the enactment of the new law.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS

Activity	Participants	Description
Legal Assessment Meeting	NCDC Lawyers, Lawyers from the State Ministry of Health (MOH) or Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Director of Public Health, the State Epidemiologist, and representatives from relevant pillars (Lab, Animal Health, environmental health, Food Safety).	The meeting aims to commence the reform process by assessing the entire state's laws using the NCDC Legal Assessment Tools/ Framework.
Validation Meeting	It is the same as the Legal Assessment Meeting, plus additional relevant state personnel	This meeting focuses on validating the Legal Assessment Report.
Development/ Drafting Meeting for a New Public Health Security Bill	NCDC Lawyers, Lawyers from State MOH or MOJ, Director of Legislative Drafting, Director of Public Health, State Epidemiologist, representatives from relevant pillars, key state public health agencies, Ministry of Finance, and Public Health NGOs (including INGOs like WHO, UNICEF).	This meeting aims to develop the first draft of a new Public Health Security Law, considering the findings and recommendations from the Legal Assessment Report.
Stakeholders Review Meeting on the New Public Health Security Bill	Same as the Development/Drafting Meeting, plus legislators from the State House of Assembly (especially House Committee on Health members)	This meeting allows all stakeholders to deliberate on the draft bill developed during the Drafting Meeting.

Activity	Participants	Description
Presentation of Draft Health Security Bill for Approval and Legislative Process	Meeting with the Key Commissioners	This meeting is to formally present the draft bill to the Commissioner of Health for approval and onward transmission to the Executive Governor.

The Nasarawa State Government is at an important juncture in its journey towards enhancing public health security. To effectively implement the legal reforms proposed by Orixine Consulting and Resolve to Save Lives, a dedicated and multidisciplinary team is essential. This team, comprising key personnel from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), will play a crucial role in ensuring the successful integration of the proposed legal framework into the state's governance structure. By assembling a team with diverse expertise, the state can harness the collective knowledge and capacity to address the complex challenges associated with public health.

The proposed team could be comprised of the following officials:

S/N	MDAs	Required Persons
1	Ministry of Health	DPH, DPRS, State Epidemiologist, Dir. Laboratory, Dir. Food Safety, Dir. Finance
2	Ministry of Agriculture	Dir. Veterinary + Animal Health Officer/Area Veterinary Officer
3	Ministry of Environment	Dir. Climate Change + Desk Officer Environmental Health
4	Ministry of Justice	Dir. Legal Drafting, Legal Adviser, Legal Officer
5	Ministry of Women Affairs	Focal Person
6	Ministry of LGA Affairs	Focal Person
7	SEMA	Focal Person
8	Finance	Focal Person
9	State House of Assembly	Dir. Legal Services
10	Environmental Agency	Focal Person

S/N	MDAs	Required Persons
11	State Primary Healthcare Development Board	Focal Person

Reforming state health security laws is critical for safeguarding public health and enhancing states' capacity to respond effectively to health emergencies. This initiative will promote collaboration among legal experts, public health officials, and key stakeholders to develop robust, context-specific legislation.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Orixine Consulting, with the support of Resolve to Save Lives (RTSL), are committed to supporting this effort alongside the Nasarawa State government and all Civil Society Organisations in the State. This will contribute to the overall improvement of health security at the subnational level in Nigeria.

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