

HEALTH

FEATURE/NEWS>>

By Ojoma Akor & Philip Shimon Clement

Primary health care is the first level of care and very important in making quality health care services available and accessible to the people. Communities in the rural areas where there are no Primary Health Care (PHC) centres are subjected to untold hardships and preventable deaths and diseases.

The people are forced to travel far, go to other places and levels of care thereby choking institutions providing secondary and tertiary care in the country.

For people of Gui village, in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), it was a dream come true when the European Union Support to Immunization Governance in Nigeria (EU-SIGN) provided them a PHC centre recently.

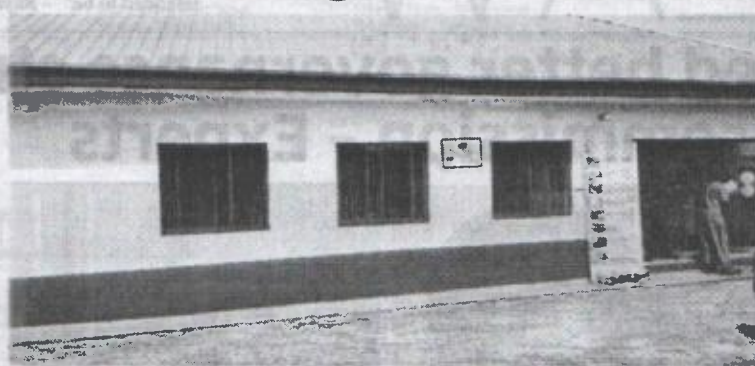
The EU-SIGN is a seven-year project funded by the European Union from 2011-2018 as part of developmental strides of the union to the Nigerian government through the Ministry of Budget and National Planning which will facilitate government efforts in reducing the burden of preventable diseases, eradicating polio and strengthening access to the primary health care system.

A resident of the village, Abigail Lurher, said before the donation, emergency cases of child birth or severe health cases had to be taken to Sauka, Airport Road, adding that because of the distance, sometimes people died before getting to the hospital.

She said the upgraded and commissioned health facility, would provide succour for them.

She appealed for the deployment of health care personnel and drugs to the hospital.

How primary health centre alleviates our sufferings - Gui residents



■ Primary Health care Centre upgraded by the EU-SIGN project in Gui village of the FCT

"Some of the doctors come at 8:00a.m. and before 4:00p.m., they are gone, making it difficult for people with serious cases to be attended to in case of emergencies. Sometimes, too, when you are tested, they prescribe drugs for you to buy at chemists which I feel is a big issue that needs to be addressed when establishing primary health care centres of this nature," Lurher added.

Another resident, Yunusa Shuaibu commended the efforts of the Federal Government and the European Union but urged for ease of access by health care seekers.

"My prayer is that everything about this hospital should be accessed by all and not a few. Also, Gui village should not be the only focus as other communities around the airport do not have roads and water as well as hospitals. It will also go a long way in helping children under five to be immunized," he said.

The district head of Gui Community, Alhaji Alhassan Yusuf, thanked the European Union Commission for establishing the Primary Health Care Centre. He however, pleaded for more support from the commission and the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) to establish a secondary school in the community now that there is a place to access primary health care.

"Our children trek three to four kilometers to reach the nearby secondary school and before they get there, they must have missed one or two lessons which is not encouraging," he lamented.

Yusuf also pleaded with the Abuja Municipal Area Council chairman and the FCT minister to assist in tarring the road leading to the primary health care centre to ease accessing it by health care seekers from neighbouring communities.

The European Union

Ambassador to ECOWAS and Nigeria, Ketil Karlsen, said the union has spent N3.8 billion to support the Federal Government's effort in eradicating polio under its support programme known as the European Union Support to Immunization Governance in Nigeria (EU-SIGN).

According to the ambassador, the funds were utilized in purchasing 29 vehicles and solar refrigerators as well as construction of health facilities and cold stores in 23 states of the federation including the FCT with the latest being the recently commissioned Gui Primary Health Care Centre.

Karlsen added that the European Union support covers 24 states including the FCT in partnership with other international organizations like the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) which is aimed at de-listing Nigeria

from countries where polio still exists. It is a concerted effort that can only be achieved through working together.

According to him, the major focus of the EU-SIGN is to improve the implementation of policies on Primary Health Care, strengthening routine immunization and reducing morbidity and mortality of under five children and to vaccinate against preventable and other communicable diseases.

Minister of State for Health, Dr. Osagie Ohanire, commended the European Union and its partner agency for her continuous effort in eradicating polio from Nigeria and access to primary health care services.

"It is a very good project and we welcome the help we can get from all our partners in pushing the primary healthcare agenda towards universal health coverage which is the primary focus of President Muhammadu Buhari's health agenda," he said.

The Executive Director of National Primary Health Care Development Agency, Dr. Faisal Shuaib, said the agency in its effort to reposition and have a robust health care system has been partnering with the European Union which has been yielding positive results of which the most recent is the commissioning of the Primary Health Care Centre in Gui village.

It is hoped by the European Union that as the programme is winding down in January 2018, all the Health Care Centres and logistic procured by the union will be sustained by the Federal Government and help in ridding the country of polio.

Ways to manage neck pain

By Ojoma Akor

Being in an uncomfortable position for a long time and poor posture can cause neck pain. Neck pain may also occur with diseases such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia, among others.

It may also result from a neck injury, and stress that causes muscle tension may worsen neck pain said Dr. Samir Yacout, a specialist in neurosurgery and spine, Saudi German Hospital, Dubai.

He said the symptoms include: "Problems looking from side to side, driving and reading. Sometimes, pain may prevent sleeping. Neck pain can cause headaches. Neck pain that lasts for months may affect a person's ability to work."

Yacout, who is also the Head of Neurosurgery and Spine Center, said diagnosis could be made from a medical history and physical examination. X-rays may also be done. The health care provider may order blood tests to see whether neck pain is due to diseases with

similar symptoms.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) may be done if the health care provider needs a clearer picture of bones, nerves, discs, and other soft tissues. Sometimes, electromyography (EMG), which helps find muscle and nerve problems, may be done if the neck problem may be causing numbness or tingling in the arms because of pressure on nerves.

He said: "Treatment depends on the cause of the pain. If an injury is the cause, the health care provider may suggest using ice on the area. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may help reduce the pain. For especially severe pain, stronger narcotic medicines may be needed for a short time. Muscle spasms may be helped with a muscle relaxant. Physical therapy may reduce pain with deep heat treatments, traction, and exercise.

The expert said a 34-year-old Nigerian woman, who suffered a neck fracture during her vacation in Dubai, was first

admitted at another hospital where doctors advised massage and warm compresses and no more physiotherapy sessions, which did not work.

"Then the patient came to our hospital for a second medical opinion. She immediately had X-rays showing a fracture in the second cervical vertebrae which constitutes a danger to the spinal cord where any movement can lead to injury and thus the possibility of quadriplegia," he said.

He pointed out that during the operation, which lasted about two hours, the head was pulled and the neck was extended as far as possible, which was considered a challenge for the anesthesiologist, and a small incision was done in the right front of the neck to reach the broken cervical vertebrae and fix it with a special nail.

Dr. Reem Osman, the hospital's chief executive director, said that type of fracture is uncommon and that many surgeons had been avoiding it but with new technologies, the experts were able to address it in the hospital.

All Nigerians must contribute to achieve affordable healthcare - Expert

By Philip Shimon Clement

A former Executive Secretary of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), Dr. Dogo Mohammed, has said that everyone must contribute his quota for Nigeria to achieve Universal Health Coverage.

Universal Health Coverage means ensuring individuals and communities access healthcare services without suffering financial hardships.

Speaking during a roundtable on Universal Health Coverage organised by Universal Health Coverage Nigeria 2025 organisation in Abuja, he said the coverage was a collective task, and that Nigeria must not be left out in achieving it as it would go a long way in enhancing health care delivery.

"Universal health coverage requires universal contribution," he added.

The Acting Executive Secretary of NHIS, Malam Ibrahim Atahiru, said there

must be adequate and strategic planning in place to achieve Universal Health Coverage in Nigeria.

He said in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the scheme had over the years achieved a major reform that saw states of the federation implement health insurance schemes, also called State Social Health Insurance Initiative.

He maintained that NHIS would pursue the UHC mandate allocation of resources and subsidised coverage for poor and vulnerable individuals as well as promote uniformity of the coverage across the country.

The Chairman, Universal Health Coverage Nigeria 2025, Dr. Hope Uweja, said the roundtable was organised because it had become very important to brainstorm and offer solutions to better health care coverage in the country.