

Achieving health insurance for elderly, retirees, dependent on political will – Committee chairman



[NNN](#): Mr Linus Awute, the Chairman, Ministerial Committee on the provision of Health Insurance for the Retirees and the Elderly in Nigeria, says achieving health insurance coverage for the group is based on political will.

He said this on Tuesday in Abuja, at the formal presentation of the committee's report to the Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire.

Awute said that recommendations on how to achieve health coverage for the persons concerned were made in the report.

According to him, apart from recommendations, implementation strategies were also provided with the report laying emphasis on financial risk protection for the elderly.

“This is where the issue of funding comes in. We have researched to find that no society can sustain funding of health care from only one source.

“Hence our recommendation is that which is balance [between](#) perceived need for Medicare and the acceptable level of national expenditure on health care.

“In this wise, pluralistic timeline sale system is recommended. Here we are advocating for innovative multiple sources of funding.

“We went about to identify such viable sources that will bring about incremental funds landing under the principle of equity and justice that is going to be guaranteed by the new National Health Insurance Act (NHIA) law.

“That is if we can be very innovative, but again, it is all about strong political will”, he said.

Awute, a retired former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Health, said that the report represents an aspect of the minister’s roadmap to achieving universal health coverage.

He added that if implemented, it would represent a remarkable point in the scorecard of President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration as it clearly reflects the commitment of his government to promote and improve healthy living and management.

Speaking to the [News Agency of Nigeria](#) after the presentation, he said butter committee recommends a participatory approach to healthcare for the elderly and retirees from all three tiers of government to ensure a smooth enrollment process.

He also said that the report recommended a next level activity that has to do with the assemblage of the role players to also form a compact where their responsibilities would be defined.

“Also in alignment with our report is that health insurance is going to be mandated, but that is not going to operate mechanically.

“So there are some sudden architectures that will have to be put in place to forerun the success of that mission, but the most important thing is for us to know that no community, or country can on it’s own resort to a funding of healthcare alone.

“That is why we came up with the pluralistic approach where innovative funding has to come in, meaning that there are areas and sources where these funding provisions can come from.

“After this it is set the template for implementation,” he said.

While accepting the report, the Ehanire said that the document was a big support not only for the elderly, and the retirees but for the whole country.

He said that president subscribed to the view that elders who have served their country be treated with respect and dignity.

He also said that the president committed to investing in older persons in recognition of the contribution they continue to make to family, community, and nation.

“The mark of civilisation in any community is how well the strong can take care of the weak and that is what we call civilisation.

“That nobody is left behind, the young, the old are taken care of because those who are able today were not able when they were younger and one day they will also not be able in future that is the way life is.

“Therefore, in taking this report, you have done a job not only for the elderly, you have done a job for everybody, for the whole of Nigeria and for the whole of our own civilisation here.”

According to him, older persons with intergeneration links were a force for socio-economic growth with institutional memory and experience to shepherd youths and advise on growth opportunities.

The Minister of State for Health, Dr Olorunnimbe Mamora, commended the committee for coming up with the report, adding that all their efforts would be justified by its implementation.

[NAN](#) reports that the 22 member committee was set up on Nov. 30, 2020 to assess the current situation of health insurance coverage and access to health care for Retirees and senior citizens in Nigeria.

It was to also develop a national framework for the effective health insurance coverage of retirees and senior citizens and make recommendations to the minister of health on potential resource mobilisation and other mechanisms for the successful implementation of the framework.()

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