Steering the rudder in uncharted waters
from the editor

The maiden edition of the IntegratE newsletter titled “Steering the rudder in uncharted waters”, is geared toward throwing light on who we are as a project, what we do, our activities as well as milestones of the project.

In a nutshell, the main focus of the IntegratE project is to improve the quality of family planning and primary healthcare services offered by Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs) and Community Pharmacists (CPs) in Lagos and Kaduna states, with emphasis on adolescents and women in the lowest socio-economic quintile in selected communities.

The newsletter would be available on a quarterly basis, giving insight into what has been achieved. For this edition, we have an array of topics that will delight our audience as it promises to be educative, illuminating as well as entertaining. We hope you enjoy the ride.

Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) which is the percentage of women aged 15 - 49 who are practicing, or whose sexual partners are practicing, any form of contraception in Nigeria is very low (16% in 2016). The unmet need for family planning in Nigeria is also very low (16.1%). Therefore, providing women who want contraceptives with access to them is a key intervention to improve maternal outcomes. Contraceptive use in Nigeria is poorer than the average contraception use within Africa (33%) and in other densely populated African countries such as Ethiopia, Egypt and South Africa (34%, 58% and 54% respectively).

The failures of the primary healthcare system in Nigeria has created an overburden on the private health sector and made more prominent, the informal healthcare sector comprising of proprietary patent medicine vendors (PPMVs). The private sector in Nigeria accounts for 58% of health services provision, including child-related health services. PPMVs and Community Pharmacists (CPs) comprise of a sizable portion (nearly 40%) of the private healthcare sector in the Sub Saharan African region and provide between 15% and 83% of all child health services. PPMVs operate legally in Nigeria and are defined as “persons without formal training in pharmacy, who sells orthodox pharmaceutical products on a retail basis for profit”. In Nigeria, PPMVs are an important source of care for the poor, they are located close to communities and are often the first source of care for hygiene and FP products and treatment of child illnesses. In fact, 56% of persons in the lowest quintile cite PPMVs as their source of FP services. Moreover, younger women (<25 years) are more likely to obtain their FP methods from CPs and PPMVs.

The 2015 FPwatch study results for Nigeria, report the private sector as accounting for 86% of outlets stocking contraceptives or providing FP services in Nigeria; 72% of those outlets are PPMVs and 4% are CPs. In the North West and South West regions, 69% and 81% respectively of outlets providing modern contraceptives are PPMVs.

CPs and PPMVs play a very important role in providing access to healthcare services for millions of Nigerians. It is therefore imperative that policies and practices be entrenched to provide these often marginalized providers a more prominent role in healthcare delivery if the country is to achieve the CPR target of 27% by 2020.
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The IntegratE is a four-year project co-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and MSD for Mothers that seeks to improve the quality of Family Planning (FP) services provided by Community Pharmacists (CPs) and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs) in Lagos and Kaduna state.
IntegratE is a proof of concept that Community Pharmacists and PPMVs can provide a wider range of FP and Primary Health Care (PHC) services than they are currently authorized to if trained. In Nigeria, the PPMVs are an important source of care for the poor and are located close to communities. They are the first source of care for hygiene, FP products and the treatment of child illnesses. Majority of the persons in the lowest quintile cite PPVMs as their primary source for FP services. The project is designed to support the federal and state ministries of heath in achieving its contraceptive goals.

The IntegratE project also seeks to create a supportive environment for expanded FP services among Community Pharmacists and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors, strengthen the quality of family planning service delivery and implement a comprehensive research agenda that will inform policies and programs for the expansion of family planning services for community pharmacists and patent and proprietary medicine vendors.

This is achieved through a consortium of implementing partners that include Marie Stopes International, PharmAccess, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, DKT, Population Council and the Society for Family Health as the lead. These partners pool in different strengths, coming together in different work streams, to contribute to the increased access to Family Planning and PHC services for the poor and adolescences.

The project will cover the undeserved areas/communities in Kaduna and Lagos, targeting youths, adolescents and women in the low wealth quintile as primary beneficiaries and also, CPs and PPMVs in selected communities.

Inauguration ceremony of IntegratE steering committee.
Highlights from Year One

Family Planning Services
Available Here

| Safe and Trusted |
• Stakeholders’ Meeting:

The IntegratE met with stakeholders in Kaduna and Lagos, seeking a systematic avenue for the selection of LGAs in the state. Due to the financial constraints, the project is unable to work with all PPMVs and CPs in the two states. After the meeting, it was agreed that the project would work in six LGAs across the states and the number may increase according to need basis. Certain indicators were reviewed and used to determine the priority LGAs for the project.

The selection process was modelled after the IMPACT SEEDS Diabetes project in East Harlem, New York and the indicators used included the population of women of reproductive age (15-49 years of age), the presence of any Family Planning (FP) donor funded activity in the LGA, access to the LGAs, etc.

The key stakeholders in attendance included the Pharmaceutical Council of Nigeria (PCN), Ministry of Women Affairs, State Ministry of Health (SMoH), State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDA), NAFDAC, National Association of Patent and Proprietary Medicine Dealers (NAPPMED), Association of Community Pharmacists in Nigeria (ACPN) and Lagos State Medicine Dealers Association (LSMDA).

• BCC Visioning Meeting:

The IntegratE project convened in Kaduna for the BCC Visioning meeting. This was geared toward developing messages and pictorials for the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials on FP and prevention/treatment of childhood illnesses for both clients and providers.

Also, to develop a communication strategy document for the project, to guide all communication materials that need to be developed by all partners in line with the National Family Planning Communication Plan.

• (IPCAs) Interpersonal Communication Agents TOT:

The Training of Trainers (TOT) for IPCAs took place in Abuja with trainers from Abuja, Kaduna and Lagos in attendance. The group was taken on topics such as family planning, diarrhea and as well as other PHC services IPCAs are expected to be conversant with. There were group work sessions as well as field work for knowledge testing and experience was shared at the end of the day.

Cross section of Lagos State Ministry of Health Officials and Other Stakeholders at LGA selection

Training slide development meeting.

Pre-testing of the IPC Flip chart during the IPC Training of Trainers
• **Steering Committee Meeting:**

The steering committee meeting took place in Abuja with all relevant stakeholders present. The aim of the meeting was to review the current achievements, the challenges of the project as well as discuss emerging issues and support needed to ensure the project remains on course.

Attendance included Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, MSD for Mothers, LSMDA, Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH), PCN, NAPPMED, KSMoH and implementing partners.

• **Training of PPMVs and CPs:**

The trainings of CPs and PPMVs were conducted in Kaduna and Lagos states during the first year. These trainings were done in tandem with the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) and the Federal and State Ministries of Health. In total, the training numbers for last year were four hundred and twenty-one (421).

In Lagos, there were one hundred and forty-four (144) for tier one, fifteen (15) for tier two and ninety-six for community pharmacists. In Kaduna, there were ninety-three trainings for tier one and seventy-three trainings for tier two.

• **GIS Mapping & Assessment of CPs and PPMVs in Lagos and Kaduna**

In March 2018, the project commenced the GIS mapping of Community Pharmacists and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors in Lagos and Kaduna States. IntegratE state teams facilitated the participation of PCN, ACPN, NAPPMED/APMEV in the recruitment and the training as well as deployment of data collectors across LGAs in the states. Following the mapping of CPs, PPMVs and preparation for the implementation phase, the states team conducted facility assessment to appraise the functionality of the mapped facilities and document their capacity and readiness to offer FP services to women and adolescents.
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