

OVERVIEW OF THE CROSS RIVER 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

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.

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:** Establish robust surveillance systems, including laboratory networks and data reporting mechanisms, to identify health threats early.
- **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 CROSS RIVER STATE?

Cross River State is located in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. It shares boundaries with Cross River State to the west, Ebonyi State to the north, Benue State to the northeast, and the Republic of Cameroon to the east. The capital of Cross River State is Calabar.

Cross River State has an estimated population of approximately 4.4 million people. The State faces multiple public health threats, including cholera, TB, HIV, COVID-19, and Lassa Fever. Based on national health risk assessments, the State has a moderate to high risk of disease outbreaks, particularly due to its status as a tourism hub with significant cross-border transit with Cameroon.

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 dynamic legislative environment, previous successes in public health reforms, the strong capacity of legal officers, and the need to strengthen legal frameworks to support public health preparedness and response in the state.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

- Cross River 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.

Stakeholder Engagement Planning	▪ Identify and involve relevant stakeholders. ▪ Support dialogue and collaboration amongst stakeholders to achieve consensus on the reform approach.
Drafting and Review	▪ Conduct a thorough review of existing laws. ▪ Draft new legal provisions to address identified gaps and align with IHR (2005).
Finalisation and Advocacy	▪ Refine the draft law based on feedback from stakeholders. ▪ Advocate for the adoption of the new legal framework.
Presentation and Transmission	▪ 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
High-Level Sensitisation and Advocacy Meeting with One Health Ministries	Permanent Secretaries of the following ministries: (a) Health (b) Justice (c) Agriculture (d) Environment Directors representing the following departments	This meeting aims to introduce the subnational health security legal reform initiative, strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration, and secure stakeholder support for the forthcoming legal reform activities in the State. It would be an opportunity

	(a) Public Health (MOH) (b) Disease Control (State Primary Healthcare) (c) Veterinary Services (Agric) (d) Environmental Health (Environment) (e) Legal Drafting (Justice)	for technical partners to provide an overview of the reform process and gather input on stakeholder inclusion, team composition, and the next steps for the legal assessment phase.
Validation of Legal Assessment Report 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 (Laboratory, Animal Health, Environmental Health, Food Safety).	This meeting focuses on introducing the legal assessment and 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.

NEED FOR A DEDICATED TEAM TO SUPPORT THE LEGAL REFORM PROCESS

The Cross River State Government is at an important juncture in its journey towards enhancing public health security. A dedicated and multidisciplinary team is essential to effectively implement the legal reforms proposed by NCDC and Resolve to Save Lives. 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	Dir. Veterinary + Animal Health Officer/Area

	Agriculture	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
11	State Primary Healthcare Development Board	Focal Person

NEED FOR A DEDICATED TEAM TO SUPPORT THE LEGAL REFORM PROCESS

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)**, with the support of **Resolve to Save Lives (RTSL)**, is committed to supporting this effort alongside the Cross River State government and all other stakeholders in the State. Implementation and organisation of the meetings/activities will be supported by **Orixine Consulting** – RTSL designated implementing partner. This will contribute to the overall improvement of health security at the subnational level in Nigeria.

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