



# **The Communique Issued at the end of the First National Forum on Unintended Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion in Nigeria**

## **PREAMBLE**

The Partnership for Advancing Abortion Research and Reducing Unsafe Abortion in Nigeria (PAARRUAN) organized a national forum on unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion at the Kakanfo Inn, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria between March 14-15, 2024. PAARRUAN is a platform for setting abortion research agenda, utilizing research findings, and implementing projects to reduce unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions in Nigeria. PAARRUAN is led by the consortium of the Center for Research, Evaluation Resources and Development (CERED), and the Academy for Health Development (AHEAD) in Nigeria, with support from the Guttmacher Institute (GI), USA, organized the forum. The inaugural members of the Partnership are Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Medical Sciences, Ondo; University of Ibadan, Ibadan; and the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti.

Sixty-one (61) professionals, including researchers, service providers, journalists, program managers, drawn from tertiary institutions, and local and international organizations attended the forum. The institutions are Bayero University, University of Abuja, University of Calabar, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Ibadan, University of Medical Sciences, and Federal University, Oye-Ekiti. The development partners are the Guttmacher Institute, Jhpiego, MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices, Ipas, and Society for Family Health. Other organizations are the Centre for Media and Society, the Population Association of Nigeria, and media houses in Nigeria. The government representative came from the Oyo State Ministry of Health.

Dr. Akin Bankole, a Senior Researcher at the Guttmacher Institute, presented the keynote address titled Building National Collaboration for Addressing Unwanted Pregnancies and Unsafe Abortion in Nigeria. Thirty-two (32) abstracts, three panel discussions, and four lectures were presented at the forum.



## OBSERVATIONS

1. Unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion pose major reproductive health problems in Nigeria. Unsafe abortion accounts for 30-40% of maternal deaths in the country.
2. The contraceptive prevalence rate remains poor; the unmet need for family planning is about 18%, representing the major cause of unintended pregnancy and abortion. The root cause of abortion is the high number of unintended pregnancies in the country.
3. Despite the restrictive laws of abortion in Nigeria, abortion figures remain high. Approximately 1.4 million abortions occurred in the country in 2019.
4. Most induced abortions in the country are unsafe because the procedures are performed secretly, in settings without minimal standards, and by untrained persons.
5. Reduction of unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortion will contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for a coalition, consisting of a multidisciplinary team, all relevant stakeholders, including academia, the media, religious institutions, civil society organizations, youth groups, health practitioners, community leaders, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, to tackle the challenge of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in Nigeria.
2. Members of PAARRUAN should build a strong coalition in the four participating institutions and extend this opportunity to other institutions in Nigeria.
3. PAARRUAN needs to synthesize current evidence and develop a research agenda on unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and other sexual and reproductive health issues in Nigeria.
4. PAARRUAN should take advantage of relevant conferences on law, social sciences, public health, media, to present issues relating to unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion and need to take action to address it.
5. To be effective, there is a need to develop a clear message supported by the evidence. Such messages can be disseminated using all available media including social media channels.



6. The media have a critical role to play; however, to be effective, the media need data on the nature and impact of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion. To this end, researchers should make relevant data available in journalism-friendly formats.
7. Government should improve funding for reproductive health to address unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion.

## **APPRECIATION**

Appreciation is expressed to all the delegates, the organizers, and sponsors of the forum.

### **Signed**

**Prof. Akanni Akinyemi** (Centre for Research, Evaluation Resources, and Development – CERED)

**Mr. Ayoola Ojewusi** (Academy for Health Development – AHEAD)