

**THE ROLE OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN THE PROMOTION OF PEACE,
SECURITY AND WELLNESS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the whole world, people envision a better future for themselves, for their children and their children's children in peace, security, as well as wellness, prosperity and social justice. Along with this assurance of financial coverage, primary health care is key to the attainment by all people, of this level of health necessary to realize those aspirations. Primary health care is people oriented service built on the axiom of health of the people by the people and for the people. Primary health care promote peace, security, and wellness, and seeks to prevent injuries, violence, illness and insecurity through delivery of health care services, creating conditions that help people to become and stay healthy, as well as extending the reach of health care providers into communities making health care accessible, through community and public participation, use of appropriate technology, inter sectoral collaboration for health promotion. Primary health care through their professionals, such as health educators, carry out advocacy, sensitization with policy makers, and community mobilization, to create awareness and to liaise with relevant stakeholders to help in poverty reduction especially among the vulnerable groups – women and children. They also advocate that government policies on sanitation, water supply, urban and rural development, women empowerment, gender education, employment, family planning, policies on pregnant women and children welfare, immunization and general health services should be implemented through provision of health education. Primary health care workers ensure that massive awareness creation has reached the vulnerable groups for care of self and for utilization of all health care interventions made available to them in their communities by the government. This paper seeks to examine the role of primary health care in the promotion of peace, security and wellness.

KEY WORDS: Primary Health Care, Promotion, Peace, Security, wellness

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the whole world, people envision a better future for themselves, for their children and their children's children in peace, security, as well as wellness, prosperity and social justice. Along with the assurance of financial coverage, primary health care is key to the attainment by all people, of this level of health necessary to realize those aspirations. Today, the need for people-centered primary health care is greater than at any time in history. We are facing demographic and social changes with an ageing population, urbanization, globalization and rising inequities, epidemiological transition including the rise of chronic diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health and multi morbidity, while coping with unfinished needs of maternal and child health, communicable diseases and increasing antimicrobial resistance, complex emergencies, including epidemics, wars and violence and the effects of climate change, all resulting in the largest population migration in history, increasing complex health system and rising cost of health care, increasing citizens' voice, social participation and rising expectations and an enlarging role of the private sector, innovation, the technological revolution and information age in health service delivery; no nation will be able to meet these challenges without strong commitment to primary health care and universal coverage (WHO, 2015). There

are three tiers of health services in Nigeria, namely; primary health care services, secondary health care services and tertiary health care services. Of these three, the one which is most community based is the primary health care whose challenge is to establish a health care system that touches the life of every citizen and tackles the conditions that cause the highest mortality and morbidity. As Nigeria is operating on a mix economy system, private enterprises also play their roles in the provision of health care services (WHO, 2016).

Primary health care is people oriented service built on the axiom of health of the people by the people and for the people. According to Garba (2005), primary health care was used to mean the care given to a patient by the health workers who saw him first. Primary health care forms an integral part, both of the country's health system of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of the individual, the family and the community within the national health system, thereby bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work; it also constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.

Concept of Primary Health Care

According to Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, primary health care is an essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally acceptable to individuals and families in the community, and through their full participation, and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination.

World Health Organization (2016) identified five key element to achieving the goals of primary health care.

- Reducing exclusion and social disparities in health (universal coverage reforms)
- Organizing health services around people's needs and expectations (service delivery reform)
- Integrating health into all sectors (public policy reforms)
- Pursuing collaborative model of policy dialogue (leadership reforms)
- Increasing stakeholders' participation

Primary health care being a comprehensive health system has five principles to ensure its sustainability. These are:

- Equity: Primary health care in order to meet the main health problem of the community must be provided equally to all individuals and families irrespective of their gender, age, caste, colour, location – urban or rural, and social class.
- Community participation: Community members must be involved in need identification, planning, implementation of interventions and evaluation of project or programmes in order to make proper use of the available resources at their disposal.
- Health workforce: PHC emphasizes on recruitment of adequate number and distribution of trained health care professionals who are expected to work as a team to ensure provision of health care to communities.
- Use of appropriate technology: The technology used in primary health care must be appropriate, accessible, affordable, feasible, and culturally acceptable to communities.
- Multi sectoral approach: PHC approaches recognizes other sectors as equally important in health service delivery e.g, Agriculture, Education, Housing, Water development, Rural development, Industry, Community organization, etc. (WHO, 2005).

Primary health care component includes:

Provision of maternal and child health (MCH), provision of essential drugs, appropriate treatment of common diseases, prevention and control of locally endemic diseases, nutrition, dental health care, environmental health, mental health, care of the aged, and health education or behaviour change communication.

Primary Health Care in the Promotion of Peace

Health researchers have confirmed that health, peace and social justice are intertwined (WHO, PHC, WHO Health Promotion). Without social justice, peace is not possible; without peace, health is not possible; and without health, peace is not possible. Researches have also confirmed that social determinants of health and associated inequities have a significant impact upon health outcomes for individuals and populations. Health workers and professionals are taught to care for individuals and for communities using a socio-environmental perspective to identify a broad range of factors impacting health. Advocating for evidence based health care approach that involves public policies to support health is now an important aspect of the work of health professionals. Three of such approaches are of particular relevance here as they incorporate peace as a component of health – primary health care approach, health promotion approach and holistic health approach (WHO, PHC, WHO Health Promotion).

By examining these three approaches, the connection between health and peace becomes evident making explicit decision of that connection a legitimate approach. Just as advocacy for peace is legitimate within the practice of health care work, attending to health is part of the practice of peace workers. Primary health care workers as peace advocates and ambassadors promote peace for individuals, families and communities in order to achieve the primary goal of PHC, which is health for all by the year 2000; they promote peace by making health care services available, accessible, acceptable, affordable and sustainable and provided equally to all individuals, families and communities irrespective of their gender, age, ethnicity or location.

PHC promotes and protects the health of the people and contributes to a better quality of life and world peace through its core components. The culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that rejects violence and prevents conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nation (United Nation General Assembly, 2018). The culture of peace and non-violence is a commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and inter faith dialogue and reconciliation.

Primary Health Care in the Promotion of Security

Health security is the awareness of being secure that health is good and if not there are ways to obtain care to return to good health. It aims at guaranteeing a minimum protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyles. According to Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA, 2017), it is an effort by nations, international organizations and civil societies to accelerate progress towards a world safe and secure from infectious diseases, threats to global health security as an international priority, and to spur progress towards full implementation of the agenda.

In an effort to meet the global health security, Primary Health Care, in collaboration and partnership with Center for Disease Control, helps by preventing avoidable catastrophes through preventive services such as

- Immunization.
- Detect threats early through targets for strengthening laboratory and surveillance system reporting and capable workforce.
- Responding rapidly and effectively through targets for building emergency operation centers hinting public health law enforcement and improving medical countermeasures and personnel deployment (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

The term human security first officially appeared on the scene of international relations in 1994, with a report by the UN Human Development Program (UNDP). It challenged the traditional concepts of security by contending that the central focus of security efforts should be the individual, not the nation-state that has so far been the typical focus of analysis. It stated that it was time to redress the balance and to move from security thinking of the cold war, focused on

the protection of territory, to a security vision that includes the protection of the people (UNDP, 1994:22).

In support of this shift in security focus, the report cites the founding document of the United Nations where freedom from fear was stated as a recognized right, and where equal weight was given to territories and people (UNDP, 1994:24). Human security was defined in the UNDP report as safety from constant threat such as hunger, diseases and repression, as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruption in matters of the daily life of an individual.

The UNDP report offered seven different areas where threats to human security can be found;

- economic security where the main threat is persistent poverty
- food security where the threats are hunger and famine
- health security where the threat includes injury, diseases and lack of access to health care
- environmental security where the threats are among other pollution and environmental degradation and climate change related issues
- personal security where the threats are different forms of violence
- political security where the threats are among others, political repression, human rights abuses (UNDP, 1994). Human security in a broad sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill their own potentials – freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of the future generations to inherit a healthy, natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore national security (Commission on Human Security, 2003).

Primary health care and wellness promotion

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behaviour towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions. People need to acquire the knowledge, skills and information to make healthy choices such as the food they eat, and the health care services they need. In order to make these choices, they need access to opportunities and assurance of an environment where people can demand further policy actions to further improve their health. Primary health care uses health education intervention to ensure people acquire the necessary information, knowledge and skills (WHO, 2016).

Social mobilization is the process of bringing together all societal and personal influences to raise awareness of demand for health care, assist in the delivery of resources and services, and cultivate sustainable individual and community involvement in order to employ social mobilization, membership institutions, community partners and organizations, and others collaborating to reach specific groups of people for intentional dialogue. Social mobilization aims to facilitate change through an interdisciplinary approach. Primary health care uses social mobilization strategies as a tool to ensure community and organizational partnership in health care promotion (WHO, 2016).

A healthy city is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and developing to their maximum potential. Health cities place health high on the agenda of decision makers and promote comprehensive local strategies for health protection and sustainable development. The aim is to create a health supportive environment, to achieve a good quality of life, to provide basic sanitation and hygiene needs as well as supply access to health care; primary health care through one of its core values promotes the health of its citizenry through accessibility and availability as well as education on environmental sanitation and hygienic behaviour, attitudes and practices (Tsouras, 1995).

An effective school health programme can be one of the most cost effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health. School health programmes is a strategic means to prevent important health risks in children, youth and adults. Most of the leading causes of death, diseases and disabilities can be significantly reduced by preventive education initiated in schools by primary health care providers as well as social and political policies. Primary health care through their services provided at schools also help to reduce the risk factors that could result to poor health.

Oral health is a key indicator of overall health, wellbeing and quality of life of the people. WHO defines oral health as a state of being free from chronic mouth and facial pain, oral and thermal cancer, oral infection and sores, periodontal diseases, tooth decay, tooth loss and other diseases and disorders that limit an individual's capacity in biting, chewing, smoking, speaking and psychosocial well being. Primary health care services significantly help to reduce global disease burden by promoting equity and integrity in oral health promotion into the Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevention and control programme (WHO, 2016).

Primary Health Care promotes wellness through good governance. Health is a precondition for all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – an action on the social and environmental determinant of health is in turn critical to creating inclusive, equitable economically productive and healthy societies (United Nation General Assembly, 2012). Health gain as well as the realization of health as a fundamental human right and health equity requires that policy makers in all sectors routinely consider health outcomes including benefits, harms and health related cost.

The mutually reinforcing relationship between health and development, makes realizing synergies both desirable and necessary, therefore legislations, rules and regulation are important instruments for government to use in fulfilling their responsibilities to prevent diseases, and promote population health and to protect people from social, economic and environmental harms that threaten the right to health. Primary health care make use of advocacy, sensitization, social mobilization and need identification, implementation and evaluation as a strategy to encourage good governance in wellness promotion.

The Role of Primary Health Care in the Promotion of Peace, Security and Wellness

Primary health care promotes peace, security, and wellness and seeks to prevent injuries, violence, illness and insecurity through delivery of health care services, creating conditions that help people to become and stay healthy as well as extending the reach of health care providers into communities making health care accessible, through community and public participation, use of appropriate technology, inter sectoral collaboration for health promotions. Specifically primary health care promotes peace security, and wellness through the following approaches and activities--

- Provision of good obstetric care through Integrated management of pregnancy, labour and puerperium carried out through students provided by PHC policy, nursing and midwifery guidelines.
- Provision of essential prenatal care and child survival strategies
- Immunization of children 0-5 years against early childhood diseases
- Provision of family planning services and making contraception available without cost
- Provision of food supplement and use of community based antibiotic treatment, good nutrition and dietary diversification for mother and child to promote intake of diverse nutrients daily.
- Provision of insecticide treated net to reduce death related to malaria.
- Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS through timely intervention with antiretroviral treatment to infected mother and child.

- Provision of good parenting education to mothers and women of child bearing age, example, to encourage immediate and continued exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months to 2 years and the use of oral rehydration therapy to control dehydration associated with diarrhoea in infants and children.
- Provision of essential newborn care and services including care of umbilical cord, circumcision, ear piercing and other ad hoc services.
- Improved sanitation and access to clean water supply to help reduce childhood infection and diarrhoea through collaboration with related agencies.
- Primary health care also uses multi sectoral approach to promote peace, security, and wellness through inclusion of other sectors of the economy in health care – e g, collaboration with other ministries, such as education, agriculture, communication, works, lands and housing, finance, transport, environment and rural development including social development, rural and community development and social welfare.
- Through community participation approach where members are included in identification of needs, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of health related programmes, to solve their needs.
- Provision and equitable distribution of resources such as manpower, money and material
- Provision and distribution of essential and functional health care equipment such as those used for checking vital signs, records, and for deliveries and accessories.
- Provision of essential drugs used in primary health care for maternal and child health care and care of the aged.
- Provision of good referral system in terms of personnel, good road network, transport facility and referral notes as well as follow up to secondary and tertiary health care services.
- Primary health care through their professionals, such as health educators carry out advocacy, sensitization with policy makers, community mobilization to create awareness, and also liaise with relevant stakeholders to help in poverty reduction especially among the vulnerable groups – women and children. They also advocate that government policies on sanitation, water supply, urban and rural development, women empowerment, gender education, employment, family planning, policies on pregnant women and children welfare, immunization and general health services should be implemented through provision of health education. Primary health care workers ensure that massive awareness creation reaches the vulnerable groups for care of self and for utilization of all health care interventions made available to them in their communities by the government (WHO (2006)).

Conclusion

Throughout the whole world, people envision a better future for themselves, for their children and their children's children in peace, security, as well as wellness, prosperity and social justice. Along with this assurance of financial coverage, primary health care is key to the attainment by all people, of this level of health necessary to realize those aspirations. Primary health care is people oriented service built on the axiom of health of the people by the people and for the people. Primary health care was used to mean the care given to a patient by the health workers who saw him first. Primary health care forms an integral part, both of the country's health system of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of the individual, the family and the community within the national health system, thereby bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work; it also constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.

Primary health care promotes peace, security, and wellness and seeks to prevent injuries, violence, illness and insecurity through delivery of health care services, creating conditions that help people to become and stay healthy as well as extending the reach of health care providers into communities, thus making health care accessible through community and public participation, use of appropriate technology, inter sectoral collaboration for health promotion. Primary health care through their professionals such as health educators carry out advocacy, sensitization with policy makers, community mobilization to create awareness and also liaise with relevant stakeholders to help in poverty reduction especially among the vulnerable groups – women and children. They also advocate that government policies on sanitation, water supply, urban and rural development, women empowerment, gender education, employment, family planning, policies on pregnant women and children welfare, immunization and general health services should be implemented through provision of health education. Primary health care workers ensure that massive awareness creation has reached the vulnerable groups for care of self and for utilization of all health care intervention made available to them in their communities by the government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is very pertinent that primary health care should use health educators effectively for proper advocacy and sensitization in order to create effective awareness for the purpose of poverty reduction among women and children and even the men.
2. Primary health care ensure effective advocacy of government policies concerning sanitation, water supply, urban and rural development, women empowerment, gender education, employment, family planning, policies on pregnant women and children welfare, immunization and general health services should be implemented through provision of health education.

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