

**YOUTH DELIVER THE FUTURE
INVESTING IN YOUTH PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT:
RESEARCH THAT IMPROVES POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

**Abuja, Nigeria
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**Opening Plenary Remarks
By
Dr. Hassan Muhammad Lawal
Honourable Minister of Health/Labour**

It has always been a great joy for me to attend activities that are youth focused. I am here today because I believe that when we invest in programmes and policies to improve the health and well-being of young people, we are safeguarding our future. The theme of this important International Conference, "Investing in Young People's Health and Development: Research that Improves Policies and Programs" is therefore very apt.

Nearly half of the world's population is under the age of 25. This is the largest youth generation ever in the history of mankind. Young people, ages 10-25, comprise almost 30% of the world's population. Today, 87% of young people live in developing countries, including Africa. The majority of the population in Africa- approximately 60%- are people under 25 years old. Considering the African Union definition of youth, 15-35 years, the proportion of youths in the African Sub Region is further increased. We must therefore take all necessary measures to invest in young people's health and development so that Africa can enjoy the demographic bonus of this age group.

Nigeria has shown an increasing trend of commitment to the health and development of her young people. The development of the first National Adolescent Health Policy in 1995 as well as the Strategic Framework for Adolescent Reproductive Health in 1999 and very recently (in March 2008), the launching of the reviewed policy and strategic framework to translate the policy into actionable plans underscore the recognition of the needs of young people by the government and peoples of Nigeria and their commitment to ensuring their optimal development. Let me assure you that this policy will be vigorously implemented to impact the lives of our young people by my ministry and other interested stakeholders. At this juncture, may I crave your indulgence to present a package containing the Policy and Strategic Framework on the Health and Development of Adolescents., as well as the Advocacy kits on Adolescent Health to the First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua and other members of the high table.

We look forward to the outcome of this conference in the hope that it will come up with implementable recommendations which will spur interested stakeholders (both government and non governmental organizations) to invest in policies and programmes that will impact you people's health and development.

Thank you.