



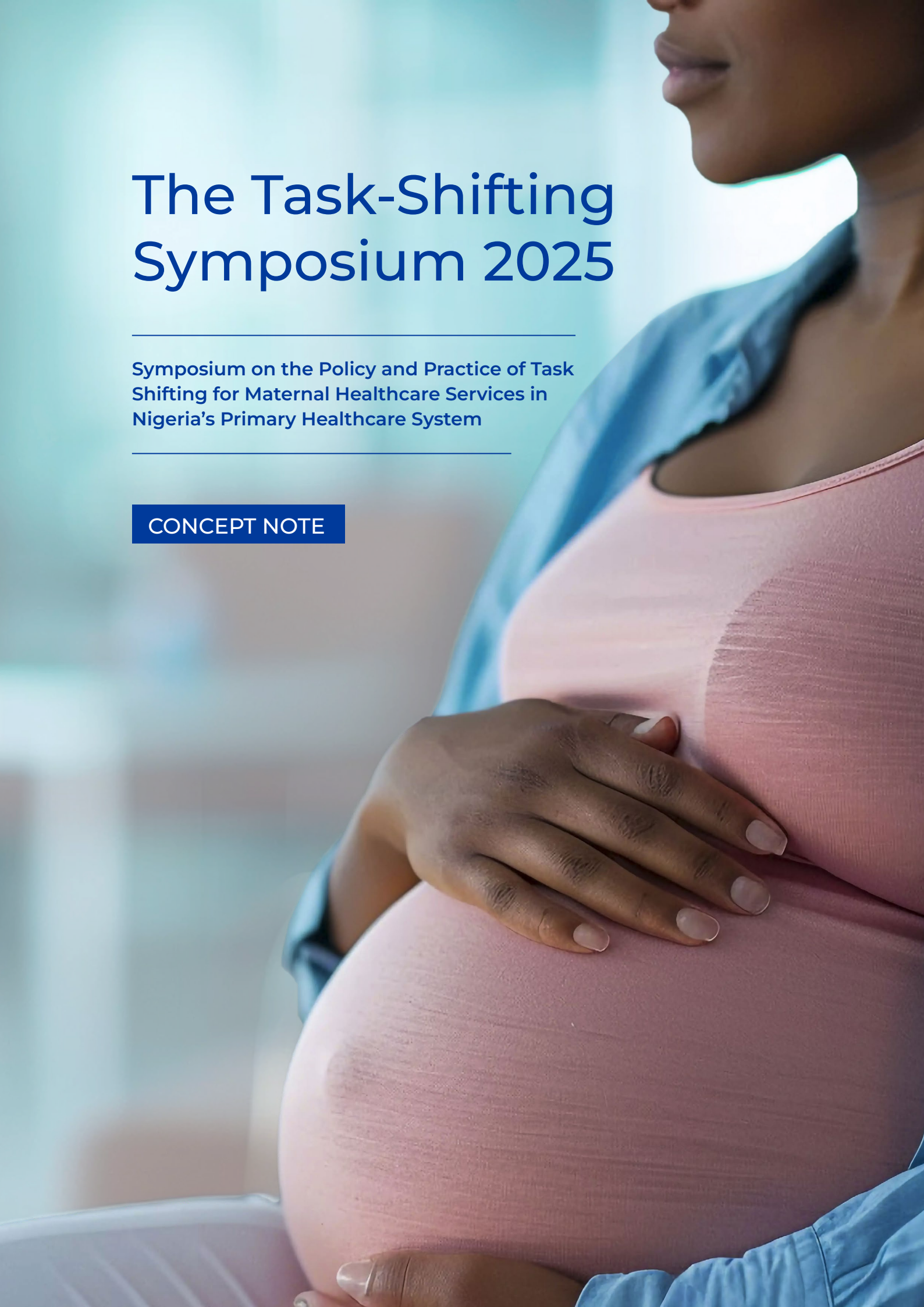
# THE TASK SHIFTING SYMPOSIUM 2025

## **Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice for Better Maternal Healthcare in Nigeria**

Insight · Implementation · Impact



**Concept Note and Agenda**

A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman with dark skin, wearing a light pink top. Her hands are resting on her large, rounded belly. A healthcare worker in a light blue uniform is visible, with their hands gently touching the woman's abdomen. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor clinical or hospital setting.

# The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025

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Symposium on the Policy and Practice of Task  
Shifting for Maternal Healthcare Services in  
Nigeria's Primary Healthcare System

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CONCEPT NOTE

# 1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Maternal health outcomes remain a pressing challenge in Nigeria, where maternal mortality ratios are among the highest globally. Despite decades of investments focused on the primary healthcare system and maternal healthcare services system, persistent shortages of skilled health personnel and uneven distribution of resources undermine access to quality maternal health services, particularly in rural and under-served areas.

Task-shifting, the systematic delegation of clinical responsibilities from more highly qualified health workers to those with less formal training, has emerged as a strategic response to health workforce shortages. Globally, and within Nigeria, task-shifting is increasingly recognised as a policy solution for expanding coverage and improving access to essential maternal health services. Despite the passage of over a decade since the adoption of Nigeria's first national task-shifting policy, which explicitly prioritized maternal healthcare services, maternal health outcomes have remained below expectations. The limited progress raises critical questions about the policy's translation into practice and the contextual factors constraining its effectiveness in improving access to maternal healthcare services.

The paucity of empirical evidence on task-shifting policy and its practice for the delivery of maternal healthcare services provided the impetus for a doctoral study examining this important topic using an interpretive lens. Conducted at the University of Oxford by Dr. Francis I. Ayomoh, this research focused on the Federal Capital Territory sought to explore the emergence and evolution of Nigeria's task-shifting policy and to understand the influences shape its practice for delivering maternal healthcare services within primary healthcare settings.

The findings from this doctoral study are intriguing and illuminating, offering compelling and nuanced insights that demonstrate that the policy and practice of task-shifting are far from straightforward. Rather, task shifting represents a contested process that demands careful navigation of tensions between policy formulation, regulatory oversight, and on-the-ground practice realities. These tensions underscore the need for critical reflection and dialogue among policymakers, regulators, healthcare workers, civil society organiser, researchers and the public. This symposium therefore seeks to provide a platform for disseminating the findings of a recent qualitative doctoral study conducted in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, while fostering discussion on how task-shifting policy and practice can be improved to strengthen maternal healthcare in Nigeria's primary healthcare system.



## 2 OBJECTIVES

### **Dissemination**

Disseminate the key findings from the doctoral research on task shifting for maternal healthcare within Nigeria's primary healthcare system.

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### **Dialogue**

Provide a platform for dialogue and critical reflection among policymakers, regulators, healthcare workers, and researchers on the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

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### **Recommendation**

Advance the national discourse on task shifting in primary healthcare settings and generate actionable recommendations to inform evidence-based policy formulation and contextually tailored practice of task shifting.

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### **Collaboration**

Strengthen collaborative networks between academia, policymakers, regulators, and healthcare workers to promote the sustainable and context-appropriate application of task shifting in the delivery of essential healthcare services in Nigeria.

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## **3** PROPOSED SYMPOSIUM STRUCTURE

The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025 is designed as a one-day dissemination and stakeholder engagement event that combines academic presentations, policy dialogue, panel discussions and interactive sessions. The theme of the event is “Advancing Maternal Healthcare through Task-shifting: Strengthening Nigeria’s Primary Healthcare System and will be delivered in a hybrid format to allow online participation of relevant stakeholders and the public. The structure of the event is as follows:

### **a) Opening Ceremony and Keynote Address**

The event will commence with a formal opening session featuring welcome remarks from representatives of the University of Oxford and key Nigerian health sector institutions. A keynote address will be delivered by a distinguished scholar or policymaker on the topic “Bridging Research and Policy: The Role of Primary Health Research in Advancing Maternal Healthcare Delivery.” This session will set the tone for the day by highlighting the importance of evidence-based policymaking and the contribution of academic research to health system reforms.

### **b) Presentation of Doctoral Research Findings**

The event will have three structured sessions for presentation of the key findings from the doctoral research. Each session will focus on a key thematic area emerging from the doctoral research. These may include:

- The evolution and policy context of task shifting for maternal healthcare in Nigeria.
- Task shifting for maternal healthcare services: The competence, availability and motivation of the workforce.
- Collective social entrepreneurship for task shifting: The policy dilemma of balancing increased access to services and quality of care

Each structured session will include a presentation by Dr Francis Ayomoh followed by a Q&A session for the audience to engage with the research findings and reflect on the relevance of the findings to broader policy and practice in primary healthcare settings.

### **c) Panel Discussion: Bridging Policy, Regulation, and Practice**

Two high-level panel discussions will bring together policymakers, regulators, professional associations, and healthcare workers to reflect on the implications of the research findings. The discussions will focus on how task-shifting policy can be better designed, regulated, and operationalised to enhance maternal healthcare delivery in Nigeria’s primary healthcare system. Panellists will be encouraged to identify actionable pathways for integrating evidence into ongoing policy and system reforms.



#### **d) Interactive Q&A and Audience Engagement**

Following the presentations and panel discussion, participants will engage in moderated Q&A sessions to deepen understanding, clarify emerging issues, and propose practical recommendations. The interactive format is intended to foster inclusive participation and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders.

#### **e) Media Engagement and Networking Session**

To enhance visibility and broader dissemination, the event will include media coverage and documentation of key messages. A closing networking session will provide an opportunity for participants to build partnerships and explore avenues for collaboration on future research, policy development, and implementation initiatives related to task shifting and maternal healthcare.

## 4

# TARGET PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025 will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders drawn from government, academia, professional bodies, development partners, and frontline healthcare delivery institutions. This multi-sectoral participation is designed to ensure that the discussions and recommendations emerging from the symposium are grounded in both policy relevance and practical applicability. To enhance more inclusive participation, the event will be organised in a hybrid format, allowing relevant stakeholders and the public to join the event virtually. The target participants and stakeholders include:

### A. Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs)

- Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (FMHSW): Departments responsible for human resources for health, reproductive and maternal health, healthcare financing and health planning.
- National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA): The directorates responsible for service delivery, policy, and community health systems.
- FCT Health and Human Services Secretariat: Departments responsible for human resources for health, reproductive and maternal health, healthcare financing and health planning.

### B. Regulatory and Professional Bodies

The key institutions that play critical roles in defining the scope of practice, setting professional standards, and ensuring compliance with task-shifting regulations.

- Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN)
- Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN)
- Community Health Practitioners Registration Board of Nigeria (CHPRBN)

### C. Academic and Research Institutions

Representatives from universities and research centres engaged in health systems and policy research in Nigeria and globally.

### D. Development Partners and Donor Agencies

Organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Fund, GAVI, and the Gates Foundation will be invited to contribute their perspectives and gain insights for the study to improve their initiatives and interventions focused on maternal healthcare services within Nigeria's primary healthcare system.

### E. Primary Healthcare Practitioners and Professional Associations

Frontline healthcare practitioners including nurses, midwives, community healthcare workers, and medical doctors will be invited to share experiential insights of task-shifting practice in primary healthcare facilities, grounding the discussions in practical realities.

### F. Civil Society and Media Representatives

Selected civil society organizations working on maternal and child health advocacy, as well as representatives from the media, will be engaged to enhance accountability, public awareness, and dissemination of key messages emerging from the symposium.

## **5** EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025 is expected to generate several important outcomes that contribute to ongoing policy dialogue, knowledge exchange, and institutional collaboration around task shifting and maternal healthcare in Nigeria. Specifically, the event will result in the following:

### **a) Enhanced Understanding of the Interpretive Dimensions of Task Shifting**

The symposium will deepen participants' appreciation of the complex, interpretive, and context-dependent nature of task-shifting policy and practice in Nigeria. Policymakers, regulators, and practitioners will gain a nuanced understanding of how policy intentions are translated into practice and the influences that facilitate or constrain effective implementation at the primary healthcare level.

### **b) Evidence-Informed Dialogue and Practical Recommendations**

Through structured discussions and interactive sessions, the symposium will provide a platform for collective reflection on the implications of the doctoral research findings. This shared dialogue is expected to yield practical, evidence-informed recommendations for strengthening maternal health policy, refining regulatory frameworks, and improving service delivery models in primary healthcare settings.

### **c) Strengthened Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Networks**

By bringing together stakeholders from academia, government agencies, regulatory bodies, healthcare workers and professional associations, the symposium will foster stronger collaborative networks. These networks will help bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice, promoting sustained engagement and joint action towards improving maternal healthcare outcomes in Nigeria.

### **d) Policy-Relevant Knowledge Products and Dissemination Outputs**

A comprehensive policy brief will be produced, documenting key insights, discussions, and policy recommendations. This brief will serve as a reference resource for national and sub-national health authorities, donors, and implementing partners engaged in maternal health and health systems strengthening.

### **e) Foundations for Future Research and Policy Engagement**

The symposium will help identify critical gaps and emerging areas for future research and policy engagement on task shifting and maternal healthcare delivery. It is anticipated that the event will catalyse further collaboration between relevant stakeholders, supporting ongoing efforts to build an evidence-informed and resilient primary healthcare system in Nigeria.

## 6 WHY ATTEND THE SYMPOSIUM

The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025 offers a rare and valuable opportunity for stakeholders across Nigeria's health sector to engage deeply with cutting-edge research and evidence on task shifting for maternal healthcare services within the primary healthcare system. Participants will gain first-hand insights from a doctoral study conducted at the University of Oxford, which provides a rigorous and contextually grounded understanding of how Nigeria's task-shifting policy has evolved and how it operates in practice.

Beyond learning, the event serves as a strategic platform for dialogue, collaboration, and influence. Attendees, including policymakers, regulators, healthcare workers, researchers, and development partners, will have the opportunity to connect, exchange ideas, and collectively chart a renewed course for strengthening maternal healthcare service delivery. The discussions will illuminate actionable strategies for improving access, quality, and sustainability of maternal health services in primary healthcare facilities across Nigeria.

By attending, participants will not only contribute to shaping the national discourse on task shifting but also be part of a broader effort to advance equitable and evidence-based reforms that enhance maternal health outcomes and accelerate progress toward universal health coverage in Nigeria.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The Symposium on the Policy and Practice of Task Shifting for Maternal Healthcare Services in Nigeria's Primary Healthcare System presents an invaluable platform to bridge the gap between research, policy, and frontline practice. Drawing from a doctoral study on task-shifting for maternal healthcare services and convening key actors across the health sector, the event will foster collective reflection and generate actionable strategies for improving maternal healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

As Nigeria continues its journey toward achieving universal health coverage, translating research into meaningful policy and practice has never been more critical. This symposium provides a timely opportunity for stakeholders to collaborate, share knowledge, and shape a more resilient and equitable primary healthcare system that delivers better maternal health outcomes.

# Task shifting for maternal healthcare services:

## A Qualitative Study of Policy and Practice in Nigeria's Primary Healthcare System

*Supervisors: Prof. Sara Shaw, Prof. Alan Silman, Associate Prof. Gemma Hughes, Dr. Nikki Newhouse*

### Doctoral Thesis Abstract


Task shifting is the delivery of healthcare services by less specialised healthcare workers due to workforce shortages following requisite training and supervision. It has been used to deliver maternal and other essential healthcare services in Nigeria's primary healthcare facilities. A decade after the formulation of the first national task-shifting policy, there is limited understanding about the policy's emergence and evolution, and the influences that have shaped its practice for delivering maternal healthcare services which are a priority for Nigeria given its high maternal mortality rate in the last two decades. Most studies that have explored task shifting in Nigeria adopted a rational view, failing to interpretively uncover how task shifting happens in primary healthcare settings and under what influences. Notably, no previous study has used an interpretive policy analysis (IPA) framework to examine the evolution of task shifting policy and its practice in Nigeria. This study addresses these gaps by providing an understanding of how Nigeria's task-shifting policy emerged and evolved, as well as the influences that shaped its practice in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with a focus on its application for delivering maternal health services in primary healthcare settings.

I designed a qualitative study using an IPA framework to explore the meanings, beliefs, values, and interests of policy actors involved in developing, interpreting, and implementing policy. I collected data by iteratively integrating three methods: documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. My analysis focused on identifying interpretive communities, defined as policy actors sharing common values, interests, and meaning-making, to explore their interpretations and meanings of the task-shifting policy and the influences shaping its practice in the FCT's primary healthcare facilities.

My findings demonstrate that the task-shifting policy and its practice in Nigeria are socially constructed and shaped by the interpretations, meanings, and interests of policy actors in four interpretive communities: optimists, advocates, guardians, and practitioners. The emergence and evolution of the task-shifting policy followed global and regional recommendations and was mainly influenced by the interests of policy actors in the interpretive communities of optimists and advocates, with some resistance from some policy actors in the interpretive communities of guardians and practitioners. The practice of task shifting was shaped by the interests, interactions, and agency of frontline healthcare workers, and by gaps in several key requirements for task shifting such as training and supervision, human resources, referral systems, regulatory mechanisms, commodities, and infrastructure.

Amid the resource constraints and tensions between healthcare workers, the delivery of maternal health services was sustained by a facility sustenance fund raised through collective social entrepreneurship. However, the delivery of maternal healthcare services through task-shifting has prioritised increased access at the expense of quality of care, thereby putting patients at risk of adverse outcomes. I argue that, ideally, the practice of task-shifting for maternal healthcare in primary healthcare settings should be discontinued. However, it remains an indispensable stopgap measure and, in the interim, should be implemented with a clear focus on quality of care. Until the FCT's primary healthcare system can be weaned off its reliance on task-shifting through sustained investments in long-term workforce development and system strengthening, task-shifting should be used cautiously, with careful attention to regulation, supervision, the quality of care delivered and the interests of policy actors.

# RESEARCHER

A portrait of Dr. Francis Ifeanyi Ayomoh, a Black man with short hair and glasses, wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark bow tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a solid dark blue.

## **Dr Francis Ifeanyi Ayomoh**

Honorary Postdoctoral Research Fellow,  
Global Primary Care Workforce  
Global Primary Care & Future Health Systems  
Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health  
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# Profile

Dr Francis Ayomoh is a Public Health Physician, Health Economist, Health Systems Strengthening expert, and Honorary Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Global Primary Care and Future Health Systems team. His postdoctoral research focuses on the global primary care workforce, with particular emphasis on Nigeria's primary healthcare system. With funding from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, he recently completed his DPhil in Primary Health Care at the University of Oxford. His research examined the policy and practice of task-shifting for maternal healthcare services within Nigeria's primary healthcare system, employing qualitative methods and an interpretive policy analysis framework. His doctoral work provides new insights into how policy actors' meanings, values, and interests shape policy implementation, health workforce interactions, and the practice of task-shifting in low-resource settings.

Francis has an undergraduate degree in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Jos and holds a Masters (Distinction) in Health Policy, Planning and Financing jointly awarded by the London School of Economics and Political Science and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He has completed certificate level courses in Global Health and Primary Health Care from Harvard University and John Hopkins University respectively. He also has a certificate in Public Management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certificate in Leadership and Management in Health from the University of Washington. He has also completed the World Health Organization's 'Advanced Health Financing for Universal Health Coverage' course.

Francis is a Mandela Washington Fellow, Commonwealth Scholar, and recipient of several awards, including the Best Graduating Medical Student Award, the Tony Elumelu Foundation Legacy Prize for Excellence in Medicine, and the prestigious President's National Honours NYSC Award from the Federal Government of Nigeria, in recognition of his contributions towards improving access to primary healthcare services in rural communities. He also received a Nautilus Award (commendation) for Academics from Green Templeton College at the University of Oxford.

With over a decade of professional experience across Africa, Francis has worked in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Liberia, and Uganda, providing technical expertise in healthcare financing, human resources for health, health policy and systems research, maternal and reproductive health, and non-communicable diseases. He has consulted for several international development organisations, including the World Bank and the Global Fund. Prior to joining the University of Oxford as a doctoral researcher, Francis worked with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Nigeria, where he was the Deputy Lead of the Healthcare Financing, Equity, and Investments team, supporting policy reforms and strategic investments to advance progress toward universal health coverage in Nigeria. Francis was a Health Financing Fellow with the Financing Alliance for Health and has worked as a Fellow of the Missing Billions Initiative where he had been involved in research and global advocacy for Disability Inclusive Health Systems.

Francis is the Founder and Inaugural President of the Oxford Global Health Society, an interdisciplinary platform that brings together students, researchers, and practitioners across the University of Oxford to engage with pressing global health challenges. He loves to teach and learn from the students, senior academics, and subject-matter experts. He has supported the teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Brunel University, London School of Economics and Political Science and the University of Oxford. He has published several peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals, and his research interests include Primary Healthcare, Health Systems Strengthening, Health Economics, Health Policy and Financing, Maternal and Reproductive Health, Non-Communicable Diseases, Disability Inclusion, Digital Health and Value-Based Healthcare.

# THE TASK-SHIFTING SYMPOSIUM 2025

Bridging Research, Policy, and  
Practice for Better Maternal  
Healthcare in Nigeria.

Tuesday  
**November 25th**  
2025

**9:00 AM – 4:30 PM**

@ Grand Lotus Hall, 3JS Hotels and  
Apartments, 31 P.O.W. Mafemi Crescent, Utako,  
Abuja, Nigeria.

**Register to attend**

<http://tinyurl.com/TASK-SHIFTING4PHC>



# The Task-Shifting Symposium 2025

A Symposium on the Policy and Practice of Task-Shifting for Maternal Healthcare Services in Nigeria's Primary Healthcare System.

## Agenda

Time	Activity	Responsible Person(s)
08:30 – 09:00 AM	<b>Arrival &amp; Registration</b>	Organising Committee Secretariat
09:00 – 09:10 AM	<b>Opening Ceremony</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Anthem</li> <li>▪ Welcome remarks</li> </ul>	All
09:10 – 09:30 AM	<b>Opening Address</b>  <b>Keynote address:</b> “Bridging Research and Policy: The Role of Primary Health Research in Advancing Maternal Healthcare Delivery.”	Dr. Adedolapo Fasawe, Mandate Secretary, FCT Health and Human Services Secretariat.
09:30 – 10:15 AM	<b>Presentation I:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Interpretive Communities and Task-Shifting for maternal healthcare: Policy evolution and meanings”</li> <li>▪ Q&amp;A Session (15 mins)</li> </ul>	Dr. Francis Ayomoh
10:15 – 10:45 AM	<b>Tea / Coffee Break</b>	All Participants
10:45 – 11:30 AM	<b>Presentation II:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “To whom do we shift the tasks: The competence, availability and motivation of the workforce.”</li> <li>▪ Q&amp;A Session (15 mins)</li> </ul>	Dr. Francis Ayomoh

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM	<p><b>Panel Discussion I:</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Task-Shifting for Maternal Health Services in Nigeria: Perspectives from Policy, Regulation, and Practice</p> <p><b>Panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dr Ngozi Nwosu, Director Primary Healthcare Systems and Development, NPHCDA</li> <li>■ Dr Sabastine Esomonu, Director, FCT PHC Board</li> <li>■ Dr. Emmanuel Udontre, Director, Nursing and Midwifery Council</li> <li>■ Chairperson, National Association of Community Health Practitioners of Nigeria (NACHPN), FCT Chapter</li> <li>■ Moderator: Vivianne Ihekweazu, MD, Nigeria Health Watch</li> </ul>	Panellists & Moderator
12:45 – 1:30 PM	<p><b>Presentation III:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Collective social entrepreneurship for task shifting: The policy dilemma of balancing increased access to services and quality of care</li> <li>■ Q&amp;A Session (15 mins)</li> </ul>	Dr. Francis Ifeanyi Ayomoh
1:30 – 2:45 PM	<p><b>Panel Discussion II:</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Balancing Access to Services and Quality of Care in Task shifting</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dr Ruqqaya Wamakko, Acting Executive Secretary, FCT Primary Health Care Board</li> <li>■ Dr. Samuel Oyeniyi, Director, Reproductive Health Division, Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</li> <li>■ Bartholomew O. Nwokpuru, Head, Registration and Licensing, Community Health Practitioners Registration Board of Nigeria</li> <li>■ Jama Medan, Chairman - National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives, FCT Council</li> <li>■ Moderator: Dr. Francis Ayomoh</li> </ul>	Panellists & Moderator
2:45 – 3:15 PM	<b>Plenary Session:</b> Comments, Feedback and Contributions	All Participants
3:15 – 3:45 PM	<b>Lunch &amp; Networking</b>	All Participants
03:45 – 4:00 PM	<p><b>Closing Reflections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Synthesis of key insights and recommendations</li> <li>■ Vote of thanks</li> </ul>	Organising Committee
04:00 – 04:30 PM	<b>Departure &amp; Informal Networking</b>	All Participants



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