



PLAN HEALTH ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION PUBLIC STATEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES ON THE CLUB FOOT INTERVENTION IN OYO STATE

September 25, 2024 Ibadan, Nigeria 11:00 am (WAT)

PLAN Health Advocacy and Development Foundation (PLAN Foundation) is a health and development focused non-governmental organization with over two decade's track records on public health, non-communicable diseases, disability, poverty alleviation and climate-smart agriculture. Our major target beneficiaries are decision makers as well as marginalized, vulnerable, hard-to-reach and hardly-reached populations especially women, young people and persons with disabilities.

PLAN Foundation has been inundated with telephone calls, WhatsApp messages, Facebook posts and emails concerning its impending club foot early diagnosis, referral, treatment and care intervention being funded by MiracleFeet in Oyo State. We have also observed several confusing, misleading and misdirected messages being circulated widely on social media, particularly on WhatsApp and Facebook.

We observe with dismay that many of such messages referred to the State Specialist Hospital, Ring Road, Ibadan and Bowen University Teaching Hospital, Ogbomoso either directly or indirectly thereby giving the impression that the treatment was being provided at the two reputable healthcare facilities.

In view of the wrong impressions and controversy which may cast aspersions on the integrity of the reputable healthcare institutions referred to above as well as the more than two decades of PLAN Foundation's enviable track records of high level of professionalism and community engagement, clinic-community collaboration and collaboration with policymakers across 14 States of the country, we are duty bound to set the records straight and make the necessary clarifications in order to stem the tide of wrong information spreading on social media like a wildfire.

1. PLAN Health Advocacy and Development Foundation concluded the due diligence and pre-granting processes with MiracleFeet, the major funders of club foot interventions projects in Nigeria with the official signing of its Grant Agreement last week. During this process, the State Specialist Hospital, Ring Road, Ibadan and the Bowen University Teaching Hospital (BUTH), Ogbomoso were identified as possible intervention sites in Oyo State. We narrowed our choice to these two health facilities based on the availability of qualified,

competent and experienced healthcare personnel in their respective orthopedic clinics and their strategic locations in the State.

2. The choice of these health facilities is based on the availability of qualified, competent and experienced healthcare personnel and their strategic locations in the State. PLAN Foundation also had plans for culturally acceptable approaches for awareness creation by working with its existing network of stakeholders to create referral links to the hospitals.
3. It is noteworthy that such networks include a cohort of 30 healthcare workers selected from 15 primary healthcare facilities across the 6 health zones of Oyo State that were trained last week on the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for women with disabilities. Another is the group of statewide stakeholders on its AmplifyChange funded Accelerating Community Commitment towards Ensuring Safer Services for the Reproductive Health of Women and Girls in Oyo State (ACCESS) Project.
4. PLAN Foundation only notified these stakeholders about the fact that the project will commence in October, 2024 with focus on Oyo State but did not mention the names of the two healthcare facilities. However, it was stated that there are plans to engage the two facilities as sites for provision of the services.
5. It is obvious that the various confusing messages on social media might have emanated from some overzealous people who took what we shared in enlightening people on our closed WhatsApp groups, edited it out of context and spread it widely.
6. The standard practice at PLAN Foundation for every project and intervention is to undertake introductory and sensitization visits to relevant political leadership and management of any institutions that will be involved in our projects. We also hold stakeholders' consensus meetings whereby we obtain the buy-in and commitment of a wide spectrum of stakeholders being engaged on our activities. This is signified by a ceremonial banner which the major stakeholder institutions sign on by the end of the consensus meetings.
7. PLAN Foundation also signs Memoranda of Understanding with institutions, organizations and agencies with which it collaborates on its various projects. These include Government Ministries, Boards and Agencies as well as non-state actors across the country.
8. PLAN Foundation has been inundated with hundreds of calls from as far as Taraba, Edo, Rivers and other neighboring States as well as the United States. We are surprised to observe several versions of different messages with the

phone number PLAN Foundation's Executive Director and office address included in them. A lot of those calls are in form of requests on persons with club feet who are as old as 55 years and even those requesting for miracle healing of their feet or other parts of their bodies due to the mention of the name "MiracleFeet". One of the messages even went to the preposterous extent of enquiring for miracle cures for club foot and other similar conditions apparently because of the word "miracle" contained in "MiracleFeet".

9. Our initial investigation also revealed that many of the callers Googled the name of our organization online and extracted the Executive Director's phone number and office address from there.

In the light of the above, PLAN Foundation wishes to state categorically as follows:

1. PLAN Health Advocacy and Development Foundation (PLAN Foundation), Ibadan does not issue any official communication to the general public WhatsApp messages.
2. All official public communication at PLAN Foundation is strictly through our official website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Tiktok accounts. These are handled by PLAN Foundation's Advocacy, Strategic Communication and Media Officer, Mrs. Ifedayo Osemwegie who can be reached on ifedayo@planfoundation.org.ng.
3. For the avoidance of doubt, the following are the official communication channels being used by PLAN Foundation:
 - Our website: www.planfoundation.org.ng
 - Our email: info@planfoundation.org.ng
 - On Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/@PLANFoundationNG>
 - On X (formerly Twitter): https://twitter.com/NG_Plan
 - On Facebook: <https://facebook.com/PLANFoundationNG/>
 - On YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@PLANFoundationNG>
 - On TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@plan.foundationng? t=8pofsAcn4I1& r=1>
4. We wish to use this opportunity to express our profound and unreserved apologies for this embarrassing but unintended mix-up to any stakeholders or potential partners, most especially Bowen University Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosho, Oyo State which has been grossly misrepresented in various social media messages including those mixing up the healthcare institution with its parent institution located in Iwo, Osun State. PLAN Foundation wishes to assure the highly revered institution that it would never have treated a

potential mutually beneficial relationship with the institution with such lackadaisical levity.

5. We want assert the fact that, immediately after signing the Grant Agreement with MiracleFeet, PLAN Foundation has commenced steps to contact the authorities of the two healthcare facilities referred to above for introductory visits and other activities pursuant to the commencement of the project. This includes adequately informing every relevant stakeholder about the project including the training, logistics, supplies, communication, documentation, monitoring and other vital aspects of the project. This we intend to pursue diligently in line with our standard practice.

Finally, PLAN Health Advocacy and Development Foundation (PLAN Foundation), Ibadan hereby implores our stakeholders, partners and the general public to discountenance any information that do not emanate from any of PLAN Foundation's official channels of communication. PLAN Foundation totally dissociates itself from any of the existing currently being circulated or future messages that may be circulated purportedly on behalf of the organization.

The organization will disseminate information on the processes for enlisting the children with club foot within the intended catchment areas of the project and the limits of the agreed number of cases that the healthcare facilities and the available resources can cater for.

While we take cognizance of the anxiety and eagerness of parents, close relations and acquaintances of families of children, and even adults affected by club foot, we wish to stress that we can only a little within the capacity of our organization, the host healthcare facilities and the funding being graciously provided by MiracleFeet, we urge everyone concerned to exercise patience and understanding. We can only move one step at a time.

Thank you!

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