

# Dr Emeka Okonkwo

MBBS MPH MBA FWACP

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER · HEALTH SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP · GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT  
PORTFOLIOS · AFRICA AND GLOBAL

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## ■ EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Registered medical practitioner with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria and Fellow of the West African College of Physicians, operating for the past fourteen years as a health systems executive rather than a practising clinician. Twenty-four years spanning clinical medicine, national disease programmes and international development, currently holding global clinical and technical authority for an international non-governmental organisation running a USD 380 million annual programme portfolio across 14 African countries and reaching 62 million people. Proven track record of winning and defending large multi-year grants, converting clinical outcomes into portfolio performance, and negotiating at ministerial and multilateral level on the organisation's behalf.

Combines the clinical authority that opens a health ministry's door with the budget discipline and governance instinct of a commercial executive, a pairing the development sector habitually keeps in separate people. Recognised for leading the technical case across four consecutive grant cycles worth USD 512 million, for taking the organisation from nine to fourteen country programmes without losing a single unqualified audit outcome, and for rebuilding the global technical function around measurable population results rather than activity reporting. Member of the Global Executive Team, standing attendee at the Board Programme and Risk Committee, and a serving member of technical advisory groups convened by multilateral health agencies. Seeking a chief medical officer or global programmes mandate in international development, multilateral health financing or health-focused philanthropy.

## ■ PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION AND CLINICAL CREDENTIALS

Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, full registration, Folio No. 38412. Annual practising licence current.

Fellow, West African College of Physicians (FWACP), Internal Medicine, 2010

Fellow, Royal Society of Public Health, 2018

## ■ SELECTED CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**Portfolio Scale.** Holds global clinical and technical authority for a **USD 380 million** annual programme portfolio across **14 African countries**, reaching **62 million people** annually and grown from **USD 240 million** and **nine countries** on appointment.

**Funding Secured.** Led the technical case on four consecutive grant cycles securing **USD 512 million** in new multi-year funding, including the organisation's largest single award at **USD 148 million over five years**.

**Population Health Outcomes.** Reduced maternal mortality across **740 supported facilities** from **412 to 255 deaths per 100,000 live births**, and lifted twelve-month treatment retention from **71% to 89%**.

**Cost Discipline.** Reduced cost per person reached from **USD 11.40 to USD 7.90** while expanding geographic coverage, releasing capacity for **8.4 million** additional people within the same envelope.

**National Programme Delivery.** Directed a **USD 210 million** national HIV and tuberculosis programme funded by a multilateral health financing institution, scaling from **96 to 340 treatment sites** and from **118,000 to 402,000 patients** in active care across **36 states**.

**Funder and Audit Standing.** Delivered **four consecutive years of unqualified audit outcomes** across all country programmes and held the organisation's top grant performance rating throughout the current cycle.

## ■ CAREER EXPERIENCE

### ■ Chief Medical Officer

International non-governmental organisation · USD 380m annual programme portfolio · 14 African countries · 4,200 employees

#### MAR 2021 – PRESENT

Scope: global clinical, technical and quality authority for the organisation's entire **USD 380 million** annual programme portfolio, delivered across **14 African countries** and reaching **62 million people** each year. Direct budget accountability for a **USD 64 million** global technical division of **1,150** clinical, epidemiological, supply chain and programme quality staff, with seven direct reports. Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer as a member of the Global Executive Team, with standing attendance at the Board Programme and Risk Committee. Accountable externally to two bilateral development agencies, a multilateral health financing institution, three private foundations and the health ministries of every country of operation.

#### KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Portfolio Strategy:** Set the organisation's technical strategy and country entry criteria, concentrating the portfolio on four disease and system priorities and withdrawing from three peripheral programme lines that could not evidence population impact.
- **Funder Stewardship:** Own the technical relationship with every institutional funder, leading grant design, mid-term review defence and renewal negotiation, and personally presenting portfolio performance to funder boards and technical review panels.
- **Government Negotiation:** Negotiate country compacts with health ministers and permanent secretaries covering co-financing, health workforce deployment and transition of programmes into national systems, in all fourteen countries of operation.
- **Executive Leadership:** Restructured a fragmented technical function of eleven vertical disease teams into four integrated practice groups, reducing senior technical posts by nine while widening country coverage.
- **Budget Accountability:** Hold and defend a **USD 64 million** divisional budget through the annual planning cycle, with quarterly variance reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and the Board Programme and Risk Committee.
- **Outcome Measurement:** Replaced activity-based reporting with a population outcome framework covering mortality, coverage, retention and cost per person reached, now the basis on which every country programme is assessed.
- **Clinical Governance:** Established the organisation's first global clinical governance framework, covering clinical protocols, adverse event reporting, prescriber oversight and facility accreditation across all supported sites.

- **Risk, Audit and Safeguarding:** Chair the global technical risk committee, with accountability for clinical risk, commodity integrity, safeguarding and donor compliance across the portfolio.
- **Crisis Response:** Directed the organisation's clinical response to two national outbreak emergencies and one protracted humanitarian displacement, redeploying technical capacity across borders inside fourteen days on each occasion.

#### SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Grew the annual programme portfolio from **USD 240 million to USD 380 million** and country operations from **nine to fourteen**, with population reach rising from **41 million to 62 million**.
- Led the technical case on grant applications securing **USD 512 million** across four cycles, including the organisation's largest single award of **USD 148 million over five years**.
- Reduced maternal mortality across **740 supported facilities** from **412 to 255 per 100,000 live births** within **four years**.
- Improved twelve-month treatment retention from **71% to 89%** across a cohort of **1.2 million** patients.
- Reduced cost per person reached from **USD 11.40 to USD 7.90**, funding coverage for a further **8.4 million** people without additional grant income.
- Closed **four consecutive financial years with unqualified audit outcomes** across all fourteen country programmes.

## Regional Director, Health Programmes, West and Central Africa

Global health delivery organisation · USD 118m regional portfolio · six countries · 1,400 staff

**JAN 2017 – FEB 2021**

Scope: full programme, financial and people accountability for the organisation's West and Central African region, comprising **six countries**, a **USD 118 million** annual portfolio and **1,400** staff, reporting to the Global Chief Programmes Officer. Six country directors reporting in. Regional signatory for all grant agreements, government memoranda and statutory registrations.

#### KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Regional Growth Strategy:** Built and executed the regional growth plan, entering two new francophone markets and consolidating three underperforming country offices into a shared services structure.
- **Country Leadership:** Held line accountability for six country directors, resetting the performance framework and replacing three appointments where programme delivery and financial control had diverged.
- **Grant Delivery:** Accountable for delivery against eleven concurrent institutional grants, including three that had entered remediation before appointment and were returned to good standing within one review cycle.
- **Health Systems Strengthening:** Shifted the regional model from parallel service delivery to integration with public primary care, embedding programmes inside national systems in four of the six countries.
- **Partnership Development:** Established co-financing partnerships with three regional development institutions, diversifying a portfolio that had been **84%** dependent on a single bilateral funder.
- **Operating Efficiency:** Consolidated regional procurement, fleet and warehousing, reducing support cost as a share of programme spend.

#### SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Grew the regional portfolio from **USD 74 million to USD 118 million** across four years and expanded from **four countries to six**.
- Reduced single-funder dependency from **84% to 46%** of regional income.
- Cut support cost from **19% to 12%** of programme spend, releasing approximately **USD 8.3 million** annually into direct delivery.
- Returned **three grants in remediation** to full standing within **one review cycle**.

### National Programme Director, HIV and Tuberculosis

National disease programme funded by a multilateral health financing institution

**AUG 2012 – DEC 2016**

Scope: directed a **USD 210 million** five-year national HIV and tuberculosis grant delivered across **36 states** through the national health system, reporting to the national programme oversight committee and to the funder's country team. Accountable for treatment sites, commodity supply, surveillance and sub-recipient performance, with **420** programme staff and **31** sub-recipient organisations.

#### KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Programme Scale-Up:** Directed the national scale-up of treatment and diagnostic services, taking the programme from partial state coverage to nationwide reach inside three years.
- **Grant Performance:** Managed the funder relationship through two mid-term reviews and one reprogramming, protecting the full grant value and securing an above-target performance rating.
- **Government Partnership:** Worked directly with the federal ministry and state commissioners of health to align programme targets, staffing and co-financing with national strategy.
- **Commodity Security:** Rebuilt the commodity forecasting and distribution model after sustained stockouts, introducing quantification discipline and third-party logistics oversight.
- **Surveillance and Data:** Established the programme's electronic patient monitoring system, giving the ministry its first reliable national view of treatment cohorts and outcomes.
- **Sub-Recipient Governance:** Introduced tiered performance and assurance arrangements across **31** sub-recipients, discontinuing four that could not evidence delivery.

#### SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Scaled from **96 to 340 treatment sites** and from **118,000 to 402,000 patients** in active care.
- Reduced cost per patient treatment year from **USD 340 to USD 218**.
- Achieved **98% budget absorption** across the five-year grant against a national portfolio average well below that level.
- Reduced commodity stockout incidence at site level from **28% to under 4%** of reporting periods.

## Medical Director

Tertiary referral and teaching hospital · 620 beds · 1,800 staff

**SEP 2008 – JUL 2012**

Scope: executive accountability for all clinical services across a **620-bed** tertiary referral and teaching hospital serving a catchment of **4.1 million** people, with **240,000** outpatient attendances annually, **1,800** staff and an operating budget equivalent to approximately **USD 24 million**. Reporting to the Chief Executive and the hospital board.

### KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Service Reorganisation:** Restructured clinical services into six directorates with devolved budgets and named clinical leads, replacing an undifferentiated departmental structure.
- **Quality and Patient Safety:** Established the hospital's first clinical governance committee, mortality and morbidity review process and incident reporting system.
- **Financial Control:** Introduced directorate-level budget accountability and case costing, bringing clinical consumable spend under active management for the first time.
- **Workforce Development:** Rebuilt the resident training programme and consultant recruitment pipeline, filling eleven long-vacant specialist posts.

### SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Reduced average length of stay from **9.4 to 6.8 days** and raised theatre utilisation from **54% to 81%**.
- Reduced clinical consumable spend by **17%** while increasing surgical throughput.

## Early Career

Tertiary referral and teaching hospitals, Nigeria and the United Kingdom

**JAN 2002 – AUG 2008**

Senior Registrar, Internal Medicine (2006 – 2008) · Registrar, Internal Medicine (2004 – 2006) · Medical Officer (2003 – 2004) · House Officer (2002 – 2003)

Completed full clinical training in internal medicine with a subspecialty focus on infectious disease, including an eighteen-month clinical research attachment in tropical and communicable disease alongside postgraduate public health study.

## EDUCATION

**Master of Business Administration** · 2015

Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University

**Master of Public Health** · 2007

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London

**Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)** · 2002

University of Ibadan

## BOARD, GOVERNANCE AND ADVISORY APPOINTMENTS

- **Member**, Global Executive Team, current employer, 2021 – Present
- **Standing attendee**, Board Programme and Risk Committee, current employer, 2021 – Present
- **Chair**, global technical risk committee, current employer, 2022 – Present
- **Member**, technical advisory group on health systems financing convened by a multilateral health agency, 2023 – Present
- **Non-Executive Director**, regional public health training institute, 2019 – Present

## ■ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Leadership Development Programme, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2019
- Board Leadership Programme, Institute of Directors, 2018
- Health Systems Financing and Economics, executive programme, 2016

## ■ CORE COMPETENCIES

### Executive and Portfolio Leadership

Global portfolio strategy · Budget ownership and defence · Executive committee leadership · Organisational restructure · Country entry and exit · Succession and technical bench

### Funder, Grant and Financial Stewardship

Multi-year grant design · Funder board presentation · Mid-term review and reprogramming · Co-financing and diversification · Budget absorption · Audit and compliance

### Government and Multilateral Engagement

Ministerial negotiation · Country compacts · National strategy alignment · Technical review panels · Regional institution partnership · Programme transition to national systems

### Health Systems and Service Delivery

Primary care integration · Commodity and supply security · Health workforce planning · Facility accreditation · Outbreak and emergency response · Population outcome frameworks

### Clinical Governance and Quality

Clinical protocol authority · Adverse event and incident systems · Mortality and morbidity review · Prescriber oversight · Safeguarding · Clinical risk management

## ■ PUBLICATIONS AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

**31 peer-reviewed publications** in international health policy, infectious disease and health systems journals, with principal authorship on work covering treatment retention in resource-constrained settings, the cost effectiveness of integrated versus vertical service delivery, and the transition of donor-funded programmes into national health systems. Invited speaker at multilateral and regional health financing forums. Full publication list available on request.

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**MEMBERSHIPS**

Nigerian Medical Association · Royal Society of Public Health · Institute of Directors

**LANGUAGES**

English (native) · Igbo (native) · French (professional working proficiency)

**REFERENCES**

Available on request.