



Health and Pharmaceutical Sector Round Up for Q1 Of 2026: Key Developments and Outlook for Q2 2026

www.strenandblan.com
contact@strenandblan.com
[@strenandblan](https://www.instagram.com/strenandblan)

+234 (0)702 558 0053
3 Theophilus Orji Street, Off Fola Osibo
Road, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos, Nigeria

| 2nd April 2025

Executive Summary

Nigeria's health and pharmaceutical sector closed Q1 2026 at a critical turning point, with the quarter marked by notable clinical milestones that signal bigger structural change across the industry, including the introduction of West Africa's first robotic-assisted gynaecological surgery.

On the policy front, the Federal Government activated Medipool as a national bulk procurement mechanism targeting medicine cost reductions of between 20 and 30 per cent, whilst President Tinubu transmitted 24 health sector reform bills to the Senate. Lagos and Kano States, amongst others, advanced mandatory health insurance schemes, and the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority moved to expand specialist healthcare infrastructure through the Medserve initiative. NAFDAC, for its part, maintained an unusually high tempo of enforcement activity, issuing alerts on counterfeit cancer medicines, contraceptives, and other products, whilst the Federal Government extended its regulatory reach into the cosmetics industry.

The quarter's most consequential unresolved matter is the legal challenge to the Nigeria-US Bilateral Health Cooperation MOU, which, if upheld, could disrupt approximately \$2.1 billion in US health commitments over five years. Q2 2026 will test whether the considerable policy architecture assembled in Q1 can withstand legal and operational scrutiny and be translated into measurable reform.



Table of Contents

04

Notable
Developments
in the Health
Sector in Q1
2026

09

Legal and
Regulatory
Updates

15

Policy and
Governance
Developments

19

Outlook: What to
Expect in Q2
2026

20

Conclusion

21

About Stren & Blan
Partners

Notable Developments in the Health Sector in Q1 2026

Nigeria Achieves Clinical Milestone with First Robotic-Assisted Gynaecological Surgery in West Africa

The Prostate Clinic in Lagos performed West Africa's first robotic-assisted gynaecological surgery in Q1 of 2026. The team removed a large benign ovarian tumour from a 30-year-old woman using a surgical robot. The patient was discharged the same day and returned to normal activities within 24 hours. This expands robotic surgery from men's health to women's care for the first time in the region. The procedure was led by Prof. Kingsley Ekwueme, with specialist gynaecologists. It reduces pain, bleeding, and recovery time compared to open surgery. The clinic already introduced the first surgical robot last year and now partners with state governments for more centres.¹ Robotic surgery is a welcome development in Nigeria's healthcare system, but its adoption also raises important legal and regulatory issues.

In Nigeria, the use of such technology must be considered against the backdrop of the National Health Act 2014, the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act, MDCN professional standards, NAFDAC's medical device framework, the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 and GAID 2025, and, in Lagos, the licensing and monitoring role of HEFAMAA. These laws and institutions collectively require

attention to patient safety, informed consent, professional competence, equipment regulation, data privacy, and institutional accountability. As robotic surgery expands, Nigerian healthcare providers must ensure that innovation is not only clinically effective but also legally compliant, ethically sound, and supported by properly trained personnel and adequate governance systems.

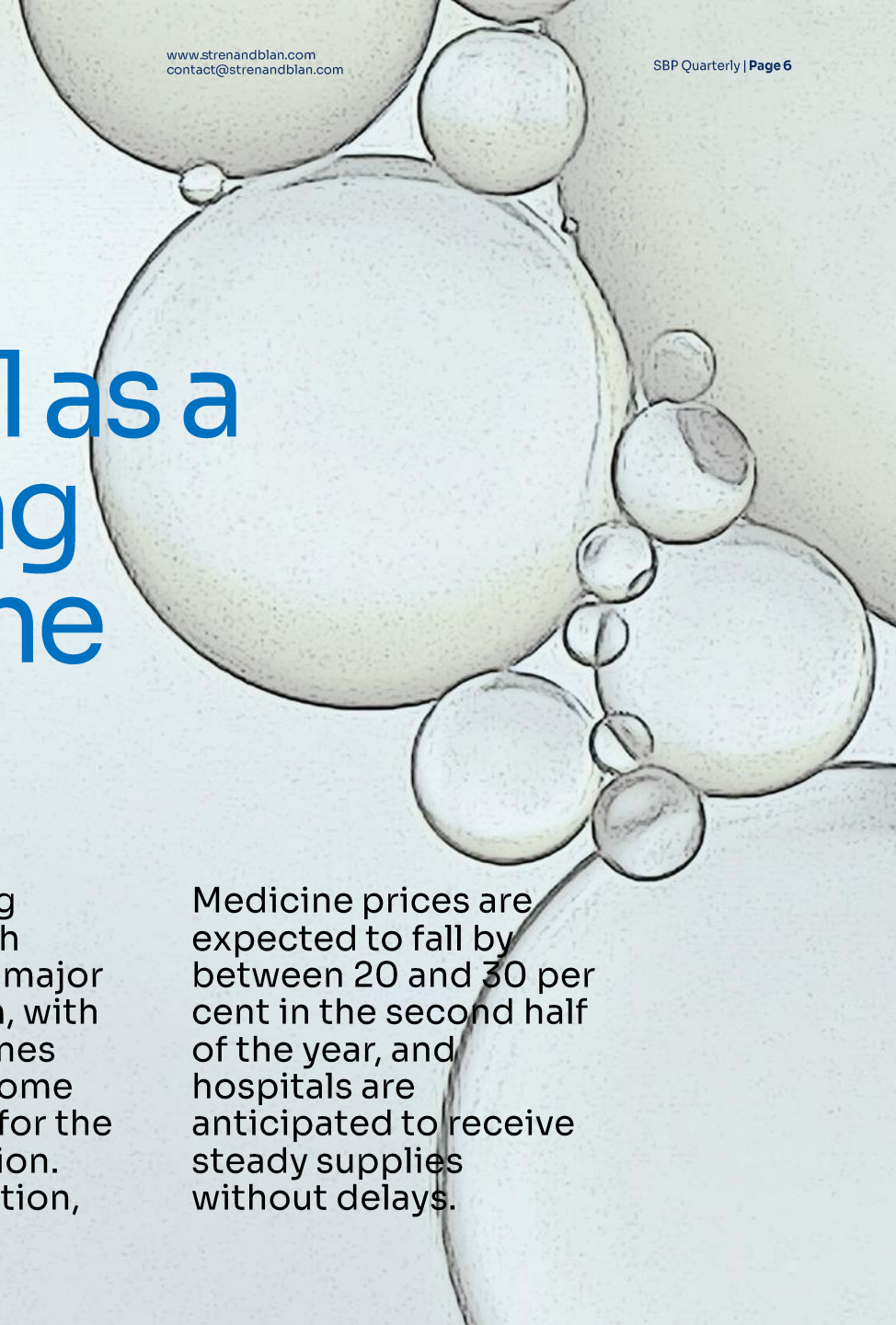
¹ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2026/01/27/nigeria-leads-in-advanced-healthcare-as-first-female-robotic-surgery-performed-in-west-africa/> <accessed on 18 August 2026>.

Federal Government Operationalises Medipool as a National Group Purchasing Organisation to Reduce the Cost of Medicines

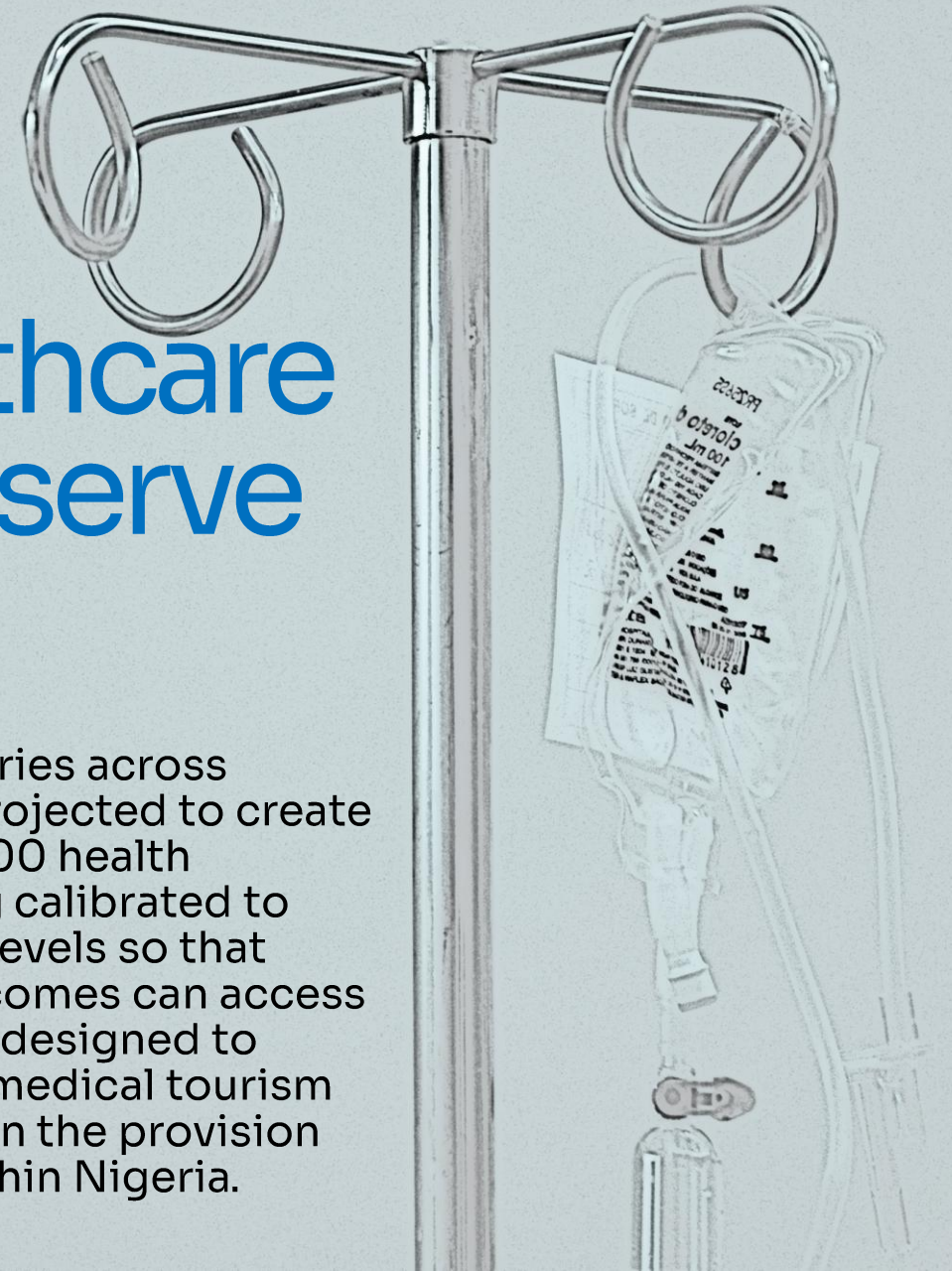
Medipool is now operational as Nigeria's national bulk buyer of drugs and medical supplies. In Q1 of 2026, the Federal Government formalised a Memorandum of Understanding to pool demand from all public hospitals, to negotiate lower prices and support local drug manufacturers. The initiative is designed to address the longstanding challenges of high costs of medications and supply shortages.

The Coordinating Minister of Health described it as a major structural reform, with essential medicines expected to become more affordable for the broader population. With this integration,

Medicine prices are expected to fall by between 20 and 30 per cent in the second half of the year, and hospitals are anticipated to receive steady supplies without delays.



Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority Expands National Healthcare Footprint through Medserve Strategic Initiatives



In Q1, the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority and the International Finance Corporation announced financing to scale oncology and diagnostic services, with over a dozen centres, 800 direct jobs, and training for more than 500 health professionals. The project will establish additional diagnostic centres, cancer treatment facilities,

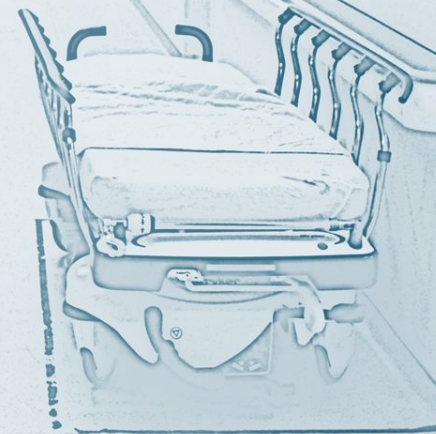
and cardiac laboratories across several states. It is projected to create 800 jobs and train 500 health workers, with pricing calibrated to match local income levels so that patients on lower incomes can access care. The initiative is designed to reduce the need for medical tourism abroad and to deepen the provision of specialist care within Nigeria.

Lagos State Government Commences Full Enforcement of Mandatory Health Insurance to Mitigate Maternal and Infant Mortality

Lagos State moved to enforce mandatory insurance more aggressively, including grassroots mobilisation and enforcement for public servants, while highlighting maternal and child-health benefits under Ilera Eko. Local government chairmen have been directed to drive enrolment, and the scheme is positioned not as a revenue

measure but as a vehicle to deliver affordable care to all residents. It aims to reduce the high rates of maternal and infant mortality, with subsidies designed to facilitate access for lower-income families. Full rollout in Q2 is expected to save many lives and could serve as a model for other states.

The full enforcement of this initiative will help families across Lagos State receive free or subsidised treatment during pregnancy and childbirth.



Legal and Regulatory Updates

The first quarter of 2026 witnessed an unusual level of regulatory activity from the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

Virtually every week, the agency moved against counterfeit products and non-compliant markets across the country, constituting a meaningful step towards

combating the counterfeiting of food and drugs in Nigeria. The following is a summary of the most significant actions.

NAFDAC Issues Nationwide Alert on Counterfeit Cancer Medicines

In Q1 of 2026, NAFDAC issued a nationwide alert regarding the circulation of counterfeit oncology medicines, specifically Avastin (bevacizumab) and Tecentriq (atezolizumab), both manufactured by Roche. The alert followed complaints from healthcare professionals across Nigeria, with several

patients having presented suspected fakes at health facilities after purchasing the products at prices substantially below market value (between ₦180,000 and ₦350,000). Investigations confirmed clear discrepancies in packaging, batch numbers, print quality, and serialisation labels.

NAFDAC cautioned that such counterfeit oncology medicines may contain no active ingredients, harmful contaminants, or incorrect dosages, with potentially fatal consequences, including treatment failure, disease progression, and death.²

² <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2026/03/counterfeit-cancer-drugs-nafdac-raises-alarm-over-fake-avastin-tecentriq/> - accessed on 21 March 2026

NAFDAC Raises Alarm Over Circulation of Counterfeit Barrier Contraceptive Products in Nigeria

NAFDAC issued public alerts about fake Kiss and Foula condoms sold in markets across Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and other cities. The counterfeit products have poor quality, no

proper sterilization, and wrong labelling. They fail to protect against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Users risk infections, allergic reactions, and breakage.

The agency directed zonal offices to mop up the fakes and warned people to buy only from approved sellers. This action protects families from health dangers caused by substandard items.³

³ <https://nafdac.gov.ng/public-alert-no-042-2025-alert-on-counterfeit-kiss-condom-in-nigerian-market/> <accessed on 20 March 2026>

NAFDAC Commences Enforcement of Sachet Alcohol Ban Amid Federal Government Controversy

Another interesting development in the first quarter of 2026 is with regard to the implementation and the enforcement of the sachet alcohol ban. NAFDAC began enforcing a nationwide ban on sachet alcohol and alcoholic beverages in bottles under 200ml.

However, there were reports that the Federal Government influenced a cessation of the enforcement actions. NAFDAC dismissed the reports as

false and misleading, stating that it had received no formal directive from the Federal Government to suspend its regulatory activities.

The dispute was subsequently brought before the courts. The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) filed a suit at the Federal High Court, seeking declarations that the sachet alcohol ban is valid under the NAFDAC Act and that the Minister of Health

[SBP2.1][ON2.2]lacks the legal authority to grant or extend any moratorium on its enforcement. In a counter-affidavit filed on 23 February 2026, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare told the court that NAFDAC is legally empowered to enforce the ban and that the ministry lacks the authority to direct, restrain, or halt the agency from carrying out its statutory mandate.⁴

⁴ <https://punchng.com/nafdac-has-powers-to-ban-sachet-alcohol-health-ministry/> <accessed on 24 March 2026>

NAFDAC Commences Enforcement of Sachet Alcohol Ban Amid Federal Government Controversy

On 4 March 2026, NAFDAC partnered with the National Orientation Agency and the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission to launch a nationwide enforcement campaign against the sale and distribution of sachet alcohol.⁵ The Director-General of NAFDAC stated that the renewed enforcement drive is driven by the urgent need to shield Nigerian children from alcohol abuse, noting that a 2021 nationwide survey found that 54.3 per cent of minors were able to obtain alcohol

independently, with many purchasing sachet and small-bottle products.

In another vein, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) warned that the ban could result in the loss of over ₦1.9 trillion in investments and jeopardise more than five million direct and indirect jobs, and the matter remains subject to ongoing litigation.⁶

The divergent positions of the various stakeholders reflect a broader tension that is not unique to the

sachet alcohol question, namely, the conflict between the imperative to protect public health and the equally legitimate concern for economic stability and livelihoods. Neither position is without merit, and the resolution of this dispute, whether through the courts or through a negotiated policy framework, will require the Nigerian Government to articulate a principled and transparent basis for determining where public health considerations override economic ones.

⁵ <https://nairametrics.com/2026/03/04/nafdac-partners-with-noa-fccpc-to-enforce-ban-on-sachet-alcohol/> <accessed on 24 March 2026>

⁶ <https://nairametrics.com/2026/01/29/man-warns-nafdac-sachet-alcohol-ban-could-trigger-unintended-consequences/> <accessed on 24 March 2026>

NAFDAC Debunks Claims of Secret Ban on Amoxicillin, Reaffirms Transparent Drug Regulation

NAFDAC issued a denial of any secret or public ban on amoxicillin, a commonly prescribed antibiotic. A viral video propagating the false claim was dismissed. The agency reiterated that it only recalls specific batches when necessary and does so through open,

transparent public communications. Nigerians were encouraged to disregard rumours and to rely on official channels, thereby ensuring that clinicians and patients may continue to use the drug safely and with confidence.



Federal Government Implements National Policy on Cosmetics Safety and Health

In Q1 2026, the Ministry of Health commenced state-level enforcement of the first National Policy on Cosmetics Safety and Health, to address toxic creams and powders implicated in skin damage and other health conditions, with the initiative designed to

protect millions of users, particularly women and young people. This policy was approved in Q4 2025 by the Federal Government and was aimed at removing substandard and harmful beauty products from Nigerian markets.

The five-year plan strengthens regulatory oversight of the manufacturing, importation, and sale of cosmetics, and introduces new rules covering labelling standards, permissible mercury limits, and product disposal.



Policy and Governance Developments

President Tinubu Transmits 24 Health Sector Bills to the Senate

In Q1 2026, President Tinubu transmitted 24 health sector amendment bills to the Senate in accordance with Section 58(2) of the 1999 Constitution. The bills arose from a comprehensive review of existing health sector legislation conducted by the Attorney-General of the Federation in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and were subsequently approved by the Federal Executive Council.

The proposed amendments are aimed at streamlining governance structures across health institutions by reducing bloated board memberships, with the stated objective of improving efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery. The institutions covered include the National Hospital for Women and Children, Federal Medical Centres, the National Specialty Hospitals Management Board, the Orthopaedic Hospitals Management Board, the National Eye Centre, the National Ear Care Centre, the

Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria, NAFDAC, and the National Blood Service Agency, among others. Additional proposals transmitted include the Records Officers Registration and Digital Health Bill 2025 and the Federal College of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Bill 2025. Following their reading at plenary, the Senate President referred all 24 bills to the Senate Committee on Rules and Business for further legislative action.⁷

⁷ <https://punchng.com/tinubu-transmits-24-health-bills-to-senate-for-legislative-action/> <accessed on 24 March 2026>

Lawyer Sues Tinubu, Akpabio, Others Over Health Agreement With US

A lawyer filed a suit at the Federal High Court in Abuja in Q1 2026, challenging the Bilateral Health Cooperation MOU signed between Nigeria and the United States. The suit named President Tinubu, the Attorney-General, the Federal Ministry of Health, Senate President Akpabio, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as defendants. The plaintiff's core argument was that the agreement permits the transfer of Nigerians' medical records, blood samples, and

DNA to the United States in breach of the National Health Act 2014, the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, and constitutional privacy rights. He further contends that the National Assembly was bypassed in ratifying an agreement of such national consequence. Notably, the US placed considerable emphasis on Christian faith-based healthcare providers within the framework, including approximately \$200 million in dedicated support for such institutions.

Among the reliefs sought was a suspension of the MOU's implementation ahead of its scheduled April 2026 commencement. Should the court grant this, it risks disrupting nearly \$2.1 billion in US commitments over five years towards HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, and maternal health interventions. The agreement continues to fuel scepticism and presents a broader governance risk for the sector.⁸

Federal Government Declares Public Health Emergency Over Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Activates Enforcement Framework⁹

In Q1, the Federal Government declared a public health emergency on the basis that greenhouse gas emissions are causing an increase in respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. The Environmental Health Council activated a national response plan to deploy new technologies to reduce vehicular

and industrial emissions, whilst surveillance and treatment capacity for pollution-related illnesses is to be strengthened. **The declaration represents the first time that the environment and health sectors have been formally integrated at this level of government.**

⁹ <https://guardian.ng/features/health/council-declares-public-health-emergency-over-rise-in-ghg-pollution-linked-diseases/> accessed 25th March 2026

Outlook: What to Expect in Q2 2026

The most immediate issue is the fate of the Nigeria–US Bilateral Health Cooperation MOU. With its April 2026 commencement date directly in the path of the Federal High Court proceedings, a suspension order would not only interrupt anticipated US funding flows but could generate broader hesitancy among international health partners about the governance environment for bilateral agreements. Conversely, the proceeding imposes a sense of responsibility on the Nigerian government to ensure that the juicy outlook of a bilateral trade does not force it to take steps and actions that negate the provisions of extant laws.

Medipool's early operational performance will be amongst the most closely monitored metrics of the quarter. If the platform succeeds in demonstrating meaningful price reductions on essential medicines, it will build the political and commercial case for deeper integration across the public hospital system. Any operational difficulties, conversely, risk undermining confidence in the broader procurement reform agenda.

On the regulatory front, NAFDAC's sustained enforcement momentum suggests that further counterfeit medicine prosecutions and market clean-up operations are likely. The nascent National Cosmetics Policy will also begin to generate its first enforcement actions, adding a new dimension to the regulatory calendar.

Taken together, Q2 2026 has the potential to be either a quarter of consolidation or one of disruption. The outcome will depend largely on how the legal, diplomatic, and operational fault lines that emerged in Q1 are resolved and on whether the institutions charged with implementation are equal to the ambition of the reforms they have been asked to deliver.

Conclusion

Nigeria's health and pharmaceutical sector demonstrated in Q1 2026 that the reform ambitions of recent years are beginning to yield tangible ground-level outcomes. From first-of-kind surgical procedures to billion-naira counterfeiting crackdowns, the quarter has been characterised by action rather than aspiration.

What remains to be determined is whether the implementation capacity and political resolve exist to sustain this momentum in the face of competing pressures. The legal uncertainty hovering over the Nigeria-US health MOU is perhaps the most immediate test of the sector's governance maturity.

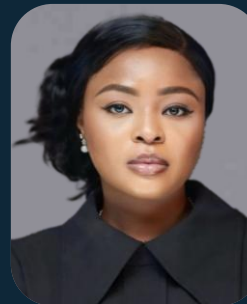
Additionally, the reforms seen in Q1 2026 are laudable. However, Nigeria is still far behind in health care compared to other Countries globally. Stakeholders must continue to intensify efforts to improve our healthcare systems.

About Stren & Blan Partners

Stren and Blan Partners is a world-class ingenious law firm with a beautiful blend of the brightest minds and well-rounded individuals championed with sole responsibilities of providing solutions to business problems and equally finding answers to the questions of our clients. We are a team always guided by our professional ethics. Also, honesty and transparency have been our watchwords in practice.

Stren & Blan Partners is a full-service commercial Law Firm that provides legal services to diverse local and multinational corporations. We have developed a clear vision for anticipating our clients' business needs and surpassing their expectations, and we do this with an uncompromising commitment to Client service and legal excellence.

The Authors



**Francisca
Igboanugo**

Team Lead

Franciscalgboanugo
@strenandblan.com



**Omolola
Ambrose**

Senior Associate

OmololaAmbrose
@strenandblan.com



**Emmanuel
Ughanze**

Associate

EmmanuelUghanze
@strenandblan.com



**Oluchukwu
Nwakor**

Associate

OluchukwuNwakor
@strenandblan.com



**Ebenezer
Ogunwole**

Associate

EbenezerOgunwole
@strenandblan.com

