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**The Political Economy of Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Evidence and Lessons for Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background**: Today, after many years of doubt, pessimisms and uncertainty, the world has revisited Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and adopted it as a global health priority under the SDGs. But at the core of strategies to move this goal forward is the need to sustainably finance health services for social equity and financial risk protection. The work bases its arguments on the augmented human capital growth theory to argue that the value of human capital and the resulting productive capacity of the economy justifies the central role of public policy in financing UHC.

**Method**: The paper uses an analytical approach of political economy to benchmark Nigeria’s experiences with six (6) countries in Africa and Asia, using the Murray and Frenk’s functions-of health systems framework which describes each country’s approaches to raising revenue, pooling risk and purchasing services and coverage-box framework which assess progress across the three (3) dimensions of coverage: who is covered, what services are covered and what proportion of health cost is covered. Data were sourced from ILO, World Bank and WHO databases and published articles.

**Result**: A synthesis of the result of the review of the UHC implementation in the selected countries and comparison with Nigeria’s experience shows substantial variations and at the same time clearly reveals broad issues for policy consideration for the country- key among which is extending effective access to the poor and the informal sector and financial protection at the point of service.

**Conclusion**: The first wealth of a nation is its population health. While private and even donor financing plays supportive role in all health systems, it is public financing that drives improvements in health performance on key UHC indicators such as financial protection and access to quality health services.