



## THE NEED FOR PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS INVOLVEMENT IN CURTAILING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Governments, all over the world have adopted different measures to tackle covid-19, in the same vein the Nigeria government has adopted several measures to curtail the effect and spread of the disease. There have been calls to increase these measures and the inclusion of all stakeholders to collaborate to win the battle against the disease. In line with the above, this study examined the involvement of Public-Private Partnership in the resolution of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The study utilized the secondary method of data collection. The study examined the various efforts of government in the battle to curtail the disease. The study found that despite the efforts of government in curtailing the effect and spread of covid 19 in Nigeria, the rate of confirmed cases has been on the increase. The study concludes that the involvement of Public-Private Partnership in the strategies adopted by the Nigeria government will go a long way in curtailing the effects and spread of the disease.*

**KEYWORDS:** Covid-19, Pandemic, Public-Private Partnership, Covid-19, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

The devastating consequences of covid-19 around the world including the advanced economies of the United States, Spain, Italy, France, and Germany has revealed the susceptibility of some of the most stable states to the systemic disruptions caused by an unanticipated pandemic. If some of the strongest and most stable states in the world are vulnerable to covid-19, then African nations that are among the most fragile, deserves special attention and drastic strategic measures to be implemented.

Governments of nations have adopted different measures to tackle the pandemic, in the same vein the Nigeria government have adopted measures to curtail the effect of the diseases while there have been calls to increase these measures. In line with the above, this study examined the involvement of Public-Private Partnership in the resolution of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, which is the main objective of the study. In achieving this, the study examined covid-19 in Nigeria, activities of the private sector in ameliorating the effect of the pandemic; and the need for Public-Private Partnership in curtailing covid-19 in Nigeria. The study greatly utilized the secondary method of data collection. The study will be relevant to policy makers, public administrators, students and the general public.



## LITERATURE REVIEWS/CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Shortly after the outbreak of the diseases in 2019, health experts had warned of its risk in spreading to Africa due to the close commercial links with Asian countries and that Africa might not be able to recover from the devastating effect of the disease due to the continent's fragile economies and health system in the continent. The actual number of infected persons in Nigeria is not known suggesting that the numbers of infected persons in the country could be more, which could lead to underreporting of covid 19 associated deaths (African News, 2020).

In the eventuality of the above prediction, there is the urgent need for a synchronized response to the current pandemic especially in Africa. Thus, it is necessary for Africa leaders and policy makers to utilize the uncommon chance provided by the disease outbreak to strengthening public health systems and disease surveillance, while managing suspected cases to avert impending disaster (Ohia C., Bakarey A.S., Ahmad T., 2020).

### Covid-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 also referred to as (Covid-19) is as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), it was first noticed in Wuhan City, in China, from where it spread rapidly to other countries of the world. (WHO, 2020). Due to its rapid spread and devastating effect on humans, it was declared a global health emergency and subsequently declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 by the world health organization. The World Health Organization (WHO) in her Situation Report 22 of 11th February 2020, officially named the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) as COVID-19 (WHO, 2020). The contraction (Covid-19) had to be adopted by WHO to circumvent branding the virus with its first place of identification which is china (WHO, 2020).

Coronavirus disease 2019, on its own, does not move, it can only move and spread when people come in close physical contact with each other, and an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets from the cough or sneeze can drop on the closest next person who subsequently contacts the disease through the nostrils of mouth. The common symptoms of an infected person are coughing, high body temperature, cold, difficulty in breathing, and fatigue. The period of the virus manifestation in an infected person is between one to fourteen days. (WHO, 2020).

Presently, there is no official curative medicine or vaccine to prevent the disease. Nevertheless, people are advised by medical experts to maintain general good hygiene like washing of hands frequently, sanitizing of hands, and avoidance of crowded places, people are advised most times to stay indoors (WHO, 2000).

### Public-Private Partnership

The International Monetary Fund (2018) defined Public-Private Partnerships as private sector provision of infrastructure and services that have conventionally been provided by the government. Similarly, Ughulu and Erah, (2020) defined PPP as "a long-term relationship between public sector and private sector under which the responsibility for designing, financing, construction, management and/or operation of public infrastructure and services that were traditionally undertaken by the public sector are contractually shared and jointly



undertaken by both the public and private sectors, usually in proportion to the type and quantity of risks each party can best carry” (p. 129).

From the above definitions of PPP, it can be conceptualized as a long-term contractual agreement between the public sector and private sector under which the responsibility for providing public infrastructures and/or services that were formally solely undertaken by government are jointly undertaken by the government and private sectors.

### **Covid-19 in Nigeria**

The presence of coronavirus disease in Nigeria was officially announced by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) on 27 February, 2020. The Nigeria index case was an Italian citizen, who arrived Lagos from Europe and tested positive for the disease, a few days after arrival. Another patient discovered to have been in contact with the first patient in a neighbouring state to Lagos state (Ogun) was also identified. Since then, the situation has deteriorated with more cases occurring, despite measures taken by the government to combat the virus and return to normalcy (NCDC, 2020).

However, Nigeria's health system before the pandemic was very poor. In most of the states, health facilities (hospitals, healthcare centre sect) are decaying because they have not received adequate attention, most high-ranking government officials have contributed to the dilapidated state of the health system by encouraging medical tourism.

The federal government of Nigerian introduced several measures to cushion the effect and spread of covid-19 which include:

- Establishment of a Presidential Task Force (PTF) on covid-19 (PTF, 2020).
- Ban on all international flights, except for emergency and essential flights.
- The imposition of a lockdown of non-essential activities in the Abuja, Lagos and Ogun States.
- Compulsory use of face mask/covering for all persons while in public spaces. Use of latex hand gloves are prohibited
- Compulsory provision of handwashing facilities/sanitizers and general temperature checks in all public spaces
- Ban of interstate travel except for essential needs
- Ban of gatherings of more than twenty persons outside of a workplace
- Ban of gatherings of more than twenty persons at a funeral; all infection prevention and control measures and physical distancing of 2 metres between people in workplaces and other public spaces must be observed
- Monitoring the access to markets and locations of economic activities
- Establishment of laboratories for the testing of Covid-19, (NCDC, 2020).
- Provision of unconditional money transfer to poor households and vulnerable
- Provision of food items as palliatives to the poor and vulnerable.
- Provision of credit facilities with a very low-interest rate to poor families
- Passage of the Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill by the House of Representative



The emergence of Covid-19 has demonstrated that institutions must be able to react quickly and effectively to save their citizens. How Nigeria manages the negative effect of Covid-19 outbreak will depend largely on how quickly stakeholders organise a public health response. The worth of the partnership between public and private sector actors will determine the speed of that action.

It is evident that Nigeria has a weak public health system and import up to about 70 percent of the country's health care needs. With the Covid-19 pandemic now confirmed in 34 states of Nigeria, the extent of the challenge high. It has exposed the inability of healthcare systems across the country to cope with an outbreak of disease. The dependence of Nigeria on imported health care products is more glaring now because many foreign trade partners have closed their borders as part of measures to contain the spread of the disease.

The present crisis has also revealed how the private sector can innovate at an incredibly high speed, much faster than the public sector to provide a variety of solutions to address both health and economic challenges. As a Public-Private Partnership, Afro-Champions collaborated with the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create the Africa covid-19 Response Fund, intending to collect in form of donations at least \$150 million for immediate prevention needs, and up to \$400 million for the long-lasting medical response to covid-19 (Brookings, 2020).

**Table 1: Covid-19 Cases in Nigeria for the Month of June 2020**

Date	Confirmed cases	Active cases	Recoveries	Deaths
1 June, 2020	10,578	7,157	3,122	299
2 June, 2020	10,819	7,265	3,240	314
6, June 2020	12,233	8,065	3,826	342
7 June, 2020	12,486	8,173	3,959	354
8 June, 2020	12,801	8,400	4,040	361
9 June, 2020	13,464	8,893	4,206	365
10 June, 2020	13,873	9,140	4,351	382
11 June, 2020	14,554	9,673	4,494	387
12 June, 2020	15,181	9,891	4,891	399
14 June, 2020	16,085	10,445	5,220	420
15 June, 2020	16,658	10,885	5,349	424
16 June, 2020	17,148	11,070	5,623	455
17 June, 2020	17,735	11,299	5,967	469
18 June, 2020	18,480	11,698	6,307	475
19 June, 2020	19,147	12,079	6,581	487
20 June, 2020	19,808	12,584	6,718	509
22 June, 2020	20,919	13,285	7,109	525
23 June, 2020	21,371	13,500	7,338	533
24 June, 2020	20,020	13,865	7,613	542
25 June, 2020	22,614	14,243	7,822	549
26 June, 2020	23,298	14,491	8,253	554
27 June, 2020	24,077	14,894	8,625	558
28 June, 2020	24,567	14,995	9,007	565
29 June, 2020	25,133	15,158	9,402	573
30 June, 2020	25,694	15,358	9,746	590

*Source: Authors' Research, 2020*

**Table 2: Mid-Monthly Situation Report of Covid-19 Cases in Nigeria March – July 2020**

	<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>Discharged Cases</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
15 March 2020	2	1	1	-
15 April 2020	407	267	128	12
15 May 2020	5,445	3,954	1,320	171
15 June 2020	16,658	10,885	5,349	424
15 July 2020	34,259	19,500	13,999	760

*Source: Authors' Research*

Notwithstanding these above efforts of government towards curtailing the spread and effects of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, the confirmed cases of covid-19 infected patients in Nigeria has been on the increase, as evidenced from tables 1 and 2 above. This means that the efforts of government so far have not been able to address the disease and curtail it, thus there has to be other measures and strategies to win the fight against the disease. The challenges of stopping this disease are enormous, the economic assistance that the government has announced in response to the virus has exposed the inadequacies in Nigeria's social protection systems and risks excluding the country's poorest and most vulnerable people, majority of the populace do not acknowledge government's effort towards winning the fight against the virus thus leading to the intervention of the private sector.

### **The Need for Public-Private Partnership**

Despite the above efforts of government and some private individuals, there is the need for adoption of a long-lasting strategy to prevent and mitigate such pandemic, especially now the world is frantically searching for a cure and vaccine against the disease; one reliable option is Public-Private Partnership in infrastructural and service provision. Such an approach would involve PPP to provide long-term funding, innovation and expertise needed to tackle such pandemic.

In corroborating with the above view, Ohia, Bakarey & Ahmad (2020) opined that since Nigeria has the largest population in Africa, improving the surveillance systems will greatly help in curtailing the spread of covid-19 in the continent of Africa. Efforts towards early detection and diagnosis of the virus will persuade more citizens to test and contain the spread of the virus. They concluded by asserting that more partnership with international and local partners will be very vital to fast-track the purchase and operation of available resources and potential interventions.

PPP should be involved in the production of preventive kits such as hand sanitizers, hand gloves, disinfectants and protective clothing. This will reduce cost and also a source of employment at this period when companies are closing shops.

The use of PPP in contact tracing will be most effective and efficient because the private partner knows members of their community and most of the nooks and crannies of their communities more than government officials. Even citizens are more willing to open up to the private partner they known, than unknown face from government.



PPP in research institutions' engagement in the production of ventilators and hand gloves will reduce cost on the part of government and time effectiveness because most private businesses deliver on time due to the absence of unnecessary red tapes in government establishments.

The involvement of PPP in the area of mass communication, public awareness and sensitization are necessary because strategic communications and reputation management experts at this point will reassure citizens and get their backing for government efforts to defeat the disease. People deserve updated information on the various measures to stop the spread of Covid-19. People should be educated on the need to comply with these various directives, and understand the advantage of staying at home instead of moving about 'for their daily livelihood'.

PPP in the hospitality industry; hotels can be used as isolation centres and treatment of patients in partnership with the Ministry of Health. Perhaps only the rich people in Nigeria can correctly self-isolate as they will likely have spacious houses. PPP in this area will quickly increase capacity to provide facilities for self-isolation, as thousands of people at risk will need this help. The best way to help and protect medical practitioners treating coronavirus infected patients in the country and care for their families is to provide good accommodations for them with individual toilet, bathroom and kitchen.

Some of the advantages of inclusion of PPP in curtailing the effect and spread of covid-19 are:

- To allow the private sector to influence the delivery of public services: The private sector has over the years been able to maintain an enviable standard in management and service delivery. The reverse is usually the case in public sector due to debt, mismanagement and lack of effective control. The adoption of PPP models in the fight against covid-19 in Nigeria is an effective way of curbing this anomaly.
- Budget constraint: Since Nigeria is now experiencing a recession as an effect of covid-19, PPP is seen as a viable option to provide public services and still be able to channel its deficit budget to other projects.
- Private sector know-how: Private sector are more advanced than the public sector in being abreast with latest technical know-how and expertise to maximize the potential of any sector it is involved in. Most private sector workforce attends seminars and workshops, that equips them intellectually, an advantage the public sector lack. This will be greatly felt in the area of Research and Development of drugs and vaccine.
- Accountability and transparency of Public-Private Partnerships and less corruption: Public sectors are usually shrouded in the mismanagement of its financial records, thereby making it difficult to maximize its potential and achieve effective turnover. But the involvement of the private sector, mismanagement and corruption are greatly checked. PPP should be engaged in the distribution of palliatives to citizens to ensure these palliatives get to those that need them most.
- Innovation: Private sector re-invents and introduces new technologies which aid effective public services. This is also necessary in the area of research and development of new drugs and health care equipments.



- Risk management: risks are shared between the private and public sector, which is economically healthy and advisable. In the event of any loss, liabilities are shared between both parties; in this aspect, the government will not be overburdened with risk and liabilities as a result of mismanagement that is common in Nigeria public establishments.

## CONCLUSION

The study examined the involvement of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in curtailing the effect of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It analyzed some efforts of government, private individuals and organizations in curtailing the disease.

The study found that there has been continuous increase in the confirmed cases of covid-19 patients in Nigeria, meaning that the efforts of government so far are not enough to win the battle against covid-19, there is urgent need for government to develop and implement other sustainable strategies such as Public-Private Partnership to support government's effort in provide long-term funding, innovation and expertise needed to tackle such pandemic.

The study also found that the capacity of Nigeria is grossly insufficient to tackle the needs for diagnostic tests and other healthcare products and equipment. The challenge to import supplies is worsened by the fact that many developed countries are also in need of similar medical supplies. This shows there is a pressing need to not only upgrade local capacity to manufacture health care tools and quality assured medicine but also to join forces across the continent to ensure that systems are in place to allocate limited resources efficiently to where they are most needed.

The study thus recommends that the government adopt the PPP model of infrastructural and service provision into its strategy as a matter of urgency, to mitigate the impact of the virus and provide the much needed victory at more timely base and cost effective manner due to the various advantages of PPP as revealed by the study below:

The adoption of PPP in production of protective kits such as hand sanitizers, face shield, hand gloves, disinfectants and protective clothing will reduce cost and also be a source of employment at this period when companies are closing shops.

The use of PPP in contact tracing will be most effective and efficient because the private partner knows members of their community and most of the nooks and crannies of their communities more than government officials. Even citizens are more willing to open up to the private partner they known, than unknown face from government.

PPP in research institutions' engagement in the production of ventilators and hand gloves will reduce cost on the part of government and time effectiveness, because most private businesses deliver on time due to lack of the unnecessary red tapes in government establishments.

The involvement of PPP in the area of mass communication, public awareness and sensitization are necessary because strategic communications and reputation management experts at this point in time will reassure citizens and get their backing for government efforts



to defeat the disease. People need to be well informed of the various measures to stop the spread of Covid-19. Adoption of PPP in the hospitality industry; will quickly increase capacity to provide facilities for self-isolation, as thousands of people at risk will need this help.

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