

Restriction On Palliative Measures For Sustenance Against COVID-19 Pandemic In Nigeria

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Abstract: The Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable pathogenic viral infection characterised by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), which originated from Wuhan, China and spread around the world. The menace caused by this virus has been felt in every sphere of life in Nigeria ranging from the closure of all schools from the nursery, secondary and tertiary institutions, public markets, seaports, airports, and industries. Other features created by the pandemic include social distancing, frequent hand sanitizing, face masking and total lockdown of humans and vehicular movements for both inter and intra state all over the country. The COVID-19 viral infection which is believed to have similar symptoms as the common cold, malaria and typhoid fever has caused fears in the life of the citizenry who no longer move freely to feign for themselves. This situation has therefore led to the dependency on palliatives from both the state and federal government by individuals who cannot provide food for themselves as a means of survival during this period. It has been observed that despite the interventions by world bodies and individuals who made donations both in cash and in kind to the federal government to alleviate the sufferings of the masses, these provisions were not distributed equitably thereby creating serious contentions in the country. It was also observed that the federal government has not improved the health care services as expected by providing the needed health facilities through the equipment of hospitals across the 36 states of the federation including the federal capital territory. While the citizens observed the total lockdown of all the activities in the country, less than ¼ of the states of the federation were given food items as palliatives while over ¾ of the states were grossly neglected.

Keywords: Restrictions, Palliative, Sustenance, Covid-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

The report of high incidence of covid-19 pandemic is a global health threat (Qui *et al*, 2017). The word pandemic refers to a situation where a particular disease has spread across all the contents thereby making it a global disease and as such threatens the national security across the globe (Davies, 2013, Moren, *et al*, 2009). The world had suffered so many pandemic diseases such as Laser fever, influenza, Ebola, etc. so many years ago. The mode of spread of the corona virus is such that cannot be said to have a specific pattern and as very difficult to control (Harris, 2000). Due to the pandemic nature of covid-19, certain restrictions on some rights and privileges of the citizenry such as quarantining or isolation,

restrictions on movements and social distancing have been put in place. However, there should be attention to human rights and privileges which should focus on non-discrimination, transparency, dignity and equal access to governmental provisions as palliatives to cushion the adverse effects of these restrictions. This paper provides an overview of human right concerns posed by the corona virus pandemic with some measures put in place by federal and state government and other well-meaning individuals in the society to cushion the effects on the people, the processes of the distribution of the palliative so far, and also recommend some effective ways of ensuring equitable distribution of these palliative measures across Nigeria to avoid unpleasant grudges among the people. This is important because if the available provisions to

alleviate the sufferings of the people are well distributed, the negative impact of the covid-19 pandemic would be minimized among Nigerians.

II. WHAT ARE PALLIATIVE MEASURES?

Palliative measures are deliberate efforts and provisions by government, institutions, individuals and cooperate organisations to render helps or supports as to ease the negative impact of a subsisting situation on humans through the provision of cash, food items, clothing and other relief items. Covid -19 being a new pandemic disease may not be very easy to tackle as researchers are still working on the most effective way of achieving control. However, suggestions on how it has been tackled in many areas shows that the cost of control may be very small (Maurice, 2016). Nigeria is a nation endowed with abundant natural resources which has led to the influx of people into the country on a regular basis to tap some of these natural resources like crude oil in the Niger Delta, precious stones like gold, Colom bite, diamond and coal in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The abundant deposits of these minerals have placed Nigeria as one of the most popular countries in the world. However, Nigeria is highly hospitable the current insecurity notwithstanding. The arrival of covid-19 into the country was reported to have been brought into the country by a traveller overseas first into Lagos in the month of March, 2020 which has escalated across the entire states of the federation. Subsequently, it was reported in Abuja and in Port Harcourt with few cases. The incidence of the covid-19 is increasing every day without any solution to the cure of the virus in view, as every approach on how to control the pandemic has not yielded a concrete result across the country. The fear of the rapid spread and its associated problems led to donation of cash by organisations, parastatals and individuals to enable the federal and state government build quarantine centres, acquire testing kits and equip the hospitals with gadgets necessary to combat the spread of the pandemic. This initial step gave Nigerians a ray of hope following the proactive steps employed at this juncture. In line with this initial step, many organizations in various states followed suite and started donating cash and kits to their respective state government. The state government, traditional rulers and churches also donated food items to alleviate the suffering on members in their immediate environment.

Considering the huge amount of financial supports received by the federal government against the pandemic, it is expected that all the 36 states of the federation including the federal capital territory should be bubbling with world class hospitals with "Master of the Arts" equipment for testing of infected patients and well-funded research on how to combat the virus. A federal and state project monitoring committee was expected to be put in place to monitor and deliver quality projects of which were not seen as they never existed. As a developing nation, it would have been wise if we capitalized on the scenario created by this global pandemic to acquire the basic health needs for our hospitals and clinics since no body was given the opportunity to travel out of the country to seek medical attention. The monies at the disposal of the federal

government to fight the prevailing pandemic would have been able to provide some basic health care needs of Nigerians as "opportunity lost may not be regain quickly".

III. WAYS TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PALLIATIVE MEASURES AGAINST COVID-19

It is a common adage that "A project devoid of planning; is a project planned to fail". This appeared to be the situation experience in the distribution of the various palliatives received both by the federal and state government to curb the negative impact of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It was reported in various newspapers and shown on social media and on radio how other nations were helping their people to reduce the negative impact of corona virus. Those measures were very effective and efficient in their own circumstances. The truth of the whole matter is that whatever works for a particular people and their environment may not necessary work for every other persons. It is therefore expected that different nations and people should always look out for the best way to manage their own situation because of the differences in locations, time, environment and the individuals. Considering the huge amount of monies donated to the federal government as palliative against covid-19 pandemic, the following methods should be used as sharing formula: The monies should be shared among the 36 states of the federation with great considerations on Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt factors. The factors in considerations here has to do with the population of people living in these three cities which frequently subjects the cities under pressure from the influx of people. The standards of living in these cities are quite high in terms of accommodation, food commodities and general welfare. These cities should receive moderately higher amount of monies to enable them carry out good quality projects. It will be unfair to hear that any state is excluded from partaking in this federal government intervention as this may further divide the already divided entity called Nigeria. Per adventure any state has been excluded or is about to be excluded either by omission or commission, such states should be pacified immediately and given its share of the palliative to foster unity and progress in Nigeria.

On the distribution of food items by the federal and state government, the same approach should be used. As bonafide citizens of Nigeria, equal rights and privileges should be accorded to everyone. Every good leader should have the interest of his people at heart and should do everything he could to foster peace among the people as no one individual is superior to the other. An intervention by both the state and federal government on a regular basis would be appreciated considering the hardship faced by the majority of Nigerians. To further buttress the points earlier captured in this review, it is no longer a rumour that nations like the United States of America, Europe and other developed countries supported their citizens with cash to stock up prior to total lockdown. It was also reported that the palliative is continuous as the government provide relief materials to individuals that have exhausted their stock where ever and whenever the need arises.

It will not be a bad idea if the federal government can support indigent Nigerians with cash in addition to food items and other relief materials, then it has done its best under the prevailing circumstance. Some individuals argue that it is a difficult task to reach out to the entire citizenry in Nigeria in terms of cash distribution; I want to opine that it is very possible and easy to do this if the federal government is willing. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that since the pandemic got to Nigeria, the National center for disease control (NCDC) has been frequently sending text messages to every Nigerian. This is an indication that the federal government can send cash into every individuals account because accounts are linked with the phone numbers of individuals. There is nothing done to the people during this covid-19 era that would be too much in order to sustain lives.

Social justice is very important in governance and must be strictly adhered to. A situation where there exists social injustice among the citizens of a country, there is bound to be social chaos as is currently experienced in Nigeria. This situation could lead to breakdown of law and order. This period is not the time to leave some people behind while carrying others along as this will cause problems such as marginalisation which may be very difficult to handle. If people are treated equally, there is the tendency of creating social justice and on the long-run eradicate discrimination and foster unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The situation on ground is already causing problems where by the aggrieved youths from the states that were not given palliatives are asking people from other states of the federation to relocate back to their states of origin and if this is not control, there may be civil unrest in no distant time in the country. The federal government should endeavour to have an open mind for equitable distribution of the palliatives. Active participation is expected by everybody in Nigeria to fight against the covid-19 pandemic as this will help to curb the incidence of this pandemic faster and further create a united Nigeria which the generation yet unborn will leave to be proud of. It is important to note that when there is social equity, people would become interested in contributing to the growth and development of Nigeria.

IV. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE DISTRIBUTION OF PALLIATIVE MEASURES IN NIGERIA

The distribution of palliatives in the 36 states of the federation including Abuja has been characterised by several flaws and has not been done with the best practices. It has been reported that while some states got about ten billion naira (#10, 000,000,000), others did not receive any thing either in cash or in kind. This also is not a palatable news and not at the best interest of Nigerians. Every state has its peculiar problems which are being tackled with their available lean resources. It is the duty of the federal government to provide the basic needs of its populace and such needs should be given to all the state government. A selective distribution of federal monies is highly unacceptable as the denied states are required to provide quarantine centres, equip their hospitals and provide other social amenities to every inhabitant of the state. The palliative may not be enough to take care of all the needs

in the country, irrespective of this fact every state should be reached no matter how little. Transparency at this point in time in the history of Nigeria as regards leadership is expected from both the federal and state government. The federal government being at the apex should show a good examples in matters that bother on integrity and accountability to win the trust of the citizenry. A transparent leader is a leader that wins the trust and confidence of his subjects, whose words are true at all times and who will review betray the confidence reposed on him. The covid-19 pandemic period should not be used by leaders to enrich themselves while the masses suffer as it seems to be in the prevailing circumstance. The federal government has not been able to discharge her duty effectively as regards the distribution of the palliatives provided by different organisations and individuals. The current situation has raised dust from various quarters who are questioning the reason behind the selective distribution of palliatives. These questions can be answered in one word "planlessness". If the federal government could seat down and articulate properly the way for effective distribution of the palliatives and had put men and women of proven integrity to pilot the action, every state would have had a fair share of the palliative. On the state palliative distribution, reports on discriminatory approach has been reported. Some local government chairmen have been accused of not distributing all that were received from the state government. The ward chairmen have also been accused of withholding some food items meant for the people for their family members alone. There was a clip video on the social media where 1/4 bag of rice, two tubers of yams and one carton of indomie noodle was given to a ward in a particular local government area in a state. It is however known that some items posted on social media are not always true but to some extent, some may be true. Suffice it to say that no matter the report got on the distribution of the palliatives across the country, there was a lacuna created from the way the distribution was done which is not to the best interest of Nigerians.

V. CONCLUSION

This report has exposed the simple fact that palliative measures provided to both the federal and state government the ease the sufferings of Nigerians during this covid-19 pandemic era has not been well distributed which is further causing serious problems in the country. More than 98% of the states did not receive any support from the federal government. It was also observed that while some states were given both food items and cash to be distributed to their subjects by the federal government, other states did not receive anything from the federal government as palliatives. In some states where the state government struggled to provide relief materials to the local government, the ward chairmen have been accused of diversion of these relief item thereby causing shortages as the materials did not get to every individual in the wards.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal government should constitute a standing committee drawn from all the states to see to equitable distribution of the palliative.

The state government should constitute a committee with representatives from all the local government to ensure proper distribution of the palliatives.

The federal government should ensure that no state of the federation is excluded from receiving palliative against covid-19.

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