

## THE ROLES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN COMBATING COVID-19 PANDEMIC DISEASE IN NIGERIA

**MBA O. UKOHA PhD.**

**DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING, GREGORY UNIVERSITY UTURU, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA**

### **Abstract**

*COVID -19 pandemic disease is a deadly disease that ravaging the whole world. Covid-19 erupted in a city named Wuhan in China in the year, 2019. The disease has spread quickly not as it were in China, but more over around the world. Due to the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic disease, different nations including Nigeria where faced with numerous challenges and assistance where also rendered by international organizations to tackle the scourge. This paper therefore explores the roles of international organizations in combating Covid 19 pandemic disease in Nigeria. In order to ascertain a conscientious work, this paper relied on secondary sources of data collection. Information was sourced from published books, journal articles and conference papers, technical reports from international organizations that anchored on the phenomenon under investigation. The paper concludes with recommendations which include that, there is need for Nigerian government to continue to maintain its relationship with international organizations by ensuring strict coordination and corporation as this would enable Nigeria to receive assistance from the organizations when the need arises.*

*Key words: COVID-19, disease, International Organizations, Roles, Nigeria.*

### **Introduction**

One vital role of international organizations is providing technical cooperation and assistance to member countries. By technical cooperation it denotes the provision of intellectual, financial and material assistance to countries which need them. Amongst all the roles and activities of international organizations, the most important is negotiating and setting up multilateral agreements (Pyzeworski, 1991). The multilateral agreements that are settled by the international organizations occur in sections like environmental protection, disease prevention and control, promotion of human rights, fight against crime, development of trade, etc. According to Gebbs (2013), international organizations serve diverse functions, including delivering services and aids, example the World Health Organization (WHO), provides a forum for bargaining. Diehl (2010) stressed that states create international organizations so that they could have a platform to interact with others, develop norms and cooperate to

solve existing common problems. In the past, issues like security, health and poverty have been the main reasons why states get involved with international organizations.

According to Mckibbin and Fernando (2020), the novel corona virus (SARS-COV-2) is a new strain of virus that has not been previously identified in humans and causes the disease popularly called COVID-19. The COVID-19 is definitely a global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have witnessed since the Second World War. In their own reaction, Ozili and Arun (2020) contend that since the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic disease, the virus has had spillover effects, spreading from China to every continent of the world, including developing and emerging countries like Nigeria, due to their dependence on developed countries to the importation of goods. Ozili (2020), posits that COVID-19 Pandemic has had substantial adverse effects on the global economy in general and the Nigerian economy in particular. One of such effects he identified

is the worsening of Nigeria's economy, thereby plunging the nation into double economic recession within a year.

According to Przeworski (1991), Nigeria is a member of several international organizations. It has been proved that States establish and develop international organizations in order to achieve and resolve issues that are too big for them to handle on their own and COVID-19 pandemic is one of such issues. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 pandemic disease in Nigeria was made public on 27th February, 2020, when an Italian citizen tested positive for the virus in Lagos and later died. According to Ohia, Bakery and Ahmed (2020), the reason why the outbreak was so severe in Nigeria and caused great hardships to poor citizens was because Nigeria was not prepared to prevent and respond effectively to it. Furthermore, a recent study shows why Nigeria was unable to tackle COVID-19 as it did Ebola virus, to include looming debt payments, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and Testing Kits shortages, a slowing economy and an already weak health systems (Aitig, Baker, Barrero, Bloom, Bunn, Chen & Mizzen, 2020).

According to Obinna, Dixit and Ogundeji (2020), in a bid to combat the pandemic, the Federal Government of Nigeria provided palliatives and financial assistance to the most vulnerable groups. The monetary authorities borrowed a total of \$11.24 billion from both internal and external sources. These efforts could not prevent the double economic recession which occurred in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2020. It became obvious that Nigerian government alone could not combat this crisis without the assistance of international organizations like the United Nations and its agencies, European Union, and some private sector partners.

Obinna, Dixit and Ogundeji (2020) stressed further that, the private sector after being called upon by the Nigerian government established the Coalition against COVID-19(CACOV-19) in March 2020 to help government control the disease. Since then, CACOV-19 has raised over #72 million which was used for the purchase of food relief, medical supplies, and equipment in different States of the country. This paper therefore, explores the various ways put in place by international organizations in combating the ravaging COVID-19 Pandemic disease.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **The Concept of International Organizations**

International organization is an institution drawing membership from at least three states, having activities in several states and held together by a formal agreement. They range in size from three members to 185. An international organization is a body that promotes voluntary cooperation and coordination among its members (McCormik, 1999). International organizations are established by international law as independent bodies, separate from States that make them up as members. In other words they are corporate 'persons much like companies are "artificial persons" in commercial law. The organization structure can range from simplicity to complexity depending on their size and objectives. As interdependence increases, the importance of international organization increases with it (Hurd, 2014).

According Gebes (2013), international organizations rest upon a dualistic conception of international relations which acknowledge both conflictual and cooperative relationships as basic features of the multistate system. In effect, international organizations represents an

attempt to minimize conflict and maximize collaboration among member states, thus, treating conflict as an evil to be controlled and cooperation as a good to be promoted.

Gebs (2013) continued that the roles that international organizations can play are anchored on the interest of their member States. Historically, international organizations have often been conceptualized as entities whose activities are subject to standards, and are endowed with a single task, namely, the management of common problems, organizations created to do those things that states cannot do on their own. In their own quest, Kenneth and Duncan (1998) opined that the relationship between the two international organizations and states as fairly symbiotic. The State as well as international organizations needs each other in order to achieve their goals. It is noteworthy that often enough; states alone are incapable of either getting things done on their own or of getting things done in a legitimate way. International organizations then can assist not just in getting things done, but also in doing them properly and legitimately.

### **The Concept of COVID-19 Pandemic Disease**

According to Olapegba and Delegiwa (2020), Covid 19 pandemic disease was transmitted from animals to humans in an animal market in the Wuhan province of China. In the same study some respondents believed that COVID-19 is a biological weapon of the Chinese against the whole world.

Not satisfied by these arguments, the US government in January, 2021 sent a team of investigators led by World Health Organization (WHO) experts to China to unravel the genesis of the disease. It was reported that their findings were inconclusive (This day, February 21, 2021).

Most common symptoms include tiredness and difficulty in breathing, dry cough and frequent sneezing, fever, loss of taste and smell. The mode of transmission has been found to be from person to person contact, sneezing and coughing by an infected person in close contact with others. Recommended preventive measures include frequent hand washing with soap under running water, general personal and environmental cleanliness, and maintenance of social distance of about 1.5 metres apart, avoiding handshaking and large gathering of people among others (WHO, 2020).

According to Klantschnig and Huang (2019) the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic necessitated the importation of health related materials, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Intensive Care Unit (ICU) items like respirators, oxygen and Testing Kits .However, the closure of international airports as a result of the COVID-19 has made the procurement of these materials difficult. This challenge aligns with a recent study that shows that such problems might result to the proliferation of fake locally made drugs sold in pharmacy and chemist stores. Despite the rate at which the virus has been spreading in Nigeria and other parts of the world and many still believe that the COVID-19 is a scam (Punch Newspaper, April 2, 2020).

### **Methodology**

In order to ascertain a conscientious work, this paper relied on secondary sources of data collection. Information was sourced from already published books, journal articles conference papers, newspaper publications, and technical reports from international organizations that anchored on the phenomenon under investigation.

### **The Roles of International Organizations in Combating COVID-19 Pandemic Disease in Nigeria**

Several international organizations rallied round to give financial, material and technical aid to Nigeria as their contributions in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic disease. To this end, the United Nations and its agencies made significant contributions, as well as the European Union, private sector partners and a few friendly countries. Another group in this context is a multi-sector collaboration in Nigeria's COVID-19 response known as Joint Support Framework.

According to Edward Kallon the United Nations resident and humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria maintained that; "The U N system in Nigeria has mobilized the sum of \$2 million to help the government's efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak and care for those stricken by the virus. The fund is to be used to procure essential medical supplies and also support rapid procurement of disease commodity packages for surveillance, prevention and

According to International Monetary Fund report (2020) "the IMF has secured \$1 trillion in lending capacity, servicing our members and responding fast to an unprecedented numbers of emergency financing requests from over 90 countries so far". In addition, "the IMF provided financial assistance and debt service relief to member countries including Nigeria for tackling the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Under the IMF Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) which can provide quick and one-off financing response to health disaster, Nigeria

control as well as clinical management" (Vanguard, 2020).

Similarly, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) jointly contributed the sum of \$10 million towards combating Covid 19 pandemic disease. Edward Kallon stated that, "the gesture underscores the urgent need for collaboration given the multifaceted nature of the virus and its impact on Nigeria's economy" (Vanguard, 2020). In order to build capacity of health workers and to establish Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in Nigeria, the two UN agencies namely, WHO and UNICEF made another financial contribution of \$2,347,690.85 (Vanguard, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), established in 1948 to further international cooperation for improved public health conditions. Through the World Health Organization, Nigeria has recently received the first batch of 4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine (This Day, 2021).

has benefited to the tune of \$2,454.5 million out of 35 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (IMF, 2020). The IMF also approved the sum of \$3.4 billion emergency loan support to Nigeria to tackle the economic impact of the pandemic (IMF, 2020).

In addition, African Development Bank (ADB) also issued \$1billion loan to Nigeria all in an effort to combat the pandemic. In connection with these loans, the IMF Executive Board called for the implementation of proper governance arrangements including the publication and

independent audit of crisis - mitigating spending and procurement processes which are crucial to ensure that emergency funds are used for their intended purposes (IMF, 2020).

Drawing from their past experience with other health related outbreaks such as Ebola virus, HIV, Malaria, Tuberculosis, etc, as well as their long history of working with the private and public sectors, UNDP has helped many countries, including Nigeria, to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19 as part of its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality in standards of living and build resilience to crisis and shocks (UNDP, 2020).

UNDP is a member of the Presidential Task Force (PTF) committee on resource mobilization and coordination. It had continued to support the PTF to compile records on UN agency specific contributions towards the COVID-19 response in Nigeria.

According to the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, "United Nations has launched a \$2 billion global humanitarian response plan in the most vulnerable nations". He concluded that, "Nigeria like every other country needs to act quickly to prepare, respond and recover,"(This day, 2020).

In the area of strengthening state level operational capacity, surveillance, infection prevention and control, and community engagement for effective response to COVID-19 in Nigeria, UNDP along with other UN agencies, namely; UNICEF, USAID and WHO jointly donated the sum of \$5,055,546.84 (Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, 2020).

In addition, UNDP on its own donated the sum of \$1,400,000 as aid to Nigeria's COVID-19 response. In the area of risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), under UN support to national COVID-19 multi-sectoral pandemic, the following UN agencies viz: UNICEF, UNFPA, USAID, UNWOMEN and WHO jointly donated the sum of \$8,205,054 .Apart from a cash donation of \$230,000, UNFPA also donated the sum of \$1,501,723..93 for the purpose of engaging Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to reverse the negative impact of COVID-19 on essential health services (Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, 2020).

Muhammed, Abdulkarem and Chowdhury (2017), maintained that the Operational Humanitarian Country Team (OHCT) in Nigeria released the Joint Support Framework to ensure a coordinated approach to managing the COVID-19 emergency across partners and sectors. The strategic objectives of the Joint Support Framework (JSF) directly aligns with those of the COVID-19 Global humanitarian response plan to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce morbidity and mortality, decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights improve the social cohesion and livelihoods of internally displaced people, migrants and host communities, particularly most vulnerable to the pandemic (Muhammed, Abdulkarem & Chowdhury, 2017).

Nigeria Health Sector Coordinator, Mr. Muhammad Shafiq, stressed that "a major priority is to address the stigma and

misconceptions surrounding COVID-19 both for patients and healthcare workers. Partners are also working closely with local influencers such as community and religious leaders to provide and distribute palliatives to the most vulnerable groups and also give clear information on COVID-19 prevention and control” (Guardian, 2020).

In addition, health sector partner, the Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA) collaborated with the Ministry of Health by providing over 15,000 outpatient consultations on COVID-19 (Guardian, 2020).

In line with World Health Organization guidelines, ALIMA provided training for both healthcare workers and burial teams in infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. In this way, ALIMA and other health sector partners are able to work towards both the Global Humanitarian response plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a harmonized way (Guardian, 2020).

In addition, health sector partner, the Alliance for International Medical Action

**The paper outlined the following policy recommendations.**

1. Individuals, institutions, corporate bodies should as a matter of necessity, ensure strict compliance as directed by government as this would help to curtail implications of Covid 19 pandemic disease as well as the spread of the virus in Nigeria.
2. Nigerian government should increase the efficiency of its response to any healthcare challenges by ensuring that donated funds, items and materials by international organizations reach the intended beneficiaries.
3. Nigeria government should invest substantially in healthcare infrastructure to improve the ability of the nation's healthcare system to withstand the possible outbreak of contagious and other kinds of diseases in the future.
4. There is need for Nigerian government to continue to maintain its relationship with international organizations by ensuring strict coordination and corporation as this would enable

(ALIMA) collaborated with the Ministry of Health by providing over 15,000 outpatient consultations on COVID-19 (Guardian, 2020).

In line with World Health Organization guidelines, ALIMA provided training for both healthcare workers and burial teams in infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. In this way, ALIMA and other health sector partners are able to work towards both the Global Humanitarian response plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a harmonized way (Guardian, 2020).

The problems arising from the COVID-19 pandemic disease was too severe that Nigerian government could not handle it alone.

Hence, the need for international organizations to assist with the needed aids became necessary.

The paper explored the spread of the global pestilence called COVID-19 Pandemic disease and the contributions of various international organizations in combating the deadly disease in Nigeria.

Nigeria to receive assistance from the organizations when the need arises.

5. Government at all levels as well as elected representatives should ensure that palliatives are provided to the

citizenry and evenly distributed as this would help the masses to adhere strictly to the government directives to curtail the spread of the pandemic disease.

### References

- Altig, D., Baker, S.R., Banero, J.M., Bloom, N., Bunn., P, Chen, S., & Mizen, P. (2020). Economic uncertainty before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (No.W 27418). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Diehl, M. (2010). Why States get involved with international organizations. *Journal of Political Science*.6 (1), 43-52.
- Fernandes, N. (2020). Economic effects of coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) on the world economy. Available at SSRN 3557504.
- Gebis, T. (2013). Benefits of international organizations uncategorized. *International Journal of Development Sciences*. 16 (2), 67-69.
- Guardian Newspaper (2020). Reports on Covid 19 prevention and control in Nigeria. May, 31.
- Hurd, E. (2014). The historical development of international organizations. *Tilahun Journal of Development*. 8 (1), 32-40.
- International Monetary Fund (2020). Report on Covid 19 intervention programme.
- Jacob, O. N., Abigeal, L. & Lydia, A. E. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on the higher institutions development in Nigeria. *Electronic Research Journal of Social Science and Humanities*. 2, 126-135.
- Kenneth, W.A., & Dunkan, S. (1998). Why states act through formal international organizations. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 42 (1), 3-32.
- Klantschnig, G., & Huang, C. (2019). Fake drugs, health, wealth and regulation in Nigeria. *Review of African Political Economy*. 46 (1), 442-458.
- McCormick J. (1999). *The European union politics and policies*. Westview Press. Boulder Colorado.
- McKibbin, W. J., & Fernando, R. (2020). *The global macroeconomic impact of COVID-19*. Seven scenarios.
- Muhammad, F., Abdulkareem, J. H. & Chowdhury, A. A. (2017). Major Public Health problems in Nigeria: A review. *South East Asia Journal of Public health*. 7(1), 6-11.
- Ohia. C., Bakarey, A. S. & Ahmed, T. (2020). COVID-19 and Nigeria: putting the realities in context. *International Journal of infectious diseases*. 5 (2), 21-29.
- Olapegba, D. A., & Delegiwa, E.G. (2020). Covid 19 pandemic disease and its implication in Nigerian Society. *International Journal of Social and Management Sciences*. 2. (1), 67-74.
- Ozili, P. K. (2020). COVID-19 in Africa: Socio-economic impact, policy response and opportunities. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 12 (1), 8-14.

Ozili, P. K., & Arun, T.G. (2020). Spillover of COVID-19: impact on the global economy. Working paper.

Przeworski, A. (1991). *Democracy and the market: political and economic reform in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This Day Newspaper (2020). Nigeria receives assistance from the World Health Organization on Covid 19 pandemic. June, 2.

This Day Newspaper (2021). U.N Launches \$2 billion Global Humanitarian Response Plan in the most vulnerable Nations. February, 27.

Vanguard Newspaper (2020). Countdown of supports from international bodies on Covid 19 pandemic disease in Nigeria. April, 6.

World Health Organization (2017). Is Nigeria prepared to respond effectively to Pandemics?