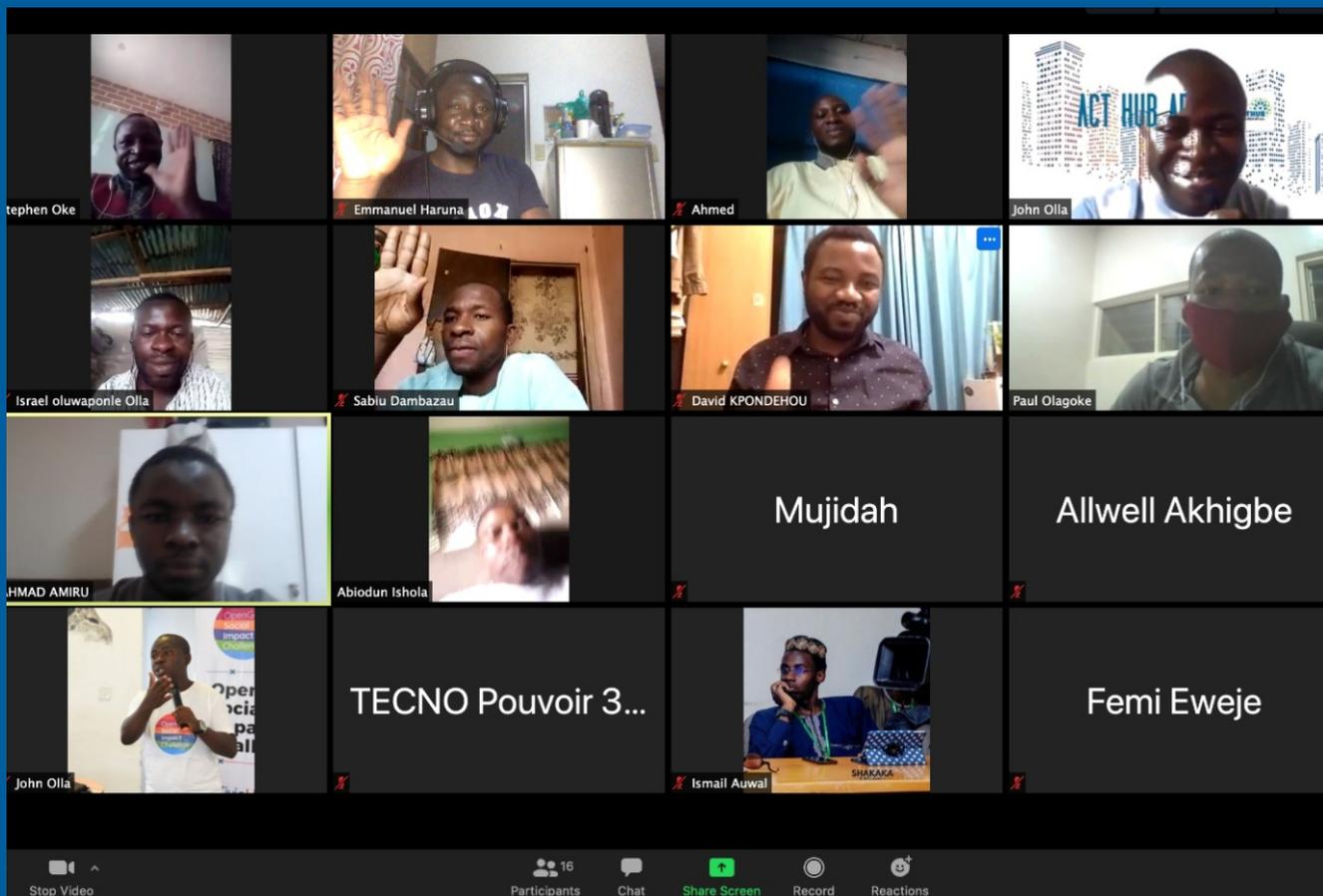




POLICY DIALOGUE

**Human Rights and Accountability in the Lockdown:
COVID-19 experience**



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COMMUNIQUÉ

PREAMBLE

Act Hub Africa held her first edition of its flagship programme Policy Dialogue. The event which was organised virtually on Monday, May 11, 2020, focused on the topic: " Human Rights and Accountability in the Lockdown: COVID-19 experience". The justification for this dialogue is to bring to fore the salient issues around Accountability and Human Right and how they are being affected during this lockdown necessitated by COVID-19 pandemic.

The dialogue had in attendance participants from Cote D'ivore, Turkey, Japan, United Kingdom and Nigeria. The dialogue was hosted and moderated by John Oluwafemi OLLA the Team Lead for Act Hub Africa an Associate of Accountability Lab Nigeria while Mr. Oguntunde Oluwatosin, Mr. Haruna Emmanuel, Mrs. Mujidat Ajibola, Mr. Ismail Auwal, Mr. Ishola Abiodun and Barr. Oke Stephen were all discussants.

The dialogue X-ray the extent to which Human Right and Accountability has been subjected to lock-down just like citizens who should speak and fight to protect and demand for it as well as the homegrown and workable solutions that can address the areas that needed urgent attention.

POINTS OF DIALOGUE

the infectious disease bill as proposed by the Speaker of the House

The appropriateness of the bill at this point was the first point of concern that was raised by 80% of the discussants. While discussing the matter, majority of the discussants believe that Nigeria should reject the bill in its entirety as it is not clearly state the benefits, and how it is different from the existing law about infectious diseases. Another concern was that looking at the bill critically one will easily spot contradiction in it. Nigerian should be allowed to ask what they are trying to achieve with this bill.

The law will be giving too much power to the DG of NCDC to be used under the guise of suspicion therefore if the bill is left unchecked it is going to hunt Nigerians in the future. Although one of the discussants said that although Nigerians are not in support of the bill but the law is timely and is ok for Nigeria at this point that we are facing Corona virus but he added that there are grey areas and should be properly addressed and Nigerians should be allowed to participate in all the processes of passing the bill into law.

Law Enforcement Brutality



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It is generally agreed that Nigeria should not keep quiet that they should address this matter, so that the law enforcement agencies can respect the people.

Why on the issue of police brutality one of the speaker said that the fact that law enforcement agencies are answerable to the President alone in Nigeria by law is a fundamental problem that should be addressed such that they become responsible and answerable to Nigerians.

Accounting for money donated to Nigerian Federal Government during Corona virus

All the speakers agreed that when talking about generating donations from the people there must be a reason why that the donation is being collected and therefore in order to ensure transparency and accountability the same thing must be used for the purpose in which it was actually collected. By deciding to spend the money on supplementary budget is actually a corruption on its own which means the Federal Government of Nigeria is not accountable and responsible in the issue of handling public fund and people expectation.

Home-grown school feeding program

All the speakers agreed that in order to ensure that the government does not spend the people's money in a wrong way therefore all hands must be on deck to call that federal government to order and stop them from going ahead with homegrown school feeding program even at this time of lock-down. They believed that homegrown school feeding programme should be stop as it does not have justifiable reason for its continuation at this point that the children are at home with their parents.

One of the discussants opined that; the primary claim of the government is to use homegrown school feeding programme to increase enrolment, therefore implementing the programme now is a project without a purpose and objective.

Competence of people in office with special reference to the minister of Humanitarian affairs, disaster management and social development

One of the discussants attest to the fact that the social register as being in existence before coronavirus and that cash transfer register is authentic and reliable although there might be some issue here and there but he believes that the social register is authentic and is reliable but he cannot boast of is the process of administration and

implementation. Others differs on the matter saying; the school feeding program is more effective in one aspect of the country and it isn't in other part. Therefore, inequality introduced into the programme is one of its failed characteristic.

Environmental Impact Assessment in Nigeria

it is obvious that a lot of people that don't have an understanding of what environmental Impact Assessment is all about. The discussant from Japan said that Nigeria should start working on how to implement environmental Impact Assessment action during and after this COVID-19

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the dialogue, the following recommendations were made

- Governments and other key stakeholders need to respect fundamental human rights in their responses to the future pandemic. Take steps to prevent and provide medical care to those in need of public health threats.
- Governments must ensure that quarantines, lock-down and travel bans comply with international and domestics standards of rights, irrespective of social, cultural and religious status.
- Security agencies must humanely abide by the principles of non-discrimination and human rights, such as transparency and respect for human dignity. Beating and harassment of citizens must be condemned in all its forms.
- The palliative measures taken by the government to cushion the effects must not be discriminatory and must be directed towards the poor who really need it. Transparency and accountability in the distribution of such assistance should be reported and documented openly without confidentiality.
- The legislative arm of Government must ensure that the proposed bills are subject to due process, as laid down in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Key stakeholders should be made to examine and make contributions before it is passed into law.
- Police should be train and retrained on regular basis on ethics and human rights.
- Government should work on how to jump-start the economy so that Nigeria can move from the state of being the headquarter of poverty to a flourishing and prosperous nation in terms of economy

- The Nigerian law enforcement agencies should be restructured in a way that they are not only answerable to the president but also to the people who directly or indirectly pays their bill.

- Nigeria needs to work on genuine data gathering, cleaning and usage for the purpose of development, now that coronavirus pandemic scenario as shown Nigeria that have pool of data that can drive development. Therefore, it is expedient that we focus on building Big Data that can fast track development in Nigeria.

- Nigerians should be enlightened about the importance of Environmental Impact Assessment and how extractive and development project impacts on their health and livelihood in general.

- Environmental Impact Assessment should be adopted in Nigeria and should be put into use before implementing any project in Nigeria and development project activities should be environmental Impact Assessment standard compliant. Also Environmental Impact Assessment law should be amended to meet international standard.

- Above all, the interests of citizens rather than individuals must be brought to the table at all costs before making any decision.

CONCLUSION

Although the citizens had voluntarily submitted their right for their health but this should not be taken for granted by law enforcement agency and or for leaders around the world to see this as an opportunity to exhibit their rulership tendencies. Also, more than ever the call is on government to be more accountable to the citizens the more, not in term of financial alone but also policy that will affect their lives. Therefore, citizens should be active enough to hold the government to account and as well raise their voice to demand for their rights.

Dated: Friday, May 11, 2020.

John Oluwafemi OLLA,

Team Lead: Act Hub Africa

Accountapreneur with Accountability Lab Nigeria