

COVID-19 Mission to Prisons report



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	1
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. PROJECT VISION	3
A. Problem Statement and Context	3
B. Project Goals and Objectives	3
C. Project Outcomes	4
III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES	4
A. Step I: Preparation and Manufacture of Deliverables	6
B. Step II: Distribution and awareness creation	7
C. Step III: Impact assessment and next steps	8
IV. PHOTO GALLERY	10

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The COVID-19 Mission to Prisons project speaks of resilience and commitment to the welfare of the most vulnerable in the society. The inspiration to stand up for the wellbeing of inmates in this COVID-19 era came from God. I will like to begin by giving complete honour and glory to God. He gave the inspiration, provided the resources and the needed strength to see it through.

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We are indeed stronger together!!!

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Introduction

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, first discovered in December 2019. It has since then become a global pandemic with every nation battling to control its spread and mortality rate. Top on the list of the recommended guidelines by the World Health Organization are personal hygiene and physical distancing. Controlling the spread of the deadly virus is now the first line action as we keep searching for a potent vaccine or treatment.

COVID-19: Mission to Prison is an initiative of Dr Lucky Aziken, aimed at ensuring the protection of the correctional facilities in Nigeria from the pandemic. The prison community is most vulnerable and stands the risk of greater fatalities in the event of an outbreak. Currently, Nigeria is experiencing community spread of the virus and the numbers are scaling up massively.

Thankfully, there is no confirmed case yet in any of the prisons in Nigeria, making the project timely. The first phase of the project raised awareness of the Coronavirus disease and improved personal and corporate hygiene in a correctional facility in Nigeria.

This phase of the project was intended to stimulate further interest and support for the welfare of prisons and inmates in this time. Just like the United Nations Secretary General rightly puts it, *"we must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable-millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves. This is a matter of basic human solidarity. It is also crucial for combating the virus. This is the moment to step up for the vulnerable."*

Project Vision

A. Problem Statement and Context

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a global health crisis unlike any in the last 75 years. It is killing people, spreading human suffering and even transforming into an economic crisis. Health care systems in many nations are at the brink of a collapse as the structures are unable to hold the demands placed on it. There had been numerous cases of wide spread community infection in different countries and this has necessitated the strict measures of lockdown in different parts of the world. Every available media has been used to propagate information to the general public and certain guidelines have also been advocated to contain the spread. While this pandemic is affecting all population across different age groups, the impact of the disease burden is not felt equally. People living in poverty, older people, those with disabilities, refugees and inmates form the disadvantaged group.

Prisons in Nigeria commonly referred to as correctional facilities are dreadful. They are often overcrowded and inmates share filthy cell rooms without mattresses. Most of them sleep on bare floors and are often exposed to a myriad of diseases and infections. The lack of access to quality healthcare makes the issues more complicated. Deaths of inmates in prison are frequent occurrences that don't make headline news. A COVID-19 outbreak within the walls of the prisons will spell doom for Nigeria. There are 240 prisons in the country with more than 75,000 inmates including juveniles, and pregnant women. The conditions of these people are already deplorable without a pandemic; it is very unlikely they will survive an outbreak. Government response has been about decongesting custodial centres by releasing older inmates and those about to complete their term. There isn't any real response to improve the welfare of those still behind bars. A visit to some of the facilities left us in shock as most of the inmates had no access to basic living commodities like soap and toiletries.

It is on this premise that we launched the COVID-19 Mission to Prisons Project.

Project Goal and Objectives

Goal: *To improve awareness of the Coronavirus disease and advocate for better hygienic practices in correctional facilities in Nigeria.*

Objective 1: To provide awareness of the COVID-19 disease process and health guidelines for inmates in correctional facilities with no access to print or digital media by June 2020.

Objective 2: To produce 3000 bottles (of 500ml) and 400 Litres (in 10Litres gallon) of antiseptic wash with antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties for the protection of inmates in correctional facilities

Objective 3: To distribute these products in 10 correctional facilities in Nigeria to be used for hand washing, cleaning of surfaces, floors, convenience, and general laundry.

B. Project outcomes

- 10 correctional facilities in eight states in Nigeria are provided with educational pamphlets on the COVID-19 Pandemic and empowered to take proactive steps to contain the spread
- 400 Litres of Antiseptic wash is made available to the Nigerian Prisons Service in every facility to be used for cleaning and disinfecting the surroundings
- 3000 Bottles (500ml) of same antiseptic wash and educational pamphlets are distributed among prisoners across cells in the different correctional facilities for maintaining personal hygiene
- Improved awareness and hygiene in the prisons helped curb the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities across Nigeria.

Project Activities

The first phase of the project was carried out in the **Nigerian Correctional Service Medium Security Custodial Centre - Uyo.**

STEP 1: PREPARATION AND MANUFACTURE OF DELIVERABLES

We aspired to shield prisons from microbial activities and improve personal and corporate hygiene for inmates as a rapid response against the COVID-19 pandemic. We decided to locally produce all our deliverables so we can ensure it is constantly in supply even in more grievous lockdown of borders across the nations. Our first goal was to produce an antiseptic wash to solve the sanitary need of inmates and protect them from infection.

After series of research and testing, we developed a product: DOXA Antiseptic Wash, a new formula with four unique surfactants that provide germicidal effect.



It has antimicrobial properties and still foams like normal soap. It is indicated for hand washing, cleaning of floors, convenience, washing dishes, and scrubbing surfaces of any form. It has the ability to completely disinfect whatever it is used on. We named it DOXA, a Greek word for glory to inspire people to see the bright side of the pandemic.



We also took the initiative to set up wash points for the inmates to have access to water and soap for regular hand washing around the facility. We built a customized stand for the water drums and soap holders.



STEP II: DISTRIBUTION AND AWARENESS CREATION

On Monday 15th June 2020, we paid a courtesy call to the correctional facility to distribute our project items and create awareness of COVID-19 among inmates and officers of the prison service.

Items delivered at the UYO Correctional Facility

1. 200 Bottles of 500ml Antiseptic Wash
2. 20 Litres of Antiseptic Wash in 10litres gallons
3. 10 units of 60 litres water bowl with dispensable taps
4. 10 specially constructed drum stands
5. 11 pieces of 31'' X 25'' Stickers pasted around the facility



STEP III: IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND NEXT STEPS

The donations were received with great joy in the prison community as all the officers on duty came out in celebration. They expressed deep appreciation for the initiative. Prior to this time, they had been several unsuccessful attempts at getting the government provide these things to help the facility in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.



In quantifying impact we requested for the number of inmates in the facility and the prior intervention measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the centre. There are about 1260 inmates occupying a facility initially built to cater for 613 inmates. 72 of the inmates live together in one cell. Their living standard is far worse than we imagined and there has not been any real intervention by the regulatory bodies for COVID-19.

The Deputy Controller of Prisons, **Mr Jaiyeoba Babafemi** carried out the formal launch of our items by using the Antiseptic soap to perform the official hand washing ceremony to encourage the prison community on the necessity of maintaining high level hygiene at such a time as this.



Our intervention was both timely and highly relevant. The administration of it is making a huge impact already. It is our belief that the facility is well shielded from the spread of infection at this time and we hope to keep up with their progress.

NEXT STEPS

COVID-19 Mission to prisons has opened our eyes to the huge gaps in correctional facilities in Nigeria and we intend to expand project deliveries across 10 correctional facilities in Nigeria especially those housing juveniles and delinquent youths.

- I. We hope to use this first phase to garner more support for the welfare of prisoners in this season. We intend to use this report showing impact and benefits to secure more funding and partnerships to cover for other correctional facilities not covered in this phase of project.
- II. We plan to use this project to advocate for better welfare of inmates in correctional facilities by the government and private sector. We intend to inspire private businesses and philanthropists to adopt improving hygiene in correctional facilities as a corporate social responsibility
- III. We also intend to maintain relationship with the Prison Service Commission to ensure that subsequent supplies of DOXA Antiseptic Wash is made available to the facilities at cost of production when the donated ones are exhausted
- IV. In the long run, we intend to commercialise DOXA Antiseptic Wash for the general public. This product will be in retail stores and sold to individuals and families for better hygiene and protection from microbes. We believe one of the expected behavioural changes in the post COVID-19 era will be the prioritization of personal hygiene. Once the product is made commercial, portions of profit will be used to improve hygiene in prisons across Nigeria and beyond perpetually.

PHOTOGALLERY







Thank you