

POLICY BRIEF

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The Innovative Approach to COVID-19 Containment in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Summary

The major ammunition against the ever-raging COVID-19 virus remains maintaining the prescribed precautionary behaviour, wearing of face mask, social distancing, and hand hygiene. However, the strategy required to ensure compliance from country to country cannot be homogenous. Every country needs to be creative and ensure humane considerations in enforcement decisions during the extraordinary experience that COVID-19 pandemic represents. Hence, our approach involved deploying existing indigenous alternative system of self-policing associated with trade unions and local communities in ensuring compliance with COVID-19 precautionary behaviour in Oyo State, Nigeria. This policy brief presents our findings and recommends the Indigenous Practice/ model of self-policing; it is entrenched in the fabrics of our community and acceptable by all. The town-gown composition of the COVID-19 Decontamination and Containment team in Oyo State drove innovation resulting in the development of a GIS backed Containment Compliance Citizens' Reporter App for tracking Compliance. Collaboration with journalists (mainstream and online) towards investigative reporting was highly effective for monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of the intervention as well as providing evidence for meting out incentive and disincentive measures.

Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic has confirmed that global health challenges cannot be solved only by health sector interventions. This is because pandemics, like COVID-19 requires intervention beyond hospital treatment, the traditional purview of healthcare workers. To truly tackle emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, a more integrated approach that breaks down disciplinary silos needs to be promoted. Every profession and their possible input must be taken into consideration when seeking solutions as espoused by the "One Health Approach". One Health refers to the collaboration of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally towards optimal health for people, animals, plants, and the environment.

The COVID-19 Containment intervention in Oyo State



reported in this brief was driven by interdisciplinary, inter-sectorial collaboration and explored established indigenous alternative systems and models of control, justice, law, security, and enforcement in Nigeria.

Research Overview

The method employed was community conversation; a method of increasing inclusive, community-based engagement, harnessing the expertise and motivation of key stakeholders. The community conversations were convened after the pattern of a traditional Town-hall meeting. Community conversations were organized as a



Community Engagement (Conversation)/advocacy with different Stakeholders throughout Oyo State

qualitative framework focusing on deploying the indigenous practice of self-policing associated with Nigeria's trade unions and aims to inform COVID-19 preventive behaviour at the community level. Geographical information system (GIS) technology was used to develop COVID-19 Containment Compliance Citizens' Reporter App. The App was developed using ESRI ArcGIS online platform to crowd source public feedback on compliance or contravention of COVID-19 protocols. Mainstream and social media were also deployed for monitoring and evaluation of the intervention post townhall meeting.

Discussion/Analysis of Research Findings

The establishment of a State-wide Containment response network provided the required inroad for advocacy and deployment of state-wide community conversation framework in the different communities comprising diverse ethnic groups, religious leaders, market leaders, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), and so on. Testimonials from the various communities showed that communities embraced the self-policing strategy, and the network system was effective with good outcomes in terms of response to decontamination, containment, and advocacy.



Recommendation

This approach is a template, which could be adapted and replicated in other parts of Nigeria and other African societies with similar structures, demographics, and indigenous practices.



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