

# Examining Government Effective, Accountable and Transparent Utilization of Resources on the COVID-19 Response in South Sudan

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## ABSTRACT

This policy paper examines the extent to which South Sudan's Government has effectively utilized resources on the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper further assesses what mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability and transparency in managing the COVID-19 crisis funds? Findings from the paper suggest that; decades of successive wars in South Sudan mean that the health infrastructure is visually non-existent with ineffective and weak capacity of government to utilize resources. The internal political turmoil and lack of investment in the health system have left the nation battered by a series of disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19. There was no efficiency observed in handling the COVID-19 pandemic by the now-disbanded High-Level Taskforce on COVID-19 and the current National Taskforce. The Ministry of Health in charge of fighting the pandemic was marred with infighting and reports of corruption, which negatively impacted the Taskforce's performance including its ability to mobilize financial resources. Notwithstanding, this paper's observation is that there is no significant misappropriation of donor funds by the Government, this is because the government did not receive the money from donors. The paper's authors could not ascertain the misappropriation by government also because there is no single record available to the authors to suggest so. Available information and documents reviewed linked and attributed to the fact that agencies such as WHO, UNICEF and other international organizations were directly in charge of their funds and spending according to their own plans with the Government left to play an oversight role which was very insufficient

given the weak and poor government capacity. As recommended by the paper, there are several policies that the South Sudan Government must put in place to better address future pandemics, including increased investment in the health sector, hiring more skilled health workers, better records keeping, improved health infrastructure as well as improving accountability and transparency.

As from the available reviewed literature, South Sudan received as of June 2020 a total cash donation of approximately US\$ 27,591,000 (Twenty-Seven Million Five Hundred and Ninety One Thousand United States Dollars Only). These funds were donated by; World Bank, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African Development Bank (AfDB), Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and European Union (EU) respectively. The Government received in-kind donations from various entities; items such as apron protection, disposable gloves, surgical gloves, examination face shields, disposable respirators, masks, FFP2/N95 masks, gowns, surgical/isolation goggles protective, wraparounds, indirect vent biohazard bags, Lab screening test kits (Primers and probes), Lab confirmation test kits (Primers and probes), RT-PCR reaction kits, and ventilators among others. Food items and other non-food, non-medical items were also donated, some handed over to the Ministry directly while others to CBOs and communities. All the in-kind donations estimated to be worth approximately US\$50 million. The general observation indicated that there had been

goodwill from international donors, governments, organizations, and the local private sector to provide both cash and in-kind donations to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. As indicated in the findings, a significant amount of in-kind donations was sent to the National Taskforce on COVID-19. Most donations by development partners have been wired through the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. The Government's role in direct handling of donor money has been significantly limited, just as it is the case with pre-pandemic projects. Other funds and in-kind donations have been wired through other multilateral agencies such as USAID, EU, UKAID, CHINA, IGAD, and African Union, among others.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, In-Kind & In-cash Donations, Government, MoH, Donors.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This policy paper examines the extent to which South Sudan's Government has utilized resources on the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper further assessed mechanisms that are in place to ensure accountability and transparency in managing COVID-19 crisis funds. The paper has outlined lessons learned and suggested policy recommendations, which will be presented to policymakers through webinars and make findings available to the public through any feasible means. To generate evidence, the paper reviewed the national response strategy and other available literature at the High-Level Task Force's (HLTF) disposal and development partners. Among some of the reviewed documents includes the HLTF correspondences, and records that contain information on all forms of cash and in-kind donations made to the Taskforce. The materials gathered were analyzed to ascertain the extent to which Government and its partners have effectively utilized the COVID-19 response resources to mitigate the spread of the virus. The paper was guided by specific questions which enabled better analysis of the available data. Findings from the paper suggest that; decades of successive wars in South Sudan mean that the health infrastructure is

visually non-existent. The internal political turmoil and lack of investment in the health system have left the nation battered by a series of disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19.

The world is experiencing global health, social, and economic crises due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In East Africa, countries face varying levels of risk and unique preparedness and response mechanisms. South Sudan's cases have increased to 2,450 as of August 7, 2020 with 47 deaths although the accuracy of the outbreak's scale faces skepticism given the limited capacity for testing and surveillance (WHO and South Sudan Minister of Health, 2020). South Sudan's humanitarian needs will increase far beyond the direct health impacts of the pandemic. The context is one of chronic poverty, conflict and insecurity, limited infrastructure, weak health system, and insufficient investment by the Government despite a shortfall in donor funding in the country. The humanitarian situation remains dire as millions of people are still in need of food aid, in addition to 300,451 refugees, 276,896 spontaneous refugee returnees, and 1.4 million IDPs, many of whom live in large, densely populated Protection of Civilian (PoC) camps with inadequate hygiene items (Care South Sudan, 2020 and UNHCR, 2020).

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has established a High-Level Taskforce chaired by the President and deputized by the First Vice President. This Taskforce was dissolved in May 2020 and revitalized to National Taskforce Committee (NTF) headed by the Vice President for the Service Cluster. There is also a National Steering Committee led by the Ministry of Health with the participation of health partners. In March 2020, the Government restricted movements, banned social gatherings and imposed a night curfew. But these restrictions were quickly lifted by the Presidency. The scale of the Government's responses impact remains unknown, as there is little critical analysis and evidence to suggest their effectiveness. A society

inclined to tradition, like in South Sudan, has struggled to observe global guidelines such as social distancing, lockdowns, and hand washing, besides the economic impact. That means, it is imperative to contextualize conventional preventive measures to ones that are easily adaptable by the communities. For this to take shape, effective, transparent, and accountable use of resources in this pandemic remains a critical success factor.

The world's youngest nation, South Sudan, confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on April 5 2020, becoming the 51<sup>st</sup> African nation to register a COVID-19 case. The number of cases has since been increasing daily. To deal with the pandemic, the Government constituted a High-Level Taskforce on COVID-19 (HLTF) headed by the President, Salva Kiir, and deputized by the First Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar. South Sudan, as a nation, has no experience handling a pandemic in the size of COVID-19, nor does it possess adequate financial and human resources to fight it. Government directives on the epidemic have sometimes been contradictory or not adequately enforced. The Government has appealed to development partners including the USAID, African Development Bank, European Union, World Bank, China, and IGAD, to help the young nation meet immediate needs including raising funds to secure testing kits, protective gears for medical workers, food relief for the hungry as well as information dissemination to the general masses about the COVID-19. As it can be highlighted, although South Sudan acted quickly to close down the economy and put restrictions on local and international travels at the onset, public directives coming from officials in charge of health care were found to be sometimes contradictory.

### **The Purpose of the Policy Paper**

The Government of South Sudan has struggled to contain the pandemic's spread since the first case was announced in April 2020. The upsurge in infection in Juba and

outside the capital means the virus has penetrated the communities. Besides, the weak coordination and structural ineffectiveness, the government and partners have consistently cited the lack of funding as the main challenge. However, since March 2020, bilateral donors, regional bodies, and private companies have contributed in-kind and cash donations to support the government response plans. The various communications of the dissolved High-Level Taskforce have documented these donations. Unfortunately, there has been limited transparency and accountability on the use and management of these donations by the government and its partners.

This policy paper intends to conduct a snapshot analysis of the donations in funds and materials by bilateral donors, regional bodies, and donors. It examines how the government and partners have effectively utilized these donations to contain the spread of the virus. The policy paper intends to contribute towards policy advocacy on effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable utilization of resources to defeat COVID-19 in South Sudan. The paper will subsequently be presented to the various stakeholders online and to the public on radio stations to facilitate informed public discourse on the management of the pandemic in the country.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The paper adopted a literature review as a data collection method for reviewing, analyzing relevant documents, and evaluating them. The review process looked at relevant literature that has been documented by the Ministry of health and the Taskforce and partner organizations on how they effectively utilized the COVID-19 response resources to mitigate the spread of the virus. The literature was reviewed per the significant themes of the policy paper. The reviewed documents provided the basis for a detailed contextual analysis and subsequently proposing the strategic recommendations. The policy paper's

findings will be presented to policymakers through webinars and other mediums as well as made available to the public through any feasible means.

The study combined traditional research methods, such as interviews, desk research, direct observation, critical informant conversations, and online surveys with an innovative combination of techniques drawn from participatory research and research design. Simple random and stratified sampling was used. Phone calls, email correspondences, and other online mechanisms were also employed in collecting the necessary data.

### **Policy Paper Question**

To what extent have the Government and its partners effectively utilized COVID-19 response resources to mitigate the spread of the virus?

### **Policy Paper Sub-Questions**

1. How much funds have the Government and its partners received for COVID-19 response in South Sudan?
2. What type of in-kind donations has the Government received and in dollar value?
3. How has the Government and its partners utilized such funds and materials?
4. To what extent have the Government and its partners been transparent and accountable in the use of such donations?

### **Literature Review and Discussion on Government Effective, Accountable and Transparent Utilization of Resources on the Covid-19 Response in South Sudan**

In offering an examination of Government Effective, Accountable and Transparent Utilization of Resources on the COVID-19 Response in South Sudan, Literature Review and Discussion were carried out in a line on how much funds the government and its partners have received for the COVID 19 response, the type of in-kind donations government has received and

in dollar form, how the government and partners have utilized such funds and materials and to what extent the government and partners have been transparent and accountable in the use of such donations.

### **1. How much funds have the Government and its partners received for COVID -19 response in South Sudan?**

As this paper can first highlight, countries around the world are grappling with unprecedented challenges as they tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. From the policy paper analysis of the existing literature and also acquiring information from experts' interviews, it was established that several donors have earmarked millions of dollars for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper's literature analysis further indicates that almost all the funds earmarked for the fight of COVID-19 pandemic in South Sudan went directly to International Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations Agencies. As there were limitations in acquiring all data concerning; how much funds government and its partners have received for the COVID -19 response in South Sudan, the paper's authors only managed to ascertain known amounts of fund from major donors. From the available literature reviewed, South Sudan received total cash donations of approximately US\$ 27,591,000 (Twenty-Seven Million Five Hundred Ninety One and Thousand United States Dollars Only) as of June 2020. These funds were donated by; the World Bank, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African Development Bank (AfDB), Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the European Union (EU) respectively. Details of these funds are provided in graph one below, including explanations from each



donor and institution that has received the funding.

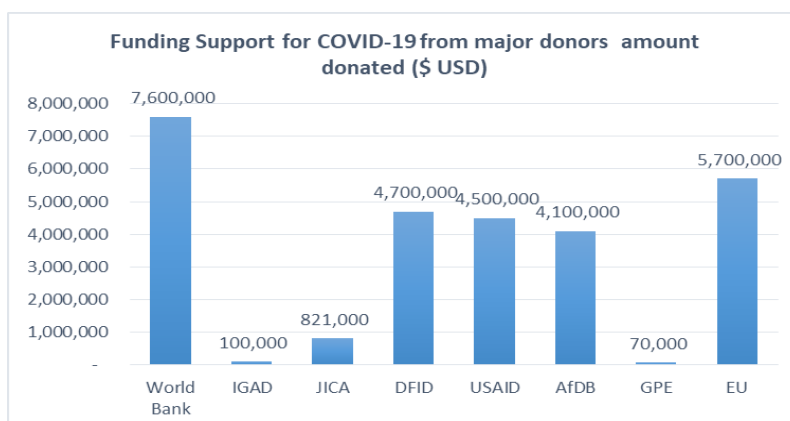


Figure 1 Source: Data gathered from various donors' sources 2020

Chart 1. Funding Support for COVID-19 from Major Donors

As indicated in chart 1, the paper established that, when the first COVID-19 was reported in South Sudan and after the formation of the High-Level Task Force in April 2020, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) donated their financial support of US\$100,000 to fight COVID-19 in South Sudan. The IGAD funds were part of the eight-country trade bloc's collective response against the coronavirus. The South Sudan High Level Taskforce on COVID-19 received the donation from IGAD staff as a direct support to the Government of South Sudan (IGAD, 2020). On the other hand, it was also confirmed on April 6 that, the World Bank activated its Contingent Emergency Response Implementation Plan (CERIP) under the Provision of Essential Health Services Project worth US\$ 7.6 million. The Contingent Emergency Response Implementation Plan was said to have been implemented in partnership with UNICEF and it financed priority activities in South Sudan's national COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. The plan would help South Sudan develop counter measures to limit the transmission and thus, reducing COVID-19. Specifically, it would finance the procurement of medical supplies and equipment, strengthen the infection prevention and control measures, provide

training to health workers and improve health screening at points of entry. South Sudan in partnership with the World Bank, the United Nations (UN) agencies including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other development partners launched its mitigation plans in anticipation of the COVID-19 spread to other areas out of the capital Juba. These funds went directly to the United Nations agencies but not to the South Sudan Government.

Similarly, the Japanese Government through the Japan International Cooperation Agency provided to UNICEF a financial donation of US\$ 821,000. As the paper can show, over half of the funds from Japan were reported to have been spent on increasing access to clean, safe water and hygiene. Part of the funds was allocated to Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study. The funds from the people of Japan have also been spent on strengthening risk communication and community engagement, including digital engagement and reduce rumor mongering, to ensure that people are aware of how to avoid the spread of the virus and protect themselves against the disease. This funding went directly to the United Nations agencies but not to the South Sudan Government. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development was reported to have provided

funding to GOAL to the tune of €4 Million (equivalent of US\$ 4.7 million). The funding is to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Sudan and South Sudan. The policy paper could not establish exactly how much funds were specifically allocated for South Sudan. Meanwhile, from the information received from GOAL, its website indicated that the US\$ 4.7 million is being used to help GOAL and its partners reach over 200,000 people living in vulnerable communities to contain the spread of the virus. That, GOAL would be messaging communities in both countries through radio and poster campaigns as well as through conducting direct training sessions on social distancing and good hygiene practices. GOAL would also work with the local officials in both Sudan and South Sudan by distributing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), supporting outpatient consultants and developing disease alert systems that could inform the authorities of local infections within 48 hours (GOAL, 2020). This funding appears to have been provided directly to GOAL as a UK international organization, but not to the South Sudan Government.

According to the data received from International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United States Agency for International Development also donated \$ 4.5 Million to South Sudan. The funds were used for improving access to affordable water, sanitation and hygiene services to communities most at risk of being infected by COVID-19. IOM has been establishing a network of shared public hand washing stations in densely populated areas that lack access to hygiene facilities, such as markets and busy transit hubs for locals, returnees and migrants. IOM also conducted training of Hygiene Promoters on how to conduct COVID-19 sensitization at community level, including identifying key influencers and community leaders and producing radio broadcasts focusing on addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Protection issues amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (IOM, 2020). This funding appears to have

been provided directly to the IOM as the United Nations Agency but not to the South Sudan Government. The African Development Bank approved a sum of US\$4.16 million towards the fight against COVID-19 in South Sudan. Based on the literature reviewed concerning the approved funds, the paper discovered that the grant aimed to bolster the South Sudan's capacity to detect COVID-19 cases and prevent further spread. The bulk of activities under the African Development Bank-funded project have been focusing on improving facilities for the management of COVID-19 cases, including the procurement of oxygen cylinders and the recruitment and training of health workers. The funding is also to improve the capacity for the detection of cases and the tracing of contacts (The East African, 2020). The funds under the African Development Bank are being used by World Health Organization (WHO) in close coordination with South Sudan's Ministry of Health.

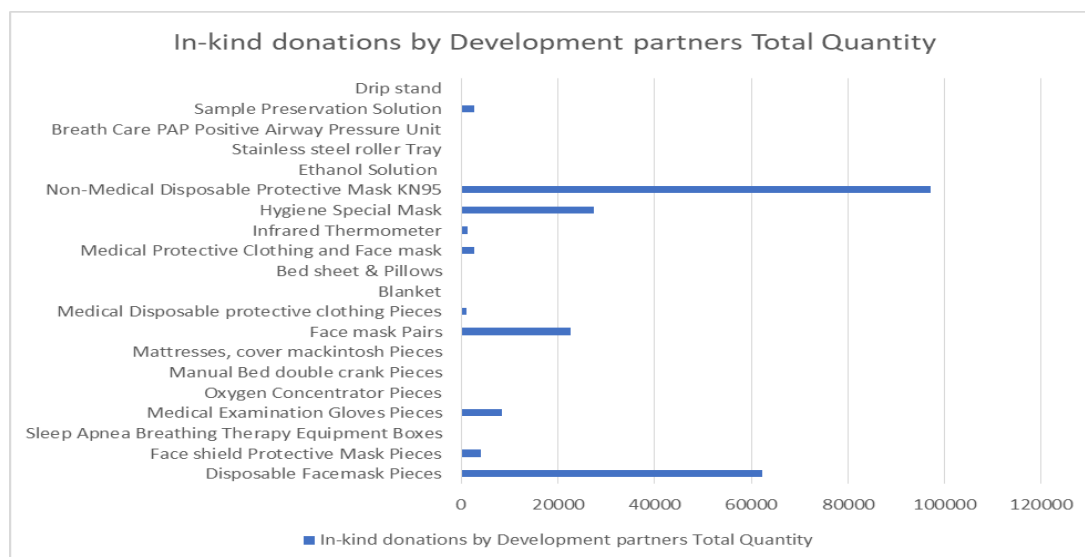
Finally, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) also provided about US\$70,000 to UNICEF in late March 2020. These funds was being used to support awareness campaigns on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures, self-learning materials to students, customized radio programs for children of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and safety/hygiene facilities, and menstrual hygiene management support for girls, school building disinfection, guidelines, policies and safety measures to reopen schools, back-to-school campaign to encourage students to return to school, capacity building of the ministry's staff and state education ministries to respond to and manage future crises, including program planning, response and evaluation & partnership engagements to support the Ministry of Education in planning its response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Global Partnership for Education, 2020). It was also reported that, the European Union provided funding of 4.9 million Euros

(equivalent of US\$5.7 million dollars) to South Sudan to fight the COVID-19 Pandemic. The information obtained from the European Union’s Ambassador through the South Sudan Broadcasting Cooperation (SSBC) shows that, most of the funds were disbursed to European or American organizations with no direct funding to the Government of South Sudan.

## 2. What type of in-kind donations has Government received and in dollar value?

Furthermore, the paper obtained data from the South Sudan Ministry of Health which showed that the government received in-kind donations from various entities; items such as apron protection, disposable

gloves, surgical gloves, examination face shields, disposable respirators, masks, FFP2/N95 masks, gowns, surgical/isolation goggles protective, wraparounds, indirect vent bio hazard bags, Lab screening test kits (Primers and probes), laboratory confirmation test kits (Primers and probes), RT-PCR reaction kits, and ventilators among others. Food items and other non-food and non-medical items were also donated. While some of these items were handed over directly to the Ministry of Health, others were handed to the Community Based Organizations and communities especially in at risk points. All the in-kind donations were estimated to be worth US\$50 million (South Sudan Ministry of Health Records 2020).

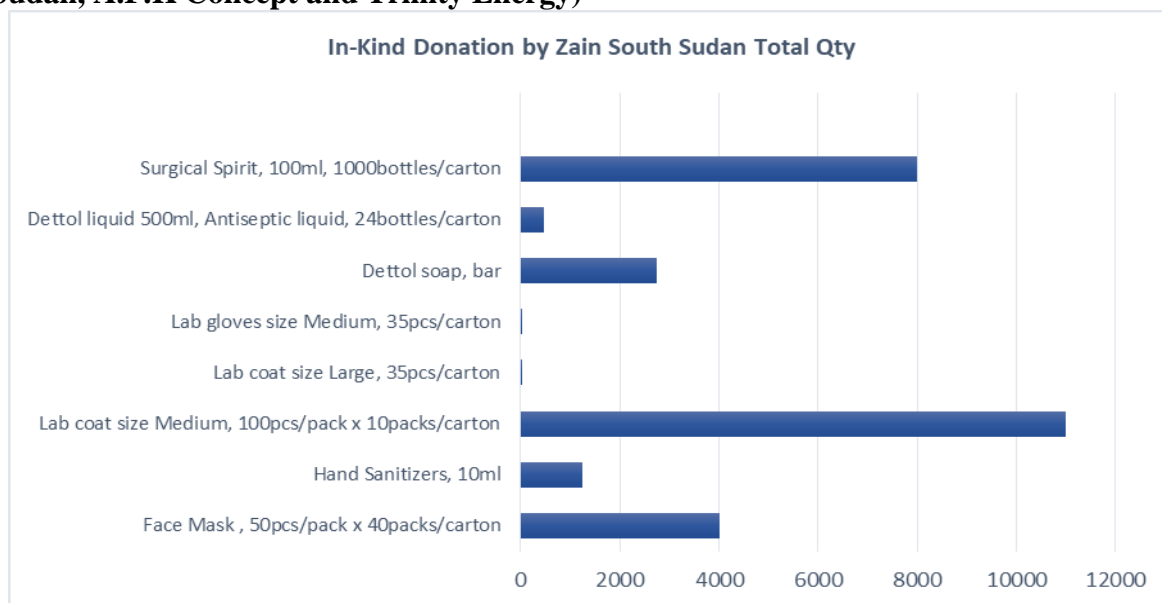


Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Records 2020

Chart 2: In-kind donations by Development Partners

Based on the above chart 2, the Ministry of Health received a number of in-kind items from development partners mainly Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations agencies. As it is indicated, the details provided here only focused on the in-kind donations provided by the development partners. The authors of this paper acquired the inventory from the Ministry of Health and the established in-kind donations by development partners were recorded as; disposable facemask pieces 62,400 pieces, face shields, protective mask 4,200 pieces, sleep apnea breathing therapy equipment 51 boxes, medical examination gloves 8,500 pieces, oxygen concentrator 4 pieces, manual bed double crank 146 pieces, mattresses, cover mackintosh 100 pieces, face mask 22,600 pairs, medical disposable protective clothing 1,020 pieces, blanket 39 pairs, bed sheet & pillows 75, medical protective clothing and face masks 2,760 pieces, infrared thermometer 1,326 pieces, hygiene special mask 27,500 pieces, non-medical disposable protective mask kn95 97,200 pieces, ethanol solution 19 pieces, stainless steel roller tray 7 kits, breath care pap positive airway pressure unit 2 pieces, sample preservation solution 2,800 and drip stand 40 pieces.

**In-kind donations by South Sudan’s Private Sector (Zain South Sudan, MTN South Sudan, A.F.K Concept and Trinity Energy)**



Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data 2020

**Chart 3 In-kind Donation by Zain South Sudan**

As shown in chart 3 above, the inventory of In-Kind Donation indicated that Zain South Sudan provided the Ministry of Health with; Face Masks 50pcs/pack x 40packs/carton 4,000, hand sanitizers 10ml 1,248, lab coat size medium 100pcs/pack x 10packs/carton 11, 000, lab coat size large 5pcs/carton 35, lab gloves size medium 35pcs/carton 35, Dettol soap bar 2,736 pieces, Dettol liquid 500ml, antiseptic liquid 24bottles/carton 456, surgical spirit 100ml, 1000bottles/carton, 8,000. Most of these in-kind donations are kept by the Ministry of Health at their Central Medical Store (CMS) at Konyo-Konyo-store A.

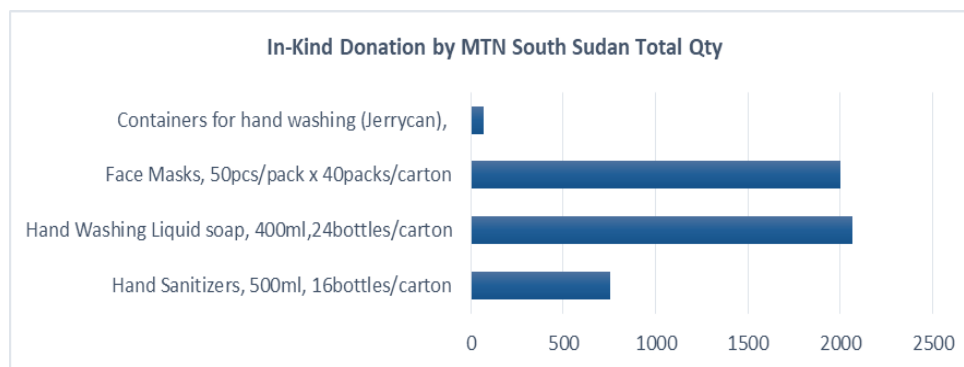
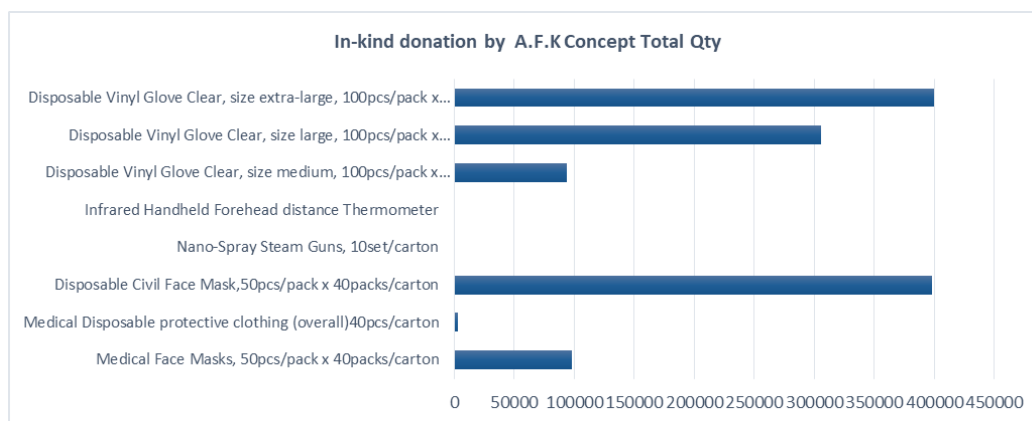


Figure 2 Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data 2020

**Chart 4 Shows In-kind donations by MTN South Sudan**

As shown in chart 4 below, the inventory of In-kind donation indicated that MTN South Sudan provided the Ministry of Health with; Hand sanitizers 500ml, 16bottles/carton 752, hand washing liquid soap 400ml, 24bottles/carton 2, 064, Face Masks 50pcs/pack x 40packs/carton, 2,000 and containers for hand washing 69 Jerry cans.



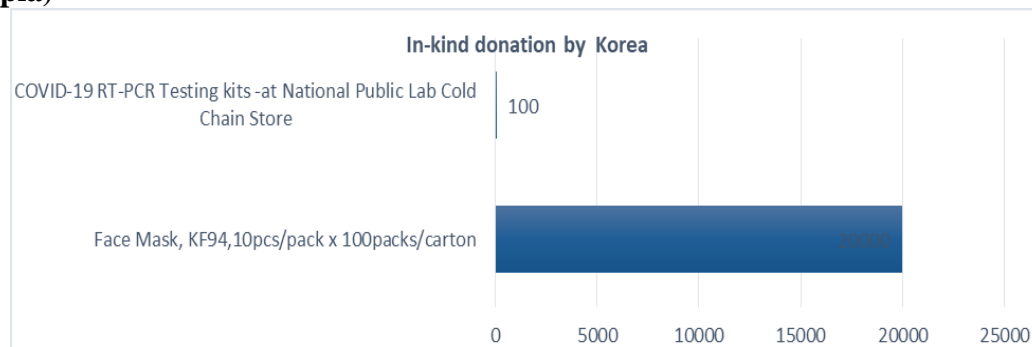


Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020

Chart 5 Shows In-kind donation by A.F.K Concept

As shown in chart 5 above, the inventory of In-Kind Donation indicated that A.F.K Concept provided the Ministry of Health with; medical Face Masks 50pcs/pack x 40packs/carton 98,000, medical disposable protective clothing (overall) 40pcs/carton 3,000, disposable civil face mask, 50pcs/pack 40packs/carton 398,000 pieces, Nano-spray steam guns, 10set/carton 500, infrared handheld forehead distance thermometer 950, disposable vinyl glove clear, size medium 100pcs/pack x 10packs/carton 94,000, disposable vinyl glove clear, size large 100pcs/pack x 10packs/carton, 306,000 and disposable vinyl glove clear, size extra-large 100pcs/pack x 10packs/carton 400,000 pieces. Most of these in-kind donated items are kept at the CMS, Konyo-Konyo-Store A.

**In-kind donations by other Regional and International Governments (South Korean Government, Egyptian Government, Government of China, IGAD and Government of Ethiopia)**

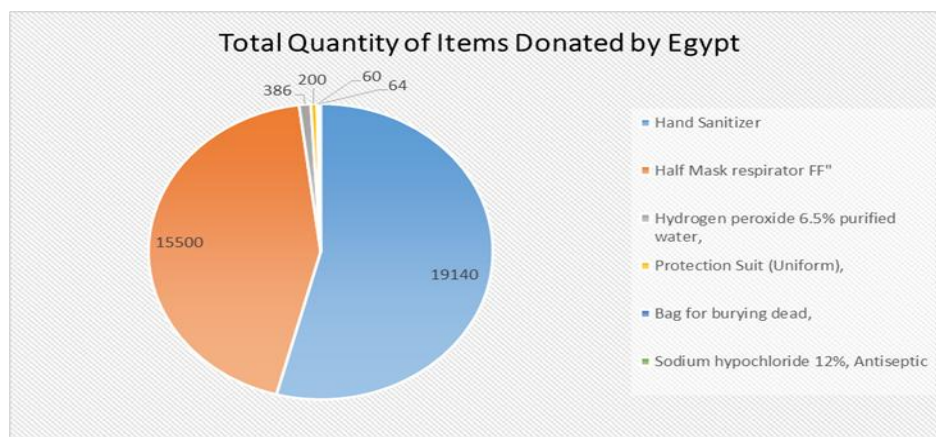


Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020

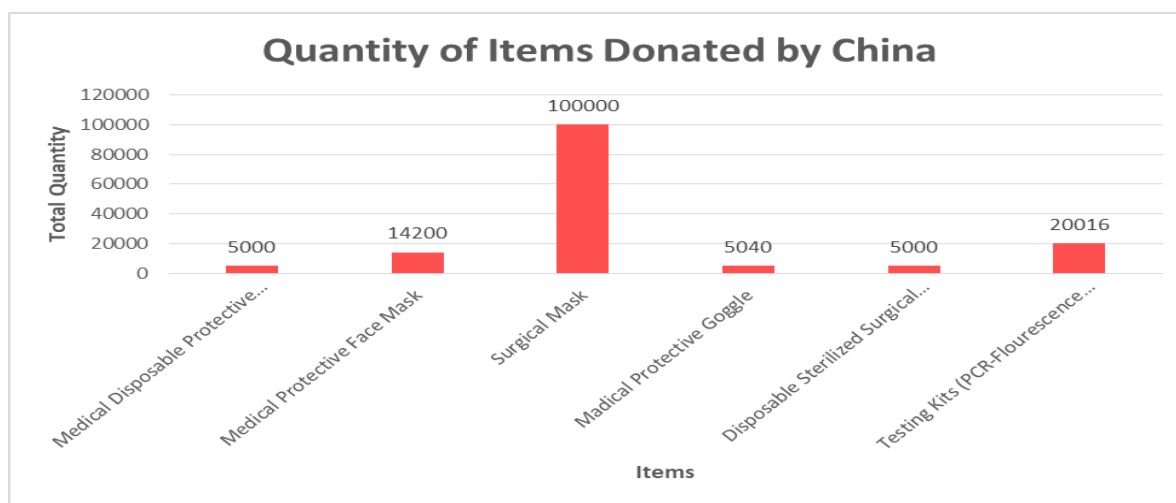
Chart 6 Shows In-kind donation by South Korean Government

As shown in chart 6 above, the South Korean Government provided in-kind support to the Government of South Sudan through the Ministry of Health. The in-kind items provided include; Face Masks, KF94, 10 pcs/pack x 100packs/carton 20,000 and COVID-19 RT-PCR Testing kits -at National Public Lab Cold Chain Store 100.

As shown in chart 7 above, the Egyptian Government has provided in-kind support to the Government of South Sudan through the Ministry of Health. The in-kind items provided includes; Hand sanitizer 19,140 pieces, Half Mask respirator FF"15,500 pieces, hydrogen peroxide 6.5% purified water, 386 pieces, Protection Suit (Uniform) 200 pieces, Bag for burying dead bodies 60 pieces and sodium hypo chloride 12%, antiseptic 64 pieces.

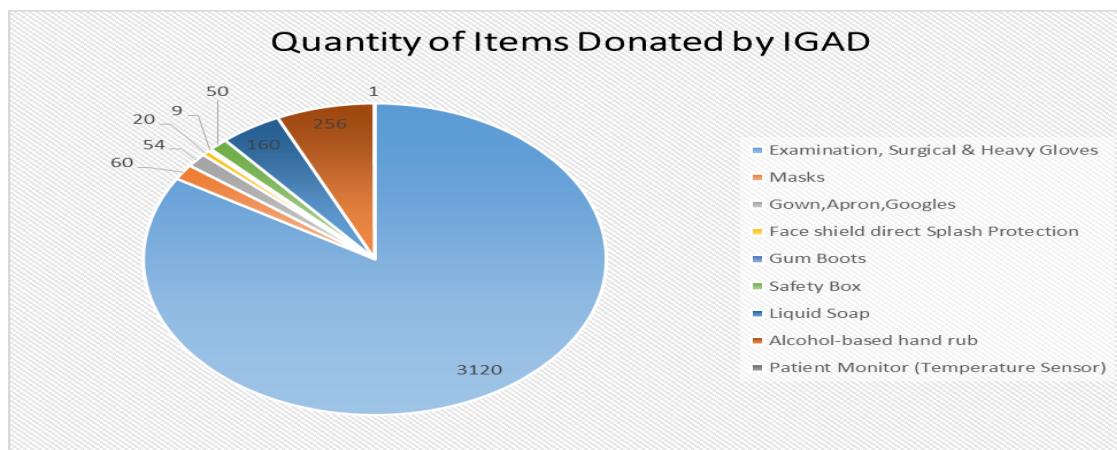


Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020  
**Chart 7 Shows In-kind donation by the Egyptian Government**



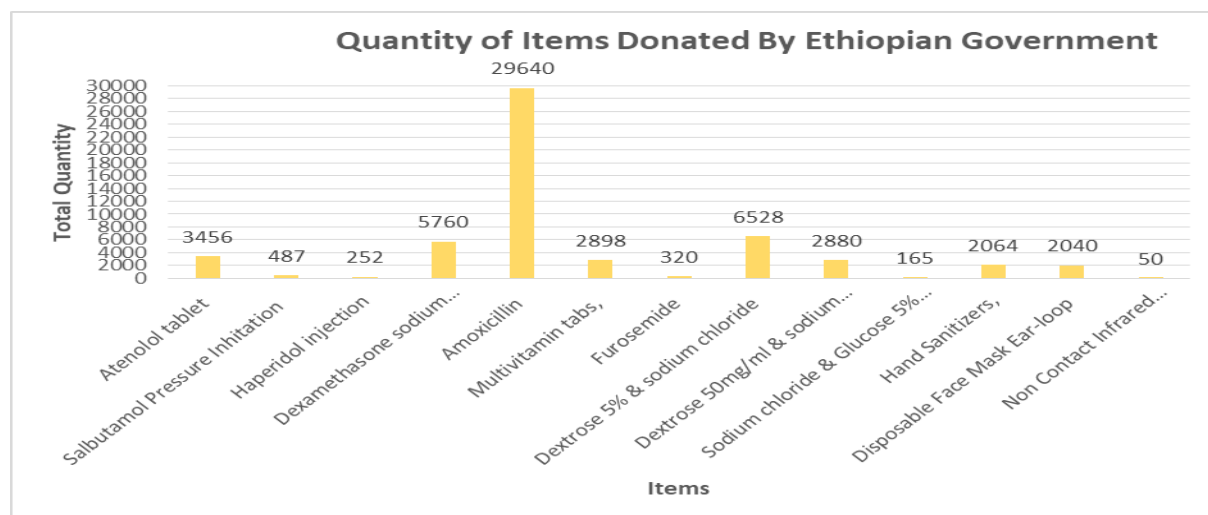
Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020  
**Chart 8 Shows In-kind donation by the Government of China**

As shown in chart 8 above, the Government of China also donated some in-kind items to the Government of South Sudan through the Ministry of Health. The items donated includes; Medical disposable protective clothing 5,000 pieces, medical protective Face Masks 14,200 pieces, surgical Masks 100,000 pieces, Medical Protective Goggle 5,040 pieces, disposable sterilized surgical gloves 5,000 pieces and testing kits (PCR-Fluorescence probing) 20,016 pieces.



Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020  
**Chart 9 Shows In-kind donation by IGAD**

The data from the South Sudan Ministry of Health indicated that, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) donated a number of in-kind items. Most of the items reported are kept at the CMS Konyo-Konyo-Store A. As shown in the Pie chart 9 above, the In-kind items includes; Examination, surgical & heavy gloves 3,120 pieces, Masks 60 pieces, gowns, aprons, goggles 54, face shields Direct Splash Protection 20, Gum Boots 9 pairs, Safety Box 50, Liquid Soap 160, Alcohol-based hand rub 256, and patient monitor (Temperature Sensor) 1 piece.



Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health Inventory Data, 2020  
**Chart 10 Shows In-kind donation by the Government of Ethiopia**

Details of inventory data obtained from the South Sudan Ministry of Health showed that, the Government of Ethiopia donated in-kind items. As shown in chart 10 above the items were; Atenolol tablets 3,456 pieces, Salbutamol pressure Inhibition 487, Haperidol injection 252, Dexamethasone sodium phosphate 5,760, Amoxicillin 29,640, Multivitamin tabs, 2,898, Furosemide 320 Dextrose 5% & sodium chloride 6, 528, Dextrose 50mg/ml & sodium chloride 9mg/ml 2,880, Sodium chloride & Glucose 5% infusion, 1litre, 15bottles/carton 165, hand Sanitizers 2, 064, disposable Face Masks, ear-loop 2040 and non-contact infrared thermometer 50 pieces. It was reported that most of these items are stored at CMS Konyo-Konyo-Store E.

The paper findings also suggested that, Trinity Energy has provided the Ministry of Health National Taskforce Committee on Coronavirus with in-kind donation worth US\$420,000. As some record shows, Trinity Energy donated three times to the Ministry. However, the Trinity Energy limited its donation mainly to

support coronavirus preventive measures. Among the materials it provided were; ventilators, testing kits, facemasks and gloves. Trinity Energy also supplied the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre with fuel to aid the routine operations of the facility (South Sudan News Portal, 2020 & Petroleum Africa, 2020).

### **3. How have the government and its partners utilized such funding and materials?**

The general observation is that there had been goodwill from international donors, international governments, organizations, and the local private sector to provide both cash and in-kind donations to fight the COVID-19 Pandemic. As indicated in the findings, significant amounts of in-kind donations were sent to the national taskforce on COVID-19. Most donations by the development partners have been wired through the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. The government's role in direct handling of donor money has been significantly limited, just as it is the

case with pre-pandemic projects. Other funds and in-kind donations have been wired through other multilateral agencies such as USAID, the EU, UKAID, CHINA, IGAD, and the African Union, among others.

The South Sudan Government and development partners are using the collected funds to, among others purposes, provide training for communities, government officials, and NGOs' staff on how to respond to the Pandemic. The funds were also used to equip communities, hold public campaigns, and provide health workers with personal protection equipment (PPE) to prevent, detect, and treat people infected with the COVID-19. The community-based organizations, youth and women groups, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the international humanitarian organizations led by WHO and UNICEF are also working on expanding health care capacity in the country, and increasing the number of care beds at Dr. John Garang Infectious Disease Unit from 24 in April to more than 100 in June 2020. There are also plans to mitigate the pandemic's social impact, especially on women, children, and vulnerable groups such as the disable people, by equipping and supporting CBOs to address the needs of these groups through mini-grants (Medical Press Report, June 22, 2020.). The materials donated by the International donors, South Sudan's Private Sector, the Regional and International Governments are being distributed to the various communities and to the different health facilities in Bor, Yei, Nimule, Malakal, Aweil, Wau and Torit. The extent to which funding and given in kinds have been effectively utilized cannot be precisely established by this paper due to the lack of transparency to provide information to ascertain their utilization by concerned institutions.

#### **4. To what extent have the government and its partners been transparent and accountable in the use of such donations?**

Since the onset of the Pandemic in February 2020, the government of South Sudan has operated in a context of uncertainty and less effectively in coordinating with the local authorities, given the leadership vacuum in the states caused by the delay of the formation of state governments. The paper observed that no adequate open approaches were taken, i.e., open government and open data, as far as the procurement procedures are concerned. Although no widespread irregularities on what was announced by donors and those that were donated to the Ministry of Health were significantly identified. Even though there is evidence of government and its partners utilization of earmarked COVID-19 funds and in-kind, the authors believed lack of open government and open data remained a significant challenge as far as the procurement procedures are concerned as the public or communities were not involved. As argued by the authors an open approach would have resulted in higher efficiency in delivery activities, resources on COVID-19 and better outcomes on government and its partners. As suggested by my most interviewed experts and concern South Sudanese transparency and accountability in the use of such donations could increase public trust. Additionally, the international organizations which provided grants to national organizations, CBOs, and other groups have not been done transparently. Given the way international organization provision of COVID-19 funds to national organizations and CBO no strict monitoring mechanisms have been put in place ensure value for money to the South Sudanese citizens. While every government's first responsibility is to care for its people, an effective response to a public health crisis like COVID-19 requires government transparency and accountability, civil society's full participation, and access to information. In particular, corruption thrives during crises and makes governments and the international community less able to respond swiftly and effectively. Governments and international donors are



now providing unprecedented sums of money to support COVID-19 response efforts, sometimes without necessary anti-corruption safeguards. Emergency procurement processes and the suspension of oversight measures in many cases are further heightening corruption risks. This is providing new opportunities for corrupt government officials and criminal organizations to enrich themselves at the expense of public health, as well as raising the potential for public officials to become involved in bribery and corruption by virtue of their position and influence, which can further erode public trust in government and undermine the COVID-19 response. Views from experts indicated that an African trade grouping had donated \$100,000 to South Sudan to combat coronavirus (IGAD 2020). The country, which just came out of the decades-long civil war, has been left to combat the Pandemic with a nascent health infrastructure. But how this money has been used raises many questions.

There was no efficiency observed in the handling of COVID-19 Pandemic by both the now-disbanded High-Level Taskforce on COVID-19 and the current national taskforce. The Ministry of Health in charge of fighting the Pandemic was marred in infighting and with corruption reports, which impacted the task force performance. Notwithstanding, this paper's observation is that there is no significant misappropriation of donors' funds by the government; this is because there is no single record available to the authors to suggest. That is probably attributable to the fact that agencies such as WHO and UNICEF were directly in charge of their funds and spending, with the Ministry left to play an oversight role. The paper recommends several policies the South Sudan government should have put in place to better address issues of transparency and accountability in the use of donation to address the pandemics. As experience from the authors suggests, accountability and transparency will bring about incentives that increase investment in the health sector,

hiring more skilled health workers, better records keeping, and improved health infrastructure. With the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis, transparent and accountable is someone the government of South Sudan would need.

Funding grassroots South Sudanese initiatives have not been adequate even though approximately US\$ 27,591,000 were said to be been donated to South Sudan to fight the COVID-19. Further, local initiatives have proven their efficacy in responding to COVID -19, yet most of their interventions have had little or no outside support. Donors should have channeled more funding for local, front-line initiatives to maximize impact. As documented by many scholars in South Sudan, fiscal and economic crises are widespread, with their depth and duration still mostly unknown. Risks of corruption, with many cases already confirmed, are huge in every corner of South Sudan, for example, in the procurement of hospital supplies, and have been widely denounced by investigative media and civil society organizations (CSOs). External influences are also prevalent in government agencies, yet South Sudan is heavily dependent on foreign aid to provide emergency relief and funding. With the COVID-19 situation, the case for increasing fiscal transparency should have been unarguable (Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, 2020). Experience has shown that applying a risk-based prioritization framework is a crucial first step. Tailored to each context, the framework should determine which governance, transparency, and accountability mechanisms must be integrated into all COVID-19 public health response planning and design. This framework should prioritize deterring those forms of corruption that stand to most severely undermine both the quality and speed of the public health response. There may be times when risks and mitigating measures identified during ordinary times are deprioritized during an emergency response.



As it was observed, the funding for COVID-19 South Sudan was primarily channeled through international organizations, and there are no community-led monitoring mechanisms which place greater reliance on bottom-up social accountability from the public itself are central to a robust response. Measures to increase the transparency of data and decision making, as well as channels for citizens to report instances of potential corrupt acts safely, are paramount. Four fundamental principles accountability, transparency, participation, and inclusion have become nearly universal features of the policy statements and programs of international development organizations; such principles were not adequately applied by the recipient partners of the COVID-19 funds. This widespread new consensus is deceptive: behind the ringing declarations lie fundamental fissures over the value and application of these concepts. Understanding and addressing these divisions is crucial to ensuring that the four principles become fully embedded in international development work. Accountability, transparency, participation, and inclusion represent vital embodiments of the opening to politics that occurred in development work in the 1990s. They bridge three distinct practitioner communities that emerged from this new direction, those focusing on governance, democracy, and human rights (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020). But consensus remains elusive as the paper found out that significant amounts of funding were only earmarked to donors-based organizations but not to some extent directly to the South Sudan Ministry of Health.

In the paper's view, the international donors and the South Sudan government, given the level of the Pandemic, follow a narrower approach, applying the core principles primarily to the quest for greater public sector effectiveness. Evidence also suggests that due to concerns of corruption by government officials, international

organizations decided to pursue or prioritize selective parts of the set, engendering tensions among the different principles. However, the Pandemic has exposed the limitations of government's responses in both national and state levels due to inadequate risk management frameworks and weak, bureaucratic, unconnected, and unresponsive public sector institutions. That could have especially profound implications for the poorest and most vulnerable populations and increased support from donors to their own NGOs. It was also evidence that most of the in-kind items were made public through the media as a public relation and donor visibility when the partners are handing over to the Ministry of Health than the money actually been spend by NGOs and local partners.

## **CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has demonstrated the need for a reliable and effective public sector, as the South Sudan's Government is at the center of responding to the crisis. Public sector institutions in the Republic of South Sudan are responsible for the provision of emergency services, the formulation of appropriate responses (appealing for financial support, economic support packages, cash transfers, or other social safety nets during the COVID-19 Pandemic), intergovernmental Coordination (both vertically and horizontally and with NGOs and donors), and the regulation of private sector agents to contribute and respond to COVID-19. The South Sudan's Government, through the Ministries of Health and Ministry of Finance and Planning, needs to be fast, creative, productive, transparent, and accountable with however, limited finances received from donors. The innovative, effective, transparent, and accountable ways the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance and Planning, could have shown to donors and the South Sudanese citizens in general, may act as a way of urging donors to provide direct financial support to the government instead of donors channeling

almost all its finances to humanitarian and development organizations.

As a young nation, South Sudan faces key institutional challenges in the health sector, a legacy of many years of conflict, and inadequate resources allocation. The country has no experience handling public health crises, the magnitude of COVID-19 Pandemic. With a dwindling economy, poor health infrastructure and fewer number of health workers, the nation is slowly being tested and stretched to limits by the novel pandemic. It is essential that South Sudan efficiently allocates its limited resources, and coordinates effectively with its development partners to fight and win the war on COVID-19. This study examined whether the extent to which the government has effectively utilized resources on COVID-19 Pandemic and to assess what mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability and transparency in managing crisis funds (<https://www.transparency.org/en/press/imf-make-covid-19-funds-transparent-accountable>). The fundamental debate around Government Effective, Accountable and Transparent Utilization of Resources on the COVID-19 Response in South Sudan can be addressed through introducing anti-corruption measures in coronavirus-related emergency relief programs that should be included to ensure the money disbursed is known to the general South Sudan public by both government and the NGOs themselves.

### **Recommendations**

- **Inter-Governmental Coordination:** all COVID-19 related support, be it financially or in-kind should be coordinated based on existing humanitarian and national/local government coordination mechanisms.
- **Strengthening transparency and accountability as part of the crisis response:** As Government and NGO institutions are inevitably reshaped, there is a need to avoid endangering fundamental governance principles and norms. There are significant corruption

risks that can undermine emergency response effectiveness and create or exacerbate adverse outcomes. If left unaddressed, these can lead to excessive waste, inefficiency, and weak results.

- **Strengthening transparency and accountability by government and its partners is essential to build trust and mitigate corruption risks:** Building and sustaining the citizen's trust is critical if the South Sudan's Government is to manage the crisis and increase its effectiveness.
- **The Government of South Sudan, NGOs, and Donors need to ensure the unambiguous assignment of responsibility for the oversight of both extraordinary spending measures and the supply and delivery of goods and services related to COVID-19.**
- **Building transparency and anti-corruption measures into each category of the COVID-19 crisis response will also be vital when considered by the Government of South Sudan, NGOs, and Donors.**
- **Promoting transparent procurement (including e-Procurement systems) to ensure value-for-money in public spending with the involvement of oversight bodies such as the national parliament and civil society.**
- **Implementing systems and controls for the traceability of emergency and recovery expenditures should be put in place by the government-backed up by establishing rules regarding the timing and format of publishing information on spending.**

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#### About the Institute of Social Policy and Research (ISPR)

Institute of Social Policy and Research is a public policy and research center founded in 2017 to undertake social, economic, and governance policy research, and conduct tailored courses and management consultancy for civil society groups, and the public and private sector.

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