



April 16, 2020

3025 4th Street, NE, Suite 122
Washington, DC 20017

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
United States House of Representative
2365 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: COVID-19 Foreign Assistance Could End up in Personal Bank Accounts Without Due Diligence

Dear Congresswoman Lowey,

We are Africa Faith and Justice Network, a Catholic network of 28 religious congregations and a nationwide supporting membership, whose primary focus is on advocacy and education for the transformation of United States policy towards Africa and the promotion of just governance within Africa.

The Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) is highly concerned about the impact of COVID-19), on the African continent and the preparedness of African countries to handle massive viral outbreaks. Since the news about COVID-19 in Wuhan, China first spread in December 2019, its global impact has been felt in the loss of over one hundred thousand lives, strained health care systems, and global economy on the verge of collapse.

While we advocate for solidarity with Africa, especially with the threat of COVID-19, we must call attention to a persistent virus of great concern that threatens the lives of Africans on a daily basis, namely, the virus of corruption by leaders in Africa which is often aided by international collaborators. In this light, COVID-19 assistance could end up in personal bank accounts if proper due diligence is not enforced at all levels.

We thank Congress and the American people for allocating 59.3 million dollars for humanitarian and health assistance to assist 19 African countries as stated in the [March 26, 2020 Department of State press release](#). These funds will be the difference between life and death for many people on the continent. While these funds are greatly needed in Africa, AFJN would like to request that there be increased transparency and accountability in how the funds are administered to ensure that they are used for their intended purpose.

AFJN is calling on the Congress and any agency responsible for administering the funds to:

1. Ensure that the distribution of the 59.3 million dollars is expedient to reduce the impact on the poor and minimize the loss of life
2. Distribute the funds to trusted religious, non-profit, non-governmental, and civil society organizations working on the continent who already have an established record of good stewardship in the communities while maintaining due diligence that they are still worthy stewards.

3. Require that good governance practices are maintained with high levels of transparency and accountability which include:
 - a. Allowing for transparent distribution of the funds, so that no individual, organization or person can move funds into an account that is not being used for the Covid-19 response purposes
 - b. Monitoring how the funds are being used, to ensure that no individual, organization, or government is able to use the funds for corrupt purposes.
4. Provide funding for additional countries in Africa who were not part of the 19 countries selected for these humanitarian and health assistance funds
5. Make accessible additional funds as needed, for the duration of this crisis to assist in minimizing loss of life on the African continent.

During this crisis we must redouble our efforts to promote good governance, accountability and transparency, and strong institutions that attend properly to the needs of their people.

This is why the Africa Faith & Justice Network is requesting that there be increased transparency and accountability throughout the fund distributions process so that the monies are used for their intended purposes.

We thank you for your attention and are happy to answer any questions you might have on these matters.

Sincerely,



Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP
Executive Director