



WILL THE ARRIVAL OF COVID-19 VACCINES ALTER POST PANDEMIC IMMIGRATION AND ENTRY PROTOCOLS IN NIGERIA?

Overview

One year after the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), many vaccines have been formulated to help provide acquired immunity against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS CoV 2), and more are expected to be produced across the globe. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) on 18 February 2021, seven different vaccines across three platforms have been rolled out in various countries.

On the 2nd of March, 2021, Nigeria received nearly four million doses of Covid 19 vaccine, being the first batch of the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. The arrival of this vaccine marked a historic step in curbing the spread of the pandemic in the country and hopefully, will bring normalcy to the country. The entry of these vaccines marked a notable step towards the objective to guarantee even-handed dissemination of COVID-19 vaccines in Nigeria and around the world. In what will be the biggest Vaccine obtainment and supply operation in history.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has ranked Nigeria's COVID-19 vaccine rollout as the best in Africa in terms of storage and utilisation of the covid-19 vaccines for its population. According to [Dr. Kazadi Mulombo](#), the representative of WHO during a joint news briefing on COVID-19 vaccination update of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), WHO and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Abuja.

He said: "More than 1.8 billion vaccines are being distributed globally as of today, mostly in 10 countries. Africa is lagging behind, but even though Africa is lagging behind, Nigeria is among the countries that are distributing the most covid-19 vaccine as we speak."

What we anticipate!

The Pandemic caused a 70% drop in worldwide travellers' entries to Nigeria compared to the previous year. Companies with expatriate employees have been the hardest hit thereby affecting the Nigerian economy. In order to curtail the spread of the virus and at the same time, boost the economy, the country began a COVID-19 vaccination programme, with the aim of vaccinating at least 100 million Nigerians in the first year.

Furthermore, The Federal Government of Nigeria and the Nigeria Immigration Service are currently taking bold steps to provide vaccine certificates to Nigerians who have been vaccinated to help them avoid certain border restrictions and avoid entry protocol hassles in the country. We foresee that now that the Covid-19 vaccine has been rolled out into the country, we are hoping that it will be the key to helping us get moving again especially in promoting the ease of doing business in Nigeria.



Many companies are eager to have their expatriate employees travel into the country without having to undergo mandatory quarantine protocols as well as the elimination of blanket travel bans between countries (which will, consequently, help spur air travel's recovery). We believe that the introduction of proof of covid-19 vaccine upon arrival will bring a lasting solution to this and serve as a way for foreign employees to avoid restrictions and mandatory quarantine protocols.

Nigeria already has precedents of vaccination certificate, e.g., the yellow fever vaccine certificate which is a compulsory entry requirement into the country. As a result, we believe that the Nigerian Government may make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for all passengers flying to or from Nigeria and this will change the immigration and entry rules into the country. Hence, it is important to implement appropriate vaccinations and health clearances for travellers as COVID-19 vaccinations will likely become similarly standard for international flights. This should be rapidly adopted by all countries and airlines, and could even be applied more broadly - in hotels and airport terminals.

However, any vaccination regime will need governments to pass strong laws and regulations on the ground. Furthermore, Digital travel passes and vaccination cards may be one solution, but to work, these will require standardization across borders.

With the entry of the vaccines, we are likely to see a quick recuperation of international travel and progression towards the ease of doing business. So, therefore, the quick and broad dispersion of COVID-19 Vaccines as well as standardizing safety and sanitation measures are vital elements to bring back traveller confidence and in effect, boost the economy and promote ease of doing business in the country.

Conclusion

It's crucial that the government ensures all individuals have access to the vaccine and work towards achieving a high vaccination rate across communities. This will be necessary to mitigate and alter post pandemic immigration hassles and entry protocols being faced upon arrival into the country. We anticipate that the arrival of Covid-19 vaccines in to the country will be the key to helping us get moving again especially in promoting the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

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