**REJOINDER: FRONTIERS HEALTHCARE SERVICES DEBUNKS ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION**

Following the recent media publication of spurious, mischievous, and false allegations of wrongdoing said to have been raised by one Okudzeto Ablakwa against Frontiers Healthcare Services (“FHS”) for its unblemished, valuable, and enriching administration of the Airport Covid-19 testing project, FHS, by this rejoinder, hereby debunks and rejects these allegations in its entirety as baseless, unsubstantiated and a malicious fabrication concocted and propagated by persons whose sole agenda is the promotion of their political interests and self-aggrandisement. It is rather unfortunate that what ought to be hailed as one of the greatest achievements of our nation during the covid-19 pandemic, has been wrought with negative media onslaught owing to the current politically polarised nature of our dear nation. In categorical rebuttal of these malicious allegations and for purposes of setting the records straight, FHS wishes to state as follows:

1. **AWARD OF CONTRACT**

For the records, it is pertinent to state at the outset, that the reopening of the air borders of the Republic of Ghana during the Covid 19 pandemic was made possible by the introduction of innovative health solution systems ingeniously designed by Frontiers Healthcare Services Limited, essentially, with the principal focus on arresting the potential inflow and onward transmission of the ravenous covid 19 virus to the resident population of our dear country, Ghana. Frontiers Healthcare Services timely developed and introduced decisive and functional interventions that addressed the desperate urgencies and health hazards resulting from the prevalence of the pandemic which threatened to decimate not just the Republic of Ghana, its people, and fortunes, but that of the entire world. The crucial and significant mandate of Frontiers Healthcare Services at the time was to provide critical solutions aimed at restoring safety for international travels and economic activities by providing a reliable, effective, and efficient rapid health screening system at the country’s borders for all travellers. This scientific intervention required sacrifice, commitment. It required humongous expenditure and deployment of huge resources in an emergency circumstance under an extremely urgent basis. It required urgent mobilisation of capacity and capability from within and outside the country in a manner unprecedented, not only within the country, but at the time, even globally. The sole object was to save lives by limiting the spread of the killer virus through migration. The whole world was in panic and urgent measures were sought for the curtailment of the dreaded pandemic.

Overwhelmed by the adversities occasioned by the existing ineffective, inefficient and inconvenient system of travel protocols whereby travellers had to be quarantined for days until a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test came negative, which process was a debilitating hinderance to travel, the Ghana Airports Company Limited (GACL) sought the assistance of FHS which is widely known to have invested huge resources in the provision of hundreds of bio-scientific cutting-edge and automated testing machines that offer a comprehensive, effective and efficient solution to cure the undue delay and hardship inherent in the old-fashioned sluggish and moribund travel process. Accordingly, FHS submitted a proposal to the Ghana Airports Company Limited (GACL) for consideration. Following the approval of the proposal of the FHS deployed its machineries and personnel to the air borders of the country, at the Kotoka International Airport, on 1st September 2020, on the strength of which the Republic of Ghana, through FHS, came to be recognised as the first country in the world to deploy and commence rapid testing on international arriving passengers for the novel COVID-19 virus.

The National Covid-19 Task Force, the team of experts set up and authorized by the Government of Ghana to develop and oversee measures to combat the pandemic, as part of its mandate, recommended a two-tier approach to the testing process. Moreover, the expert services of FHS became extremely necessary when, following influx of a deluge of travellers, the GACL required the establishment of a rapid bio-scientific screening set-up at the airport for purposes of undertaking the destination rapid screening of travellers. Under the prevailing circumstances only a window of two-weeks was provided within which FHC was constrained to set up and deploy its cutting-edge systems which included, but not limited to two digital clean air laboratories, testing cubicles, equipment, machineries, and human resources. Without any fear of contradiction, it may be pertinent to state that in the circumstances that necessitated the establishment of the infrastructures necessary to curb the malaise of the covid 19 pandemic, no government agency or national laboratory could have provided the material, fiscal and human resources needed to set up rapid testing infrastructure quickly, in so short a time. At the time, the turn-around-time for tests and confirmation of results at the existing national laboratories was up to seven (7) days! Further, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that no one knew at that time, how long the pandemic was going to last. Clearly, this uncertainty posed an extreme risk for any investment made into the testing infrastructure. Clearly, this uncertainty posed an extreme risk for any investment made into the testing infrastructure.

1. **NATURE AND QUALITY OF THE TEST**

To ensure the integrity and reliability of the result of the test conducted under the procedure, FHS deployed a sophisticated Automated Immunoassay System (AIS) that was proven to have unbeatable accuracy. This equipment was independently tested by Ghana’s Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and the Laboratory Division of the National Covid-19 Task Force and found to be highly efficient and safe. Indeed, independent studies conducted by JH Ryu, et al., showed that this system had a sensitivity and specificity of 99.8% and 99.3%, respectively (europepmc.org).

Furthermore, FHS engaged in its employ over three hundred (300) laboratory scientists and two hundred (200) support and administrative staff to run a complex operation which ensured a quick and efficient service to travelers. These laboratory scientists and administrative staff who were indigenes of Ghana operated on a 24-hour daily services, every day of the week break in operations. 70 cubicles and Testing booths were set up at both wings of the arrival hall to take nasopharyngeal swabs for testing. Depending on the traffic, this set-up could take up to 2100 samples per hour! Lab scientists ran four shifts to ensure that they did not have to be exposed for more than 6 hours per day. FHS therefore had to engage enough staff to cover these shifts. The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they wore were disposable and very expensive! Samples taken were labelled with the digital barcodes generated at the laboratory banking hall. The two state-of-the-art, clean air laboratories had 80 machines for conducting the automated fluorescence immunoassay tests on the samples taken. The machines could deliver up to 2000 test results in an hour! (at a turnover of 400 tests every 12 minutes). The results were then entered directly into the Ghana Health Service’s Port Health database for Port Health officers to be able to isolate passengers who tested positive at their screening points. This was a feat no other country could boast of.

Contrary to the falsehood which the propagandists and anti-progressive forces would have the unsuspecting good people of Ghana believe, this venture was no cheap scratch-and-go antigen testing system available on the market! Considering the high fatality rate of the pandemic and the capability for the ever-mutating nature of the virus, FHS utilised a highly sophisticated and robust system that would efficiently detect any variant and isolate all positive cases in order to greatly curb the high mortality rate in Ghana, and as was the general case, around the world. Without a robust testing system, many positive cases would have slipped into the country and wreaked havoc and extreme destruction of innumerable precious lives.

1. **COST OF THE TEST**

Considering the sophistication of test done and the massive investment in infrastructure (including laboratories, testing cubicles, equipment, reagents, etc), human resource (more than 500 staff), rent and electricity, royalties, and logistics (especially Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other infection control measures), it was impractical to charge less than One Hundred and Fifty United States Dollars ($150) at the beginning of the process, and even at that, it was the cheapest fee charged anywhere in the world at the time. It was, indeed, 100% more efficient and cost-effective more than its closest competitors. Again, over hundreds of laboratory scientists were on duty daily, running four shifts, and each one of them using disposable high-grade PPEs that were top-notch and very costly. All staff were fed by FHS within the airport private facility of FHC, as well to minimise the risk of spreading the virus if they had to go and find food for themselves outside of the airport. The shift that closed at midnight were mostly kept in hotels overnight as they could not return to their homes safely and early enough to rest and prepare for the next day. Given the limited knowledge of the Pandemic, and the risk associated with the unknown duration of the testing requirement, it is understandable that the cost was at that level initially.

1. **GOVERNMENT SHORTCHANGED**

It should be noted that at the time of the contractual relationship between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and FHS, there was a global pandemic that was ravaging the entire nation, killing people at an alarming rate, and destroying the nation’s economy in a manner unprecedented in history. It was the at heat of these strange happenstance and the urgent and crying need to stave off the calamitous adversities engendered by that hydra-headed anomaly that constrained the contract between the Government of the Republic of Gana and FHS. It would be wrong for the government, at the material time and circumstances or at any other time for that matter, to be engaged in a project with an objective to make money off hapless travellers coming into the country who were being screened to save life! The primary preoccupation of the government of the Republic of Ghana at the time was to create and sustain a healthy and conducive environment that will facilitate easy and affordable international travel opportunity and to get the general economy back on track! As a matter of fact, the contractual relationship between FHS and the Government of Ghana was regulated by a duly executed contract which was robustly negotiated by world class professionals on either side.

GACL has standard terms for concessions at the airport, and stipulations of these terms were fully complied with by FHS. The contract earned GACL rent and royalties, and created jobs for hundreds of Ghanaian youths at a time when unemployment was high on account of the pandemic. It is also worthy of note that the government did not contribute financially to the setting up of the infrastructure and the running of the operations at the airport. It was fully and solely funded by FHS. The Port Health Team (GHS) were also supported by FHS with logistics to help the team deliver on their mandate efficiently. At the end of the contract, FHS donated one of its laboratories to the Ghana Health Service in satisfaction of its corporate social responsibility. The government of the republic of Ghana was in no way short-changed by FHS. Rather, the government and people of Ghana derived enormous benefits from FHS in many ways as evident from the foregoing representations. It is, therefore, malicious, and wicked for anyone to fabricate figures and falsely such tissues of falsehood and non-existent figures as profits. To set the records straight, and for the avoidance of any doubt, a breakdown and analysis of the relevant figures is attached to this rebuttal.

1. **GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE**

Of all the frivolous, scandalous, vexatious, ill-founded, and malicious allegations that have been made about this project, the most preposterous, absurd and ridiculous revolves on the mischievous assertion that FHS enjoys some form of support from the government. FHS would have ignored that laughable insinuation which originates from the porous imagination of these anti-government, anti-progress, anti-people, peddlers of hate and merchants of acrimony, but for the inference and or imputation that an unwary public may draw such unsubstantiated allegation. Accordingly, FHS would like this opportunity to state categorically and with every sense of responsibility that it has no connection with any official of the government, whatsoever. FHS, hereby expressly refutes and rejects, in the strongest terms, any suggestion or insinuation, that it has any connection, affiliation or relationship with any member of the government of the Republic of Ghana. FHS, therefore, without any reservations, whatsoever and howsoever, hereby expressly denies and refutes any allegation of government patronage. There is no iota of truth, whatsoever, in any of such suggestion. This allegation is plainly mischievous, unwarranted, and conjectural, and derives its origin from those whose motivations are driven by an inexplicable disposition to unjustifiably disparage a truly outstanding intervention that has saved Ghanaian lives in a period of truly testing challenge to the nation’s safe existence. Those that are responsible for this inglorious, disgraceful and unfounded denigration must, in the light of its huge success, feel themselves sufficiently discomfited to resile from the hopelessly embarrassing spectacle that they have now made of themselves.

1. **CONCLUSION**

By setting the records straight as above, it is believed that the good people of Ghana would come to appreciate the important role FHS played in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. Our belief is that the considerable efforts that we made to keep Ghana safe in a particularly testing time for global health through the challenge by the Covid – 19 pandemic was appreciated by the vast majority of our people. This is exemplified by the high praise for the hundreds of young men and women who risked their lives in joining the fight at the cutting-edge of the pandemic-battlefront, on a daily basis, to keep our homeland safe and to protect lives and properties. By contrast, in many western countries, health workers resigned on account of heavy workloads as well as fear for their lives and the lives of their respective families during the pandemic. Those who have raised needless, unsubstantiated controversies through distortions, fabrications, lies and half-truths being propagated to denigrate a world-class intervention that saved thousands of Ghanaian lives in order to secure some form of political advantage must now hang their heads in shame. This fellow by whatever name he is called has done a huge disservice to those who benefitted from the project; those whose lives were saved by the preventive action of comprehensive the testing mechanism and processes, and for the nation of Ghana as a whole. Casting the heroes of this venture as villains does nothing to stain a sterling and important contribution to Ghana’s enviable Covid-19 prevention measures acclaimed throughout the world as being magnificently, a huge success. May we learn to celebrate our heroes. As the Akan adage goes, “se nipa ye adie a, o se ayeyi. Se wu enyi na ye a, men sei ni din”. To wit, “If someone does good, he deserves to be praised. If you won’t praise him/her, at least, don’t spoil their name.”

Management

Frontiers Healthcare Services