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ASSIGNMENT: How is Asia responding to the CONVID-19 pandemic? Contrast this with the response to Africa.

The corona virus is a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SERS). Its symptoms depends on the virus but common signs are respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath , in more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, kidney failure and even death.

These Asian countries such as Hong –Kong, Singapore, South-Korea and Taiwan have adopted highly effective measures to battle the virus. It is said that ten days after the United States and Italy reported their one hundredth confirmed case of corona-virus, Italy had over five thousand cases and the United states over two thousand . Ten days after Singapore reported its one hundred confirmed cases; it had not reached two hundred. In January when the virus spread in China, Singaporean leaders established a crisis team and prepared for the threat to the city-state, which has close economic links with China. Their officials started a information campaign which included aggressive promotion of social distancing, it quickly placed bans on travelers from China and started contact tracing people, tested anyone with corona-virus symptoms.

Similar measures have been taken by Hong-Kong and Taiwan, which also have close ties to China and remember the 2002-03 outbreak of sever acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which made much worse by initial inaction. After the corona-virus emerged in China, Taiwan implemented crisis plans it developed after SARS, including preparing hospitals, starting intensive tracking efforts and making tests easily available. Taiwan still has fewer than one hundred cases and just one death. Hong-Kong a special administrative region in China, also acted rapidly, closing schools and enforcing social distancing beginning in January. Today Hong-Kong has fewer than two hundred confirmed cases though it potentially faces additional cases from people returning from abroad. South Korea, a far more populous place than those already mentioned has made impressive strides. South Korea has carried out the most tests per capita of any country studied, testing ten thousand people on average per day. Its testing outreach program includes home visits for people suspected of having contact with sick patients. Through such measures, South Korea seems to have flattened the curve of its outbreak.

Contrasting the response of the Asian countries to that of African countries. Several African countries have made quick responses to the CONVID-19. Earlier when the first case of the corona-virus started to come out of China, global health officials said they were very worried about what will happen if the virus started spreading in Africa, where many health systems are struggling. Well the corona-virus is spreading in Africa. Nonetheless, many countries in Africa are responding aggressively to the pandemic. Schools were ordered closed in the Nigerian capital after only eight cases were confirmed nationwide. Last week South Africa banned visitors from high-risk countries, closed down schools and quickly opened drive-through testing centers in Johannesburg.

At the beginning of February only two countries in sub-Saharan Africa which are Senegal and South Africa had the ability to test for the novel corona-virus. WHO has helped 43 more countries set up or augment their national laboratories so that they can also test for this pathogen? Kenya decided to suspend their Airways as a precautionary measure, Morocco’s King Mohammed VI, however, has ordered his government to repatriate 100 nationals of the North African nation from Wuhan. The Ghanaian President lately ordered that markets should not be opened so that officials can sanitize the markets which were a very thoughtful act and also that citizens of the country will receive daily foodstuff to those work from hand to mouth. While Nigeria has been put on lockdown for over two weeks as a precautionary measure to avoid more cases of the virus.

Therefore even as these Asian countries are making great strides to avoid and tackle the virus we shouldn’t forget the African countries that are on their part trying to tackle the pandemic.

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