**NAME: EFEBO MAGRET B.**

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**QUESTION**

**How is Asia as a region responding to COVID-19 pandemic? Contrast this with the response in Africa.**

The first case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was discovered in early December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital city of China’s Hubei Province. In the two months since, the virus has spread not only across China, but also to 28 countries. As of February 20, there were a total of 75,773 cases confirmed worldwide, including 2,129 fatalities. While the first cases of the coronavirus appeared in early December, the municipal government of Wuhan did not make information public until December 31, at which time it downplayed the severity of the outbreak and claimed that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission. The National Health Commission announced that human-to-human transmission was possible, and Beijing rapidly moved away from silence and inaction to aggressive containment efforts. On January 23, a lockdown of Wuhan was declared, as well as the decisive and drastic measures that the central government has taken since January 20, this analysis looks into the readiness of China’s medical system, its public health financing schemes, and its domestic politics. These factors played a decisive role in shaping the government’s response to the outbreak.

There were delays in calling on the private sector to assist in producing testing devices.  
  
Many citizens were hit hard and lost their jobs or had their household incomes severely reduced. Some may not be eligible for government schemes, or they may not be adequate. Some organizations therefore ensured members have access to basic necessities.  
  
To help them tide over this period, NGOs and GOs are providing the necessary assistance to meet needs of the people through RELIEF FUNDS . This is a fund replenished by donations from well-wishers who specifically want their contributions to be utilized for the purpose of reliefing suffering the virus may have caused. Some of these relief funds are uses for;  
1. Food distribution,  
2. Financial assistance

To successfully make an analysis of Asia as a region’s response to the pandemic, one must view how countries from this region responded individually and then make a contrast to that of Africa. For instance:

In China, where the virus started spreading, the government responded quite well though it would have been helpful if they had identified it earlier. In late March, the government severely restricted international travel, limiting the number of flights to the country and denying entry to foreigners with previously issued visas and residence permits. The government also took steps to discourage Chinese people from returning from overseas. Travel restrictions weren’t the only response as the government also provided financial supports and tax reduction. Later, On 1st February, the People's Bank of China and other five departments jointly issued the notice on further strengthening financial support for the prevention and control of the epidemic of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus infection, stating that relevant financial services will be further strengthened during the period affected by the epidemic. For those who are temporarily affected by the epidemic and facing difficulties, the document requires financial institutions to tilt their credit policies appropriately, flexibly adjust their loan repayment arrangements and reasonably postpone the repayment period. On 30 January, the Ministry of Finance and NHC issued a notice on the financial guarantee policy for the prevention and control of the new type of pneumonia. The Central Government shall grant a subsidy of 300 yuan per person per day to those who are in direct contact with the cases to be investigated or confirmed who are involved in the diagnosis, treatment, nursing, hospital infection control, case specimen collection, and pathogen detection. For other medical personnel and epidemic prevention workers who take part in epidemic prevention and control, the Central Financial Department shall subsidize them at a rate of 200 yuan per person per day.

Another country in the region which responded quite well is Russia, Russia implemented preventive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the country by imposing quarantines, carrying raids on potential virus carriers and using facial recognition to impose quarantine measures. Measures to prevent a crisis in Russia include banning the export of medical masks, random checks on the Moscow Metro, and cancellation of large-scale events by schools. The Russian government has also taken measures to prevent foreign citizens from heavily affected countries from visiting Russia. The Russian consumer health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor advised tourists to refrain from visiting Wuhan and stay away from Chinese zoos and markets selling animals and seafood. The agency also said that development of a vaccine against the virus was underway, relying on the WHO's recommendations.

As of 23 March, Russia has 4 testing systems and has carried out over 165 thousand tests for the virus which is among the highest testing numbers in the world. Two private lab companies started testing on 26 March. According to Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova, as of 25 March, 141 state laboratories were conducting tests in 79 federal subjects. There are plans to increase the number of reference centres across the country to 15.

Meanwhile, aside from these two countries in the region, the rest affected have also taken measures to curb the virus. The governments have imposed emergency lockdown within states including the movements of individuals in order to promote social distancing, also travel ban and restrictions, been tracking and quarantining people with travel history to affected country.

Now, if one is to contrast between these responses with that of Africa’s. We must agree that Africa isn’t totally failing. In my own opinion, I’d say that Africa is ignorant of the virus. Using Nigeria as a case study, a number of individuals (35%) are ignorant of the pandemic. Many presently believe it is “The Rich mans” virus and others say it is the plot of the government. All said, Africa is a developing continent and is learning from the actions taken by the developed nations. Healthcare is known to be poor in this area. Asides that, countries in Africa like Nigeria, are copying other states by Imposing compulsory lockdown of individuals movement and also travel restrictions. Nigeria for instance, stopped people from returning to or from places. Testing centers too have been established, in order to control the virus in the country. Although, they’ve done this but they (the government) has also failed to provide financial assistance to the people in this difficult time especially those in the rural areas. When the people are told to stop work and stay at home, it is important for the government to provide an alternative like financial assistance or give them food items courtesy of the state, when Nigeria fails to do this, some people may act against the rules even if it is for their own good. Africa is agreeably trying its best but more can be done in response to the virus. Since other countries are facing their own problems, Africa cannot ask for help as she normally does. So, therefore extra work must be done.