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**CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTON OF MOVE MENT OF NIGERIANS**

The CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC is an ongoing pandemic of corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The outbreak was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, declared to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020. As of 16 April 2020, more than 2.08 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 210 countries and territories, resulting in more than 139,000 deaths. More than 528,000 people have recovered, although there may be a possibility of relapse or re-infection. The deaths per diagnosed cases vary significantly between countries. The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, often via small droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, or talking. While these droplets are produced when breathing out, they usually fall to the ground or onto surfaces rather than being infectious over long distances. People may also become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then their face. The virus can survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours. It is most contagious during the first three days after the onset of symptoms, although spread may be possible before symptoms appear and in later stages of the disease. Common symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Complications may include pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days, but may range from two to fourteen days. There is no known vaccine or specific antiviral treatment. Primary treatment is symptomatic and supportive therapy. Recommended preventive measures include hand washing, covering one's mouth when coughing, maintaining distance from other people, and monitoring and self-isolation for people who suspect they are infected. Authorities worldwide have responded by implementing travel restrictions, quarantines, curfews and stay-at-home orders, workplace hazard controls, and facility closures.

The pandemic has led to severe global socioeconomic disruption, the postponement or cancellation of sporting, religious, political and cultural events and widespread shortages of supplies exacerbated by panic buying. Schools, universities and colleges have closed either on a nationwide or local basis in 197 countries, affecting approximately 99.9 per cent of the world's student population. Misinformation about the virus has spread online, and there have been incidents of xenophobia and discrimination against Chinese people and against those perceived as being Chinese or as being from areas with high infection rates. Due to reduced travel and closures of heavy industry, there has been a decrease in air pollution and carbon emissions.

In Nigeria, 407 cases have been confirmed, 128 cases have been discharged and 12 deaths have been recorded in the country. President Buhari announced on April 13, 2020 that a lockdown, in place since March 30 in Lagos state, neighboring Ogun state, and Abuja, the nation’s capital, would continue for another 14 days. Several other state governments, including Rivers, Kaduna, and Ekiti, have also initiated full or partial lockdowns. Due to this lockdown, millions of Nigerians observing the COVID-19 lockdown lack the food and income that their families need to survive. The government needs to combine public health measures with efforts to prevent the pandemic from destroying the lives and livelihoods of society’s poorest and most vulnerable people. The lockdown does not apply to those providing essential services, such as food distributors and retailers, including market stalls selling food and groceries, which the government has said can operate for four hours every 48 hours. The lockdown, however, prevents many Nigerians working in informal sectors from traveling to work or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have expressed fears over their ability to feed their families during the lockdown, with their daily earnings their only source of sustenance. An increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also means that many cannot stock up on necessities. The vast majority of people outside of the formal system are hit devastatingly by the lockdown. Any disruption to their daily livelihood has a huge and significant impact on their ability to meet their most basic needs. The informal sector, in which more than 80% of Nigerians work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. In Lagos alone, according to research by non-governmental organizations, 65% of the estimated 25 million people work in the informal sector. Informal workers have lower incomes, often do not have savings, health insurance, or pensions that provide a basic social safety net, and 72% are poor. When announcing the lockdown, President Buhari said the government would put in place measures to “preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity.” He said that “the most vulnerable in our society” would receive conditional cash transfers for the next two months, while Sadiya Umar Farouq, minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development said that food rations would be distributed to vulnerable households. Nigeria’s federal government should urgently develop a plan to deliver social and economic assistance to the tens of millions of people who will lose income due to COVID-19, particularly informal workers who lack an adequate social safety net, Human Rights Watch said. Their exclusion from social protections violates their right to social security enshrined in international human rights law. This plan should be developed in consultation with community-based organizations with experience serving people living in poverty. The government should also clearly communicate its economic relief plans to the public and clarify eligibility, timelines, and procedures.

**References:**

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