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

According to the World Health Organization, COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered **coronavirus**. This virus first broke out at a seafood market in Wuhan, China. Thereby making the reaction of the Asian continent to the COVID-19 pandemic an issue of global interest. Remarkably, China managed to tame the outbreak through rigorous testing and tracing contacts of those infected (The Guardian,2020).

According to BBC report, six major measure that Asia took that saved the region were pointed towards its ability to take the pandemic seriously and act quickly, make tests extensive and affordable, trace and isolate, early social distancing, keeping the public well informed and on side, and lastly individual attitudes. For instance, Taiwan, started tracing passengers from Wuhan as soon as China warned of a new type of pneumonia in the city December 2019, before Covid-19 was identified. Social distancing, ramped-up testing and contact-tracing followed soon after.

[Malaysia](https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/country/malaysia.html) rolled out some of the most drastic restrictions seen across Asia to stop the spread of the [coronavirus](https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/03/stocks-collapse-coronavirus-global-pandemic-live-200312235606108.html). It closed its borders to tourists, and Malaysians themselves could not leave for a period of time (Al Jazeera, 2020). Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, reacted quickly to COVID-19 before the city had any confirmed cases (World Economic Forum, 2020).

In January, Singaporean leaders established a crisis team and prepared for the threat to the city-state, which closed economic links with China. It quickly placed bans on travellers from China, started contact tracing for infected people, and [tested anyone](https://time.com/5802293/coronavirus-covid19-singapore-hong-kong-taiwan/) with coronavirus symptoms. Similar measures were taken in Hong Kong. Hong Kong, also acted rapidly, closing schools and enforcing social distancing beginning in January.

 South Korea, which is a far more populous place than those already mentioned, has also made impressive strides. It [ramped up testing](https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/long-term-impacts-coronavirus-south-korea), as the government empowered Korean companies to mass-produce tests. South Korea has carried out the [most tests per capita](https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-south-korea-put-into-place-the-worlds-most-aggressive-coronavirus-testing-11584377217) 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](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-whos-flattening-the-curve-on-the-coronavirus-and-who-isnt-a/) of its outbreak.

China’s response to the virus included strict social distancing, more than a month of city-wide lockdowns of Wuhan and surrounding areas, [extensive public monitoring of citizens](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/09/the-new-normal-chinas-excessive-coronavirus-public-monitoring-could-be-here-to-stay), as well as various methods of punishment and rewards to encourage adherence to such measures (Emma Graham-Harrison, 2020). According to a [New York Times analysis](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/15/business/china-coronavirus-lockdown.html), at least 760 million people in China were covered by some sort of residential lockdown.

Regarding the contrast to response in Africa, I don’t believe the African continent has been left behind, as local authorities in Nigeria announced the start of a door-to-door checks on residents of the megacity Lagos to identify cases of coronavirus (rfi, 2020). According to The World Bank, the response to the 2014 Ebola crisis taught African countries what it takes to invest in more resilient health systems and more effective surveillance mechanisms to cope with epidemics.

The countries of Africa have decided to unite around a common continental response. The region is coordinating efforts among member states of [African Union (A.U.) agencies](https://time.com/5788873/covid-19-africa-response/) and other multilateral organizations. A number of countries have embarked on border closures, nationwide lockdowns and the rollout of mass screening and testing programs. Isolation and quarantine measures are being put in place for those at risk and medical management for those who are already ill in countries like Nigeria. Also, African leaders have established an A.U. COVID-19 Response Fund (Cyril Ramaphosa, 2020).

Again, COVID-19 has presented new opportunities for cooperation between Asia and the region, particularly South Korea and Africa. South Korea has already begun engaging with African states in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has focused on multilateral cooperation through the [G-20 Extraordinary Leader Summit](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/26/g20-hold-emergency-video-summit-discuss-coronavirus), it has also shown efforts to evacuate Korean citizens who were unable to leave African states, and provided assistance to individual African nations (R. Maxwell Bone and Mattew Minsoo Kim, 2020).

Significantly, [Africa turns to mobile payments as a tool to curb COVID-19](https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/25/african-turns-to-mobile-payments-as-a-tool-to-curb-covid-19/). In March 2020, Africa’s largest innovation incubator, [CcHub](https://cchubnigeria.com/" \t "_top), announced funding and engineering support to tech projects aimed at curbing COVID-19 and its social and economic impact.African organisations and individuals have also been of massive supports as they have been donating large sum of funds to help eradicate the pandemic.

Not withstanding all the positive actions taken by Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic puts Africa at a bigger risk due to the fact a lot of individuals still do not believe that the virus exist. And even were people believe, weak health systems, poor sanitation facilities, the proliferation of informal economy and urban crowding pose additional challenges in the efforts to combat the highly infectious disease.

According to Kenyan epidemiologist, Nelly Yatich, "Sensitisation in rural and informal settings is inadequate." Therefore making it difficult for people to wash there hands and maintain good hygiene during the period of the pandemic. James, a resident of Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya described the challenging situation, saying "Many people are cramped together in small spaces," he said. "A lack of water is the norm, so washing hands is another issue” (Samira Sawlani, 2020).

Again, a high population of Africans live under one dollar a day, Africa being the 'Poverty Capital of the World', making it difficult for individuals to stay home. People live “hand-to-mouth”, meaning they have to go to work regardless of what symptoms they are showing.

In conclusion, although Africa is lacking in medical facilities and structures to fast track contacts of victims more effectively and is experiencing difficulty in social cohesion to the social distance protocol unlike Asia, due to importance attached to social gathering, the region has gone a long way in curving the spread of the virus.

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