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

Coronaviruses are a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. The virus first broke out in [China](https://www.foxnews.com/category/world/world-regions/china), therefore making the response of the Asian region important to international relations and the international system at large. According to CNN report, The [Asian Development Bank](https://www.devex.com/organizations/asian-development-bank-adb-5156) expanded its COVID-19 response package to [$20 billion](https://www.adb.org/news/adb-triples-covid-19-response-package-20-billion) from the initial $6.5 billion announced in March. The package, largely aimed at helping governments in the Asia-Pacific region mitigate the impact of the pandemic, including $2.5 billion in concessional and grant resources.

China first reported cases of "mysterious Sars-like pneumonia" to the WHO on 31 December. At this point there was no confirmed human-to-human transmission, and little was known about the virus, but within three days Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong had all stepped up screening at border points. Taiwan even checked passengers on flights from Wuhan before they got off the plane. China has imposed restrictions on the publication of research that focuses on the origins of COVID-19 (BBC News, 2020).

This has shown that the entire Asian continent has been at alert since the outbreak of the virus, thereby not restricting response to only China. Cases in South Korea spiked initially at the period of the outbreak, however it swiftly developed a test for the virus. South Korea had a rapid approvals system in place for infectious disease tests, following an outbreak of Middle East Respiratory syndrome in 2015 that left 35 dead.

According to BBC News reports, in Singapore, detectives contact-traced people, locating individuals with CCTV footage, testing them, and ordering them to self-isolate until their results were clear. Also, in Hong Kong, contact tracing goes back to two days before someone develops symptoms. They have also adopted intrusive ways of ensuring that those ordered to self-isolate actually stay at home. In Hong Kong, new arrivals from abroad are required to wear electronic bracelets to track their movements, while in Singapore those self-isolating are contacted several times a day, and required to send photographic proof of their whereabouts. Singapore has hefty penalties, including jail terms, for anyone who breaks a "stay at home" order.

Social distancing has been considered one of the best ways of containing the outbreak in Asia. In Wuhan, China, where the virus is thought to have started, five million people had left the city before the shutdown began. This led to the government imposing the biggest quarantine in human history. China has since been praised for effectively slowing the spread of the virus, after imposing a massive lockdown and upscaling its hospital capacity. But critics say such extreme measures were only required because its initial response was slow.

In Hong Kong, schools were closed and workers encouraged to work from home, but restaurants and bars still remained open. Some governments used technology to update residents in great detail. Hong Kong provided an online dashboard of all cases, which includes a map that shows the individual buildings where cases were found. South Korea issues mobile alerts letting people know if they were in the vicinity of a patient.

In Singapore, the government has been praised for its clear communications on coronavirus, including a speech by the prime minister which encouraged people to stop panic buying. Its measures have had widespread public support - helped by the fact Singapore has a long history of emphasising collective responsibility for national security. And Singaporean media does not tend to challenge the official line.

In contrast with Africa, First, the continent’s demographic structure is different from other regions in the world. The [median age of the 1.3 billion population in Africa](https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/) is 19.7 years. By contrast, the [median age in China](https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/china-population/) is: 38.4 years, and the [median age in the European Union](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20191105-1) is: 43.1 years. Experiences in Asia and Europe showed that people over 60, and those with significant health problems are most vulnerable to severe cases of COVID-19.

The second factor within the population is the high prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, malaria, HIV/AIDs, and tuberculosis. Liberia, for example, has one of the highest rates of stunting in the world.

Third, social cohesion and social gatherings are of great importance in Africa. For example, weekly attendance of a religious service is highest in Africa with rates as high as 82% in Uganda and Ethiopia. As a result, measures to impose social and physical distancing may prove to be more challenging, as demonstrated by the [protests that broke out on 20 March 2020 in Senegal](https://twitter.com/nicolashaque/status/1241088722571079681) after public gatherings, including gatherings at mosques were banned as cases of COVID-19 rose.

All these factors make it difficult for contain the virus in time in Africa unlike Asia that doesn’t face most of such challenges, and as Africa also lacks the technology that Asia has used to fast track the coronavirus outbreak within its region.

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