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

The Coronavirus pandemic is “far from over” in the Asia-Pacific region, a World Health Organization (WHO) official said.

"The [COVID-19] epidemic is far from over in Asia and the Pacific. This is going to be a long-term battle and we cannot let down our guard," Takeshi Kasai, Philippines-based WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, said at a virtual news conference on Tuesday. After first appearing in Wuhan, China, in December, the virus, officially known as COVID-19, has spread to at least 180 countries and regions, The data shows the confirmed number of cases worldwide has surpassed 873,700, with the death toll over 43,200, and more than 184,700 recoveries. This is a pandemic like no other. It is worse than the Global Financial Crisis, and Asia is not immune.

Southeast Asian nations have had varied responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Singapore shows great competence in handling the outbreak, while the majority of Southeast Asian nations struggle with the lack of technical capacity, unprepared healthcare systems, and low public awareness which include Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia. Singapore was aware of the Wuhan outbreak in late December and immediately began conducting laboratory research on the virus, heightened border control and surveillance, and implemented temperature screening for inbound flights from Wuhan and then the rest of China. Singapore’s immediate response was arguably a product of the trauma from the 2003 SARS outbreak, which severely affected the nation’s economy and population. The first case of COVID-19 in Southeast Asia was found in Singapore on the 23rd of January. This came to no surprise for Singapore as they had been preparing for the virus outbreak since December. The result has been a low COVID-19 mortality rate. In contrast, Indonesia repeatedly denied having any COVID-19 cases until March 2, and since then, the numbers grew overwhelmingly rapidly. Indonesia has the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in Southeast Asia, followed by the Philippines and Malaysia. Malaysia’s skyrocketing number of COVID-19 patients is mainly due to the delayed ban of religious gatherings. Malaysia then implemented a nation-wide lockdown and similarly, the Philippines issued a lockdown policy in the Luzon area, including Manila. Meanwhile, Laos and Myanmar continue to deny any confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Indonesia’s delayed confirmation and response against the COVID-19 outbreak resulted in a lack of preparedness in treating and containing carriers of the virus. Indonesia has a list of referred hospitals for people suspected to have been infected by the Coronavirus. Hospital beds for quarantine purposes are also scarce. Thermal scanners are found only in a few public places, like train stations and ferry terminals, and are still absent in a number of airports. This lack of technical capacity and preparedness in the healthcare system is a challenge faced by the majority of Southeast Asian nations, namely Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. This has resulted in surging numbers of cases and high death tolls in these countries. Many more cases are still undetected. In the fight to contain the virus, Singapore established a website and an online application called Dubbed Trace Together to enhance the transparency of the outbreak situation and to guarantee those under home-based quarantine comply with the quarantine policy. These online platforms list the places and times of potential Coronavirus carriers and use Bluetooth to detect those who have been within two meters of a confirmed Coronavirus patient for at least 30 minutes. Moreover, the government is providing S$100 for self-employed individuals, prohibits the reduction of annual leave for people who self-quarantine, and ensures full pay or even additional financial support for those working from home. Meanwhile in Indonesia and Malaysia, citizens ignore public announcements for social distancing procedures. There are cases of Indonesians using the opportunity to working from home and study from home to visit tourist places.

However, In Africa the covid-19 pandemic which is on a regular increase on a daily basis is trying to reduce its spread, despite not taking the pandemic seriously during its earlier days. Many African countries are being affected on a daily basis by the virus with its continuous increase in the number of infected persons. In West Africa, using Nigeria, as a case study, it is one of the many African countries who disregarded warnings from other countries to start setting in place measures to ensure that the virus could be prevented from further spreading and decrease the number of infected persons rather than an increase.

Few cases of the virus where first seen in Nigeria due to the failure of the government to put a ban to all international travels into Nigeria and it wasn’t long before Nigeria began to start recording a number of cases above 100. The Nigerian government after discovering that the virus had entered Nigeria and began to spread had to think of ways to manage the situation at hand and prevent the coronavirus from further spreading across Nigeria. Some encouraging and impressive measures where put in place by the government to begin to manage the pandemic such as banning all international travels into Nigeria, placing a two weeks Lock down in various states such as Lagos and F.C.T Abuja and other states as well, placing of the armed forces to ensure these lock down, sharing funds and food to the poor due to the lockdown. 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 has also tried to prevent its spread by sending text messages at least once per day to anyone with a registered sim card in Nigeria, also Nigeria has been able to secure quarantine centre’s for those infected with the virus and have been able to cure a few cases over at those quarantine centres. Some of these centres are located in Abuja, Lagos and the citizens of Nigeria have tried to do some community services to the less privileged such a s donating food items, face masks, money and other items that the less privileged need to last during this lockdown period.