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**ASSIGNMENT.**

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

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, which means that they are normally transmitted between animals and people. It was first detected on the 7th of January, 2020 in Wuhan, China. Coronaviruses are large group of viruses that consists of a group of genetic materials surrounded by a envelop with protein spikes. This gives it the appearance of a crown, and crown in Latin is called ‘Corona’, and that is how the viruses got their name.

There are different types of Corona viruses which cause respiratory and sometimes gastrointestinal symptom. Respiratory diseases can range from the Common cold to Pneumonia. However, there are some types corona viruses that can cause Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which was first identified in China in 2003; the Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome corona virus which was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012; the 2019 Nobel corona virus which was first identified in China. The disease began to spread from those infected to their family members, health care staff and so on. It is has become a global issue of global concern, as the whole world is now affected. Worldwide confirmed cases estimate 2,256,844; 571,851 recovered, and 154,350 deaths.

As the new corona virus marches around the globe, countries with escalating outbreaks are eager to learn whether China’s extreme lockdown were responsible for bringing the crisis there under control. Other nations are now following China’s lead and limiting movement within their borders, while dozens of countries have restricted international visitors. In mid-January, Chinese authorities introduced unprecedented measures to contain the virus, stopping movement in and out of Wuhan, the center of the epidemic, and 15 other cities in Hubei province- home to more that 60 million people. Flights and trains were suspended, and roads were blocked. Soon after, people in many Chinese cities were told to stay at home and venture out only to get food or medical help. Some 760 million people, roughly half the country’s population, were confined to their homes (According to “The New York Times”). Despite the late awareness by China over the pandemic, they have also invented scanning machines in order to detect those with the virus which has helped.

Asian countries especially Singapore and Hong Kong, have imposed border control border control. The governments have enforced stricter border checks on visitors from China, Italy, Iran, and other virus-hit countries. On the 9th of April 2020, South Korea rolled out a new measure that starting on 13th of April, short term visas for all foreign nationals will be invalidated. They also provide strong evidence to support governments in making well informed policy decisions and providing actual figures of the number of those infected, recovering, and death rate from Covid-19. This has helped to keep the world more informed.

Also, UNICEF welcomes a US$3.5 million grant from Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide urgent medical supplies in 16 countries across West and Central Asia; South Asia; East Asia and Pacific, to support governments in the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic (BANGKOK, 15 April, 2020).This grant is being used for medical care and personal protective equipment for health care staff and others.

However, in Africa on the other hand, 102 new measures, 45 countries have taken legislative action to address the coronavirus. These include legislative action (passage of laws and regulations, orders/decrees), executive order/decrees, and other practices that have not been confined. These exclude actions taken by the government using existing legislation- for example, prosecuting journalists and citizen reporters and protesters. There are 18 declarations of states of emergency: Angola, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini/Swaziland, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Botswana and Gambia. There have been 3 declarations of national state disaster in Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. There have also been 10 declarations of public health emergencies in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Niger, Sudan, and Togo.

African countries have also adopted self-isolation as a response to Covid-19. Soldiers and Police officers have been on the look out for those breaking the rules and giving sanctions to those who do not comply. There has been multiple cases of police and security force brutality in the name of ‘enforcing’ measures, including in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, against journalists and members of the public (especially those from the informal sector).

Instead of harnessing the power of technology to strengthen the response to the pandemic, governments are using disinformation laws, “fake news” provisions, etc. to clamp down on dissent. However, on March 30, Zimbabwe issued regulations that subject those who publish or communicate false statements about public officers that are enforcing the national lockdown to a penalty of up to level 14 (ZWL$120,000) or imprisonment of up to 20 years. This is one of the most extreme responses.

To some extent, the idea of social distancing in Africa has only been theoretically applicable. This is evident during the burial of Abba Kyari, Chief of staff to President Buhari. A lot of people attended the burial and were clustered up together to observe the burial rites. Also, another case study is seen in Nigeria were Funke Akindele, a Nollywood actress was arrested for throwing a party during this isolation period. She was charged to court and faced due justice. However, a lot of people were at the court, clustered together, and even making videos. This contradicts the main reason of why she was arrested in the first place, as even the authorities have violated the isolation rule.

In conclusion, Asian response in contrast to African response is very clear. Unlike Asia, Africans have not totally observed the self-isolation rule. Asian countries have also been from time to time, testing the people to know those who have been infected, however, African countries do not have the right facilities and income capacity to test most of the population. The self-isolation is also a major issue for a lot of people in Africa because of the high poverty rate. People find it hard to survive due to hunger, as they even believe hunger might kill them faster than the virus will. There was no adequate provision for the people for this period unlike in Asian countries where there has been provision of food for survival of the people during the quarantine period. In Africa, there has been underreported cases and wrong figures about the update on those infected, recovery and death rate. This is majorly because only a few people in Africa have been tested unlike in Asia, where testing occurs on a daily basis, and thereby there is transparency in the figures given on the update of the pandemic.

**REFERENCES.**

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