OGBONNA JUSTICE NNAOMA

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**HUNDER OR COVID-19**

We can no longer deny the existence or shove aside the ongoing pandemic as a nation and as a continent- Africa. In past time we would have said that the corona virus has no negative bearing on us limiting its effects to only Europe, America and Asia, but in the past couple of weeks Africa as a whole has recorded a 51% spike in the number of coronavirus cases, Nigeria has also seen a significant rise in the total number of COVID-19 cases as recent figures suggest that there are presently 627 person suffering from the deadly virus.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus strain (SARS-CoV-2). Most people infected will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness. The virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus is such that only the older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness and that is why many, especially in Africa have failed to recognize the crisis for what it is. The best way to prevent the virus is by washing your hands, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, and staying home and practicing social distancing.

COVID-19 is much more than a health crisis. By stressing every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars. We are in uncharted territory. Many of our communities are now unrecognizable. Dozens of the world’s greatest cities are deserted as people stay indoors, either by choice or by government order. Across the world, shops, theatres, restaurants and bars are closing.

The Nigerian government like every other government in the world has sprung into action to ensure that the virus is curbed by enforcing lock down measures, as many other European nations have, but there is no doubt that the country is unprepared and underfunded to handle this measure, the initial 14-day lockdown has seen added hardship to millions of Nigerians living hand-to-mouth, often on less than a dollar a day.

The vast majority of Nigerians depend on daily wages, they have to go out to get money and buy food to put it on the table for their families. Market women, bus drivers, shop owners and every other individual dependent on their daily income to survive are placed at home with no money and no chance of getting money, it is in light of this that many Nigerians argue that the only thing they would suffer from is the “HUNGER VIRUS’’, within the lockdown there has been a massive outcry for help from the poor as many of them are starving to death and many lives especially those of children who cannot go prolonged days without food have been lost.

The stay at home protocol has also been the cause of a recent spikes in crime, residents of Lagos and Ogun have been the target of operation of the popular gang called “1 million Boys”. It is certain that these attacks have become rampant because even these criminals see a need to feed themselves during the lockdown. The surge in crime in these areas has seen residents being deprived of their sleep and robbed of their food and possessions, lives have also been lost in the process.

Nigeria’s economy has also suffered as the country’s economy is expected to shrink by 3.4% this year, oil rich Nigeria has been hit by the plunge in the demand for energy set off by the global lockdown against COVID-19 and the unemployment rate, already at 23 percent is expected to climb even higher.

Many people have also been the victims of police brutality, many people have suffered at the hands of law officials and many have lost their lives for no just cause. I must conclude by saying that measures that are expected to keep us safe has only worsened our suffering, the plight of the people have only been aggravated. The pertinent question now is whether or not these lock down measures are suitable for African countries. But whether or not we are worse off the truth is, the Nigerian government has failed its people in diverse areas and the only hope for Nigerian people is that the government are able to provide support measures to ease the financial pain for the most vulnerable.