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Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.The disease caused by the novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, China, has been named **coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)** – ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV.’The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment.  Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The [lockdown](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/nigeria-announces-lockdown-major-cities-curb-coronavirus-200330095100706.html) of the states mostly three major states, Lagos, Ogun and Abuja, to curb the [coronavirus pandemic](https://theconversation.com/africa/covid-19). Those that will be affected the hardest will be households that rely on the day to day activities of self-employed individuals for consumption. Lagos is the country’s major economic centre as well as its financial capital. Ogun state borders Lagos state to the south and is notable for having a high concentration of industrial estates and being a major manufacturing hub. Abuja is the seat of government.

The extension of the lockdown is expected to add to the hardship of millions of Nigerians living hand-to-mouth, often on less than one dollar a day. Locking people down at home in the Nigerian context is like asking people to go hungry for the duration of the lockdown. More than 60 per cent of Nigerians survive on daily pay from menial jobs and petty trading. A lockdown means their means of daily livelihood have been locked down. The plight of private sector employees is no better. Many private employers have maintained a ‘no salary during lockdown’ stance, or at best a 50 per cent pay cut. Some have even completely laid the workers off.

Labour must agitate for full pay for workers, whether private or government employed, for as long as the lockdown lasts. Government must also distribute foodstuff and domestic essentials to the poor masses to cushion the effect of the lockdown. Pangs of hunger will lead to widespread anger. Protests in different forms are already being seen within the communities. People are protesting against a lockdown without palliatives, against the high-handedness of law enforcement agents, and even rejecting all manner of palliatives that smack of insult to their intelligence, such as packs of food that are not enough to feed a family of six in 2 weeks being distributed to be shared among 60-80 families in a cluster. This protest mood that is brewing has the potential to transform into a movement that would pose a serious challenge to the lockdown if the hunger question is not resolved. It could also get a lot worse, as we are beginning to see in some places in Lagos and Ogun States where a layer of lumpen youth, pushed to extreme hunger by the lockdown, go on mass looting of shops and houses, carting away ordinary people’s food and belongings.

What was also revealed was that these political elites clearly shamefully refused to follow the public health advice of social distancing and a minimum of 14-day self-isolation expected of all recent travellers, which invariably led to infection of their contacts, and of course their contacts’ contacts. This stupidity no doubt contributed to the leap in COVID-19 cases from less than 10 in two weeks to over 300 confirmed cases now.In Ogun State, for example, Dangote trucks have been exempted from the lockdown order by the state government. These trucks, by the way, are mostly conveying non-essential products like cement. So much for lockdowns and Coronavirus prevention. Dangote is the richest man in Africa and thus the message is clear; one law for the rich and another for the poor.

The necessity for the labour movement to be visible on issues that concern the workers and poor masses cannot be over-emphasized at this moment. Labour must organize and harness these pockets of protests and demand adequate food distribution to all households in need. In the same vein, labour must also expose the hypocrisy of the politicians in government and their deceitful billionaire cronies. Their donations of billions to the COVID-19 containment fund should be noted as deceitful; it is borne not so much out of altruism but as a way of paying back little from the multibillion naira milked off government in the past by way of inflated contracts, heavy tax holidays and other huge concessions that they have received in the past