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THE CORONA VIRUS: DEFINITION,ORIGIN, SYMPTOMS AND HOW IT'S AFFECTING THE CITIZENS OF NIGERIA.

As of April 21, more than 170,368 people worldwide have died of COVID-19, the highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

The number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 has exceeded 2.4 million, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. More than 651,000 people have recovered.

What is a coronavirus?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. SARS, for instance, was transmitted from civet cats to humans while MERS moved to humans from a type of camel.

Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

The name coronavirus comes from the Latin word corona, meaning crown or halo. Under an electron microscope, the virus looks like it is surrounded by a solar corona.

The novel coronavirus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7 and since named SARS-CoV-2, is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans. Little is known about it, although human-to-human transmission has been confirmed

What are the symptoms?

According to the WHO, signs of infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death.

Current estimates of the incubation period - the time between infection and the onset of symptoms - range from one to 14 days. Most infected people show symptoms within five to six days.

However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any

symptoms despite having the virus in their systems.

How deadly is it?

The number of fatalities from the new coronavirus has overwhelmingly surpassed the toll of the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak, which also originated in China.

SARS killed about 9 percent of those it infected - nearly 800 people worldwide and more than 300 in China alone. MERS, which did not spread as widely, was more deadly, killing one-third of those infected.

While the new coronavirus is more widespread than SARS in terms of case numbers, the mortality rate remains considerably lower at approximately 3.4 percent, according to the WHO.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older people are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 which may result in increased stress during a crisis.

People who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes also seem to be at high risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

Where have cases been reported?

Since March 16, more cases were registered outside mainland China than inside, marking a new milestone in the spread of the global pandemic.

The virus has spread from China all around the world, prompting the WHO to label the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

Human-to-human transmissions became evident after cases were recorded with no apparent link to China.

Read about which countries have confirmed cases [here](#).

What is being done to stop it from spreading?

Scientists around the globe are racing to develop a vaccine but have warned it is not likely one will be available for mass distribution before 2021.

Meanwhile, a growing number of countries have introduced a series of sweeping measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus, including nationwide lockdowns, bans on gatherings, closure of schools, restaurants, bars and sports clubs, as well as issuing mandatory work-from-home decrees.

International airlines have cancelled flights the world over. Some countries have banned non-citizens from entering their territories, and several more have evacuated their citizens from

abroad.

Where did the virus originate?

Chinese health authorities are still trying to determine the origin of the virus, which they say likely came from a seafood market in Wuhan, China where wildlife was also traded illegally.

On February 7, Chinese researchers said the virus could have spread from an infected animal species to humans through illegally-trafficked pangolins, which are prized in Asia for food and medicine.

Scientists have pointed to either bats or snakes as possible sources of the virus.

Is this a global emergency?

Yes, this outbreak is a global health emergency, the WHO said on January 30, raising the alarm further on March 11 when it declared the crisis a pandemic.

The international health alert is a call to countries around the world to coordinate their response under the guidance of the WHO.

There have been five global health emergencies since 2005 when the declaration was formalised: swine flu in 2009, polio in 2014, Ebola in 2014, Zika in 2016 and Ebola again in 2019

Nigeria announces lockdown of major cities to curb coronavirus

Nigeria implemented a sweeping quarantine for three major states that are home to almost 30 million people in a bid to slow the spread of the new coronavirus in Africa's most populous country.

The lockdown in Lagos, Abuja and Ogun kicks in at 11pm local time (22:00 GMT) on Monday and will stay in place for at least two weeks, President Muhammadu Buhari announced on Sunday, a little over a month after Nigeria confirmed its first case.

"All citizens in these areas are to stay in their homes. Travel to or from other states should be postponed. All businesses and offices within these locations should be fully closed during this period," Buhari said in an address to the nation.

Home to an estimated 20 million people, Lagos is Africa's most populous city and Nigeria's financial hub. Abuja is the capital of the country and the seat of its government. Oil-rich Rivers state and Kaduna state in the north earlier imposed similar lockdown measures.

The restrictions announced do not apply to hospitals and stores selling essential items such as groceries and medicine.

"We will use this containment period to identify, trace and isolate all individuals that have come

into contact with confirmed cases," Buhari said.

### Fear of price rises

The announcement triggered panic among many in Lagos, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak in the country which has so far infected 111 people and caused one death.

On Monday, residents in Lagos flooded markets and stores to buy food and other items.

Bose Odumosu, a mother of five, told Al Jazeera that she will use the next hours to stock up on food for her family.

"I was expecting the government to give us a few days to sort out our domestic needs before the announcement. I feel the sudden restriction will cause the price of commodities to increase," Odumosu said.

Shop assistants wearing face masks to prevent against the spread of the new coronavirus take stock in a supermarket in Lagos, Nigeria Friday, March 27, 2020. ]

Buhari said all branches of government have been mobilised "to confront what has now become both a health emergency and an economic crisis", but the lockdown means additional financial pain for millions of informal labourers who rely heavily on their daily earnings to survive.

Olatunji Akintan, a bricklayer, and his wife, a petty trader, live in a two-room apartment with their two sons in Ojodu, a suburb of Lagos. Every day, Akintan commutes to different locations in the megacity in search of a job and only gets paid when he is hired by building contractors for the day.

Now, the 56-year-old faces a two-week home quarantine without any income.

"Since January, I have not done much work so I have no savings. I have been thinking of what to do with the little money I have for two weeks," Akintan told Al Jazeera.

"How do I raise money now that I won't be working for the next few days? Some of us will be forced to buy food on credit if we can find those willing to sell."

In his speech, Buhari announced a series of measures aimed at relieving some of the economic pain including a three-month moratorium on government loan repayments.

"For the most vulnerable in our society, I have directed that the conditional cash transfers for the next two months be paid immediately. Our Internally displaced persons will also receive two months of food rations in the coming weeks," Buhari said.

Financial analyst Oluwatosin Olaseinde said: "The biggest palliative obviously would be food."

"The president announced a few exemptions in terms of movement for agricultural produce, which should help cushion the effect," Olaseinde told Al Jazeera, citing exemptions related to food processing and distribution.

"Ideally, I would love to see some financial assistance to groups captured in initiatives like the Trader Money Scheme," she said, referring to a government project involving the distribution of loans to small traders to support their businesses.

Women sell face masks and gloves, to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, to passengers at a public minibus station in Lagos, Nigeria Friday, March 27, 2020

Across the world, the outbreak of the new coronavirus has strained healthcare systems and hit economies hard, with few countries expected to emerge unscathed by the pandemic's financial effect.

Nigeria is already feeling the pinch with oil prices plunging. The country is the world's eighth-largest oil exporter, and almost 90 percent of its export earnings are tied to oil.

Shutting down the country's financial capital, Lagos, is expected to further add to an impending economic crisis

"There will be a slowdown in the country's GDP for the first quarter of the year," Olaseinde said. "You have five key states in the country essentially grounded. That will lead to a loss of revenue for companies and individuals. You could also see supply shocks."

Meanwhile, electricity remains a major challenge in the country. Most people rely on costly diesel-powered generators to power their homes and keep businesses afloat.

"How do I sustain my job on generators for 14 days if we continue to experience chronic power shortages? That's almost impossible," IT system analyst Samuel Edeh told Al Jazeera.

"I hope they have factored steady power supply into the lockdown plan so that some of us can keep up with work at home," he told Al Jazeera.

Families are also hoping for regular power supply during the period of quarantine.

"With regular electricity, I can store my food and also keep my children entertained during the lockdown," Odumosu said.