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CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECT OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in animals. The new virus, have made the jump to humans, but most just cause cold-like symptoms.

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. Clearly the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) that started out as an epidemic in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and ended up as a pandemic (affecting the whole world) has thrown the whole world into a war-like situation. Scores of thousands of deaths have been recorded cumulatively for all countries across the world. Health systems in most countries are overwhelmed by the seriously sick patients in hospitals, many of whom are on ventilators and nursed in intensive care units (ICU).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the main symptoms of the coronavirus usually include: sneezing, coughing, runny nose, fatigue, sore throat and fever. Some patients may have "aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea", the WHO adds. "These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don’t develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell".

LOCKDOWN EFFECT ON NIGERIANS

It is in this vein that the leadership of labor must come out in defense of the workers on the issue of lockdown. As parts of the efforts to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government ordered a lockdown on Lagos, Ogun and the FCT Abuja, for an initial period of two weeks starting 11:59pm, 30 March 2020, now extended by another 2 weeks from 13 April 2020. Many other states are already applying one stay-at-home rule or the other up to state boundaries closure.

However, 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. Labor 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. People are suggesting the government to provide palliatives around the federation to help the poor and needy who live below 1 dollar a day people are suggesting the lockdown must come with adequate provision of food and essential household requirements for all in need and to stop the robberies by hoodlums the government to create a Mass-defense Committees to coordinate the Communities Security from rampaging looters and salary must be Guaranteed/ for all workers in the period of lockdown and no job losses this is to help and provide amenities to workers all around Nigeria.