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ASSIGNMENT: WRITEW A REPORT OF NOT MORE THAN TWO PAGES, ON THE CORONA VRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.

The coronavirus outbreak began in Wuhan, in China’s Hubei province, as a localized disease in 2019, and within a short time span, it has rapidly crossed countries and continents and become a full blown pandemic. The disease spread speedily and the first confirmed case of an infection in Nigeria was announced on 27th February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. On the 9th of March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun state by a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen.

By the 21st of March, Nigeria confirmed 10 new cases: seven in Lagos and three in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. On the 23rd of March, Nigeria confirmed its first casualty, a 67-year-old male who had returned from United Kingdom and had underlying health conditions. As of the 7th of April 2020, a total of two hundred and thirty eight (238) cases were recorded, with five deaths (5) and thirty five recoveries (35).

The Government of Nigeria is trying its best to stop the spread of the pandemic and presently many states in Nigeria are in total or partial lockdown. On the 28th of January (a month before the first case of the virus emerged), the Federal Government had assured citizens of its readiness to strengthen surveillance at five international airports in the country to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) also announced that it had already set up a coronavirus group and was ready to activate its incident system if any case emerged in Nigeria. The government seems to have mobilized quickly- on the 3ist of January, following the developments of the pandemic in mainland China and other countries worldwide, the Federal Government set up a Coronavirus Preparedness Group to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country. That same day, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed Nigeria among the 13 African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus.

The Nigerian Government quickly announced the closure of all educational institutions. It also postponed the 20th National Sports Festival that was billed to hold in Benin City and the Nigerian Football Federation suspended all football activities for four weeks. Subsequently the Government closed down all shops and businesses with the exception of those selling essential foodstuff. They also ordered that everyone stayed home to except those who were selling foodstuff, those involved with the sales and transportation of fuel and those who needed to keep working so the economy could function as normally as it normally has. A lockdown was put into place; the government also blocked entry into the country from any means. The measures, especially the ones of the restrictions and lockdown were put in place to stop the coronavirus from spreading; these then brought up new challenges.

Firstly, there was the issue of hunger. A lot of people were affected by the major issue as most of them fed based on the money they earned that day and some ate through the money they earned from doing menial jobs or even begging on the streets and because of the lockdown they could not earn any money and so were hungry. This made a lot of them to flaunt the directives placed by the Government exposing them to the contagious coronavirus. Despite the efforts of the government to alleviate this by distributing palliatives around the country it has yet to reach the people who are in most need of it especially those in the rural areas.

Secondly, there was in increase in the prices of foodstuff, a situation created because of the lockdown and the fact that it would increase the profits of the sellers as the people had limited options of where to shop. Also the amount of foodstuff transported within the country reduced drastically despite the various efforts made on the part of the Government leaving foodstuff such as: yam, beans, groundnut etc. It also increased the amount of people that went without food as it cost more to feed than it had in the past.

Thirdly, the issue of insecurity arose, as a particular group of robbers popularly known as the one million boys (because of their overwhelming size) started going around neighborhoods which they had identified and sent letters which asked them for their co-operation in which if they failed would result to injuries and possibly bloodshed as they too were affected by the lockdown and were hungry. People then took to setting up vigilante watches and setting up fires to deter the activities of the group. People now live in constant fear and insecurity as they could be attacked at any time.

The country is at a critical point as the amount of cases keep increasing even as the lockdown and restrictions are in place and it is expected that they won’t be removed anytime soon meaning that the citizens of the state might find themselves in this situation for a longer period of time than formally expected.