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QUESTION: WRITE A REPORT OF NOT MORE THAN TWO PAGES, ON THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. The corona virus has been labeled a pandemic by the WHO. Now a pandemic describes an infectious disease where we see significant and ongoing person-to-person spread in multiple countries around the world at the same time. Pandemics are more likely if a virus is brand new, able to infect people easily and can spread from person-to-person in an efficient and sustained way. Corona virus appears to tick all those boxes. However, because of the fast spread of the virus, almost every country has restricted movement in their countries. One of these countries is Nigeria. Unfortunately, unlike other countries that are developed, Nigeria is not really doing well with the lockdown.

Nigeria’s federal and state governments should ensure the rights to food, shelter and other basic necessities for the people losing jobs or income during the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic assistance that the government has announced in response to the virus has exposed inadequacies in Nigeria’s social protection systems and risks excluding the country’s poorest and most vulnerable people. Millions of Nigerian’s observing the COVID-19 lockdown lack the food and income that their families need to survive. The government needs to combine public health measures with efforts to prevent the pandemic from destroying the lives and livelihoods of society’s poorest and most vulnerable people. The lockdown does not apply to those providing essential services, such as food distributors and retailers, including market stalls selling food and groceries, which the government has said can operate for four hours every 48 hours.

The lockdown, however, prevents many Nigerian’s working in informal sectors from travelling to work or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have expressed fears over their ability to feed their families during the lockdown, with their daily earnings their only source of sustenance. An increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also means that many cannot stock up on necessities. The vast majority of people outside of the formal system are hit devastatingly by the lockdown, any disruption to their daily livelihood has a huge and significant impact on their most basic needs. The informal sector, in which more than 80 percent of Nigerian’s work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, trades men and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. In Lagos state alone, according to research by non-governmental organizations, 65 percent of the estimated 25 million people work in the informal sector. Informal workers have lower incomes, often do not have savings, health insurance or pensions that provide a basic social safety net and 72 percent are poor.

When announcing the lock down, President Buhari said the government would put in place measures to preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity. He also said that the most vulnerable in our society would receive conditional cash transfers for the next two months, while Sadiya Umar Farouq, minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development said that food rations would be distributed to vulnerable households.