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CORONAVIRUS: CAUSES AND EFFECTS

The coronavirus (COVID- 19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus that has not been previously identified by humans. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The disease was first reported to the World Health Organization on the 31st of December 2019 in Wuhan, China.

This disease affects different people in different ways. Most infected people will develop mild to moderate symptoms. The common symptoms include fever, tiredness and dry cough. Some people may experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and diarrhoea. On average, it takes five to six days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show however, it can take up to fourteen days.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. We can protect ourselves and others from infection by washing our hands or using alcohol-based rubs frequently and not touching our faces.

This disease has spread to every continent in world and we have currently over two million (2,000,000) confirmed cases worldwide with over one hundred thousand (100,000) deaths and over six hundred thousand (600,000) recovered cases. In Nigeria, there are over five hundred (500) confirmed cases with over one hundred recovered cases and about nineteen (19) deaths.

As a result of the alarming at which the COVID- 19 virus spreads, nations of the world have decided to go on a lockdown; closing all borders of their countries, schools and preventing social gatherings.

This lockdown has affected so many small-scale entrepreneurs in terrible ways. The market sellers have been forced to stop selling hereby having no source of income to provide for the feeding of their families during this lockdown period.

Economies all over the world have started crashing bringing them to worst they've been in decades. Hospitals and clinics all over the world have been overloaded by infected patients which are mostly people in the Intensive Care Unit.

The Nigerian economy was not prepared for the havoc coming up them due to this pandemic. The price of crude oil (the mainstay of the Nigerian economy) tumbled like never in the last 20 years. It went to as low as below \$20 per barrel from above \$60 just before the pandemic. It has never been this bad in the last two decades and this has made a mess of the Nigerian federal government's budget estimates for 2020; making salaries payment, debt obligations and other projections uncertain. This is clearly so because the price of crude oil, which contributes over 90% of Nigeria's externally generated revenue, now hovers around \$30 per barrel, which is far less than the budget's benchmark of \$57 per barrel, and this signifies tough times ahead.

The truth is if COVID-19 breaks out in Nigeria at even a quarter of the scale seen in Italy, the entire health system would go under within days. According the WHO (2004), there are approximately 5 hospital beds per 10,000 people in Nigeria, 12 times less than what used to be the case in 1988. The University College Hospital, Ibadan with the highest bed spaces only boasts of about 900; most other Teaching and General Hospitals (mostly public) have less than half of this capacity.

The overall intervention on health in Nigeria has been recurrently unimpressive and in a constant free-fall, usually below 5% of total federal government's budget and far below the WHO's recommended 15% of the budget. Nigeria's 2020 health budget is a paltry N427 billion, equivalent of \$1.18 billion, in a country of 200 million people. Even at that, N336 billion (70%) of this is budgeted for recurrent expenditure – medical staff salaries, office running, among others. Only 46 billion naira is earmarked for capital expenditure on medical infrastructure and equipment while just 44 billion naira is set aside for actual service delivery which comes out to N220 (\$0.6) per citizen per year. In comparison, South Africa with a population of 56 million has a healthcare budget almost 12 times that of Nigeria, at \$12 billion. Other African nations like Ghana, Angola, Egypt, Gabon, Morocco and Tunisia, according to World Bank records, also spend more per capita on healthcare than Nigeria.