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REPORT

THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECT OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTIONS OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.

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THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

COVID-19 is the specific illness related to the current pandemic. A 'pandemic' means a disease that has spread on a global scale, not necessarily that it is deadly. The acronym, provided by the World Health Organization, stands for '**coronavirus disease 2019**,' referring to the year the virus was first detected. The name of the virus is **SARS-CoV-2**. The coronavirus is actually not one type of virus. It is a large family of viruses. That family includes SARS and other minor to major respiratory illnesses, ones that affect your breathing. Coronaviruses can be spread between animals and people. That's what happened with this current strain.

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) that started out as an epidemic in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and then spread rapidly to other parts of the world affecting every continent on earth, except Antarctica eventually ended up as a pandemic and 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.

By the early hours of 12 April 2020, the overall statistics of COVID-19 (Coronavirus infections) and associated deaths remain alarming and fearful. The viral infection continued to gallop; it is now over the 1.8million mark for all cases in 203 countries and territories across all continents of the world – Asia, North and South America, Europe, Australia and Africa. The number of deaths related to coronavirus is now [at the time of writing] well over 120,000. The statistics are alarming because the rise to the 1.8 million confirmed cases took less than 4 months

A country like Nigeria with an estimated population of 200 million (15% of Africa's 1.3billion people) has also been struck with the pandemic and currently has 665 confirmed cases of COVID-19 , 188 recovered cases and 22 deaths as of 21st April 2020. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-19.

EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS

As parts of the efforts to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government ordered a lockdown on Lagos, Ogun and the FCT Abuja (which have the highest number of coronavirus cases combined) 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.

This restriction that has been enforced on citizens of Nigeria have taken a turn for the worse as people of the country do not have the necessary resources that they need. In that case citizens may not be able to apply this restriction favourably. 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 and people won't just sit at home while their kids are starving hence they will be forced to leave the house for fear of hunger rather than fear of the virus so as to be able to cater for the kids. Most families don't have enough money to stockpile food for the duration of the lockdown as they earn their money daily and not monthly.

A major effect of the lockdown is Hunger. 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 goods that would be very much needed in other households.

Another effect is the fall in household consumption in Nigeria which will stem from

- partial (or full) restrictions on movement, thus causing consumers to spend primarily on essential goods and services;
- Secondly, low expectations of future income, particularly by workers in the gig economy that are engaged on a short-term/contract basis, as well as the working poor in the informal economy; and
- Thirdly, the erosion of wealth and expected wealth as a result of the decline in assets such as stocks and home equity. Movement restrictions have not only reduced the consumption of nonessential commodities but have affected the income-generating capacity of these groups, thus reducing their consumption expenditure.

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. Labour 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.

The restrictions on movement of people and border closures foreshadow a decline in exports. Already, countries around the world have closed their borders to nonessential traffic, and global supply chains for exports have been disrupted. Although the exports of countries that devalue their currency due to the fall in the price of commodities (like Nigeria), will become more affordable, the limited markets for nonessential goods and services nullifies the envisaged positive effect on net exports.

Poverty and religion are also a major issues at play, with some saying obeying the government's stay-at-home order will mean dying of hunger at home.

In conclusion, though the lockdown is considered a necessary step to take, it will not prove effective if people are still leaving their houses. Nigerians need to understand the fact that if they do not strictly adhere to the lockdown instructions, the coronavirus will kill them faster than hunger will.