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THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.

The coronavirus disease (COVID 19) that started out as an epidemic in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and ended up as a pandemic has thrown the whole world into a war-like situation. Scores of thousands of deaths have been recorded cumulatively for all countries around the world. Healthcare 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. Global and local economies stand at their worst in decades; the world economy is now declared to be in recession by the World Bank, and could eventually lead to the deepest depression since 1929. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of the virus in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-2. On March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun state, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen.

Nigeria which is one of the most populous countries on the continent with an estimated population of 200 million has 493 confirmed cases of COVID 19 as of 18 April 2020. These numbers are, however, far from the true reflection of the situation in Nigeria, based on the fact that testing is not being carried out on a large scale and the virus is now spreading communally. The Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) stated earlier in this month that the present testing volume is 500 tests per day and hoped to increase this capacity to 1000 or more testing per day in the coming weeks. Thus far, less than 5000 tests have been carried out in a population of 200 million. Presently, health officials are going from home to home to conduct tests due to the rapid rise in the rate of infections, in a single day over 50 cases were recorded. Health experts have raised alarms over the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, warning that the country's unprepared and underfunded healthcare system could quickly become overwhelmed. The Nigerian government is constantly criticized by citizens for its lack of action in fixing the country's healthcare system. Millions do not have access to adequate healthcare, with public hospitals at substandard levels and private healthcare too expensive for most to afford in a country with a high poverty rate. The coronavirus pandemic has brought the healthcare problems to light again, with angry citizens taking to social media to suggest that government officials who contract the virus should stay in their own states and be treated by public healthcare systems they have refused to fix. Despite the fact that the Nigerian healthcare system is pitiful, due to the timely intervention of the Nigerian government and the allotment of funds, provision of isolation centers, provision of a daily salary for healthcare workers treating victims of this pandemic as a form of encouragement and source of income in these hard times. These are the efforts of the Nigerian government to make the best out of a bad situation, it might not be adequate but this is not a time to point fingers but help in every way we can no

matter how small. Personally I believe the Nigerian government should be commended, due to inability of Nigeria as a nation to handle such a crises and the amount of money at our disposal

In an attempt to curtail the virus, the country's economic capital Lagos placed a ban on gatherings of more than 20 people. All schools have been closed and religious gatherings have been banned. The federal government has also ordered the closure of all international airports. The effect of the restriction measures to slow the spread of the virus are already being felt in Nigeria's largest city Lagos state. Small businesses and markets traders have been hardest hit as a stay at home order was passed by the government for two weeks, but due to the increase in cases this lockdown was extended. The extension of the lock down is expected to add to the hardship of millions of Nigerians living hand -to-mouth, often on less than a dollar a day. The president said he is fully aware of the great difficulties experienced especially by those who earn a daily wage, but despite these realities, we must not change the restrictions as it is paramount to the curtail of the spread of this novel virus. At local markets on the outskirts of the capital, that is Abuja, the restriction in movement has disrupted supply of farm produce, the only few who are able to supply have to bribe security agents, hence increasing the price of these essential commodities. In theory the supply and distribution of food should be exempted from the transport restrictions but those measures are proving difficult to enforce properly. Abuja markets management limited, who runs several markets and shopping precincts in the Nigerian capital will be requesting that all stallholders, market workers and staff wear protective face masks during supply and sale of essential food items, in a new initiative to combat the spread of the virus in the nation. Fish markets and farmers are to be open at specific times and on designated days but only food and essential items will be available. The government has pledged a series of support measures to ease the financial pain for the most vulnerable, but there have been widespread complaint that not enough is being done for those facing hunger. Due to the lack of means to procure funds there has been a spike in crime during the lockdown, as police arrested almost 200 suspects in lagos and ogun state. There was even an incident of a gang of armed robbers in sururlere ,lagos state, who called themselves the "100 million boys armed robber gang". According to the residents they received a letter supposed to be from this so called gang, advising them to prepare for their coming and prepare to give them what they want to avoid more trouble. They apparently instructed them not to involve the police or military as such actions will result in death or injuries. As it stands the residents live in constant fear of this so called gang members, no attacks have been recorded and the police is yet to respond on this issue. This is one of the fall outs of this lockdown and restriction of movement.

On the other hand officials are insisting that the measures are needed to contain the virus which, if it gets out of hand could overwhelm an already weak health system. But farmers, sellers and consumers complain the fight against the virus has turned Nigeria into a patchwork of roadblocks and regulations that have ruptured business links. Importers are also facing major hurdles that have seen the volume of goods coming into Lagos through its clogged port dwindle. The banks are closed and though theoretically it is possible to pay customs duties online, not all importers are able to do so ,as a result volume of deliveries of cargo are probably down by 50%. Analysts have warned there could still be much harder times ahead as the lockdown pushes up the cost and upsets supply chains. As the pandemic is set to be around for at least the next few months, we believe that consumers should prepare for even more price increases. This development would have important implications for the health of the economy and largely determine whether the country's present anemic growth track turns into a full downturn in the

economy of the nation.

As a nation and as individuals such a crises was not expected ,at the beginning of this year no one knew what horrors this year held .As millions around the world lose their lives on a daily basis ,loved ones gone ,an unplanned demise, shortage of food .Leaders of great nations around the world thrown into complete confusion .Sporting event all postponed ,travel bans implemented .It is sad to say that a mere biological entity now controls the affairs of men ,it dictates ,where we are to go ,whom we are to see ,what we are to eat .The silent prayers on the minds of many around the world is the rate at which this virus is spreading in other parts of the world ,it should not happen in Africa because only God would be able to deliver us from this scourge .

