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***QUESTION***

**How is Asia as region responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrast this with the response in Africa.**

According to the World Health Organization Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment.  Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

The Corona Virus has plagued the Asian region beginning with China in Wuhan hubei has spread through the continent. According to official reports, As of 22 March 2020, at least one case of COVID-19 has been reported in every country in Asia except Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, while there are suspected cases in North Korea.

The highest numbers of reported cases in Asia at present are in China and Iran. Several Southeast Asian countries experienced a significant rise in cases following a Tabligh Akbar in Malaysia event from February 27 to March 1 at a mosque in Kuala Lumpur, where many people are believed to have been infected. The event had about 16,000 attendees, including about 1,500 from outside Malaysia.Attendees shared food, sat close together, and held hands at the event. According to guests, the leaders of the event didn't talk about COVID-19 precautions, but most attendees washed their hands during the event. Malaysian authorities were criticized for allowing the event to go forward

.**How is Asia as a region responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

* **Implementation Policy of Self-Isolation and Social distancing**

China first reported cases of "mysterious Sars-like pneumonia" to the WHO on 31 December. At this point there was no confirmed human-to-human transmission, and little was known about the virus, but within three days Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong had all stepped up screening at border points - Taiwan even checked passengers on flights from Wuhan before they got off the plane. As scientists learned more about the virus, it became apparent that people without symptoms could still be contagious. So testing would be crucial. Till today these countries still practice this policy of self-isolation and social distancing and are making significant progress in containing the spread of the virus. In Contrast in to the response in Africa, There is little cooperation in maintaining social distancing and Isolation, although it is strictly enforced through the imposing of curfew. But Africa as a continent failed to act fast like China in the outbreak of this Virus because there was this perception that 'China is very far away and nothing's going to happen'."

* **They are making tests extensive, and affordable for the public**

Most countries in Asia have taken time to screen the population and test them for this virus .The way they stepped up and screened the population was really remarkable," says Ooi Eng Eong, a professor in emerging infectious diseases at the National University of Singapore.

Cases in South Korea spiked initially. However, it swiftly developed a test for the virus - and has now tested more than 290,000 people. It conducts about 10,000 tests daily for free. A country like South Korea had a rapid approvals system in place for infectious disease tests, following an outbreak of Middle East Respiratory syndrome in 2015 that left 35 dead.

By contrast, testing in the Africa was delayed - initial test kits were faulty, and private laboratories found it hard to get their tests approved. Many people struggled to get a test, and they were expensive. Only the politicians and wealthy citizens had access to these kits.

## They are using the policy of Trace and isolate

It's not enough to just test those with symptoms - tracing those with who they were in contact has been key.

In Singapore, detectives have contact-traced more than 6,000 people - locating individuals with CCTV footage, testing them, and ordering them to self-isolate until their results are clear. In Hong Kong, contact tracing goes back to two days before someone develops symptoms.

They have also adopted intrusive ways of ensuring that those ordered to self-isolate actually stay at home. In Hong Kong, new arrivals from abroad are required to wear electronic bracelets to track their movements, while in Singapore those self-isolating are contacted several times a day, and required to send photographic proof of their whereabouts.

Singapore has hefty penalties - including jail terms - for anyone who breaks a "stay at home" order. It stripped one offender of his residency rights.

In contrast many countries in the Africa will find it hard to adopt such measures due to their larger populations, and greater civil liberties.

## They are Keeping the public well informed and on side

"Outbreak response involves being transparent - that stops people panicking and hoarding things," says Prof Ooi.

## China came under fire for being slow to acknowledge the outbreak. It allowed a large political gathering to take place in Wuhan even as concerns grew. The authorities also punished doctors who tried to warn others - sparking fury after one died from the virus. It has since been praised for effectively slowing the spread of the virus, after imposing a massive lockdown and up scaling its hospital capacity. But critics say such extreme measures were only required because its initial response was slow.

## Some governments have used technology to update residents in great detail. Hong Kong provides an online dashboard of all cases - which includes a map that shows the individual buildings where cases were found. South Korea issues mobile alerts letting people know if they were in the vicinity of a patient.

## In Singapore, the government has been praised for its clear communications on coronavirus, including a speech by the prime minister which encouraged people to stop panic buying. Its measures have had widespread public support - helped by the fact Singapore has a long history of emphasizing collective responsibility for national security. And Singaporean media does not tend to challenge the official line.

By contrast, in Africa most Presidents have often contradicted health officials about the severity of the outbreak and the number of test kits available. The government has also been unable to provide information on the number of people who have been tested, as many private laboratories have not been their feeding data.

## Citizens are cooperating with the government

It's far too simplistic to say, as some have, that Asians are more likely to comply with government orders. In Hong Kong, public trust in the government is low - and there have been months of anti-government protests. Prof Pangestu believes that while Hong Kongers do not trust the government, "they are very proud of Hong Kong, and see the outbreak as a threat to [the territory's] identity".

Meanwhile, Karin Huster, a Seattle-based nurse and emergency field co-coordinator for Doctors without Borders, spent a month in Hong Kong working on coronavirus training. She noticed many there had a strong "individual sense of responsibility" because they remembered the 2003 Sars outbreak that hit the territory particularly hard.

By contrast, Africa has seen little cooperation. In Nigeria traders still find a way to go and sell goods in public places putting their health and everyone else at risk. Curfews and compulsory lockdowns have been imposed in states in Nigeria.

**In my opinion,** the outbreak hit many countries in Asia several weeks earlier - and some have been praised for containing the number of infections. For example, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan all kept case numbers relatively low - despite their proximity to mainland China. Africa should learn from the way Asia are responding to this disease outbreak