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**EFFECTS OF COVID 19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria’s federal and state governments should ensure the rights to food, shelter, and other basic necessities for 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. President Muhammadu Buhari [announced](https://twitter.com/MBuhari/status/1249764340523307009) on April 13, 2020 that a lockdown, in place since March 30 in Lagos state, neighboring Ogun state, and Abuja, the nation’s capital, would continue for another 14 days. As of April 12, Nigeria had [343](https://twitter.com/NCDCgov/status/1249802077498494976) confirmed cases. Several other state governments, including [Rivers](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/coronavirus/384084-coronavirus-wike-announces-complete-lockdown-of-rivers.html), [Kaduna](https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/coronavirus-kaduna-govt-announces-total-lockdown/rwzssfm), and [Ekiti](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/386268-fayemi-ends-self-isolation-relaxes-ekiti-lockdown.html" \t "_blank), have also initiated full or partial lockdowns.“Millions of Nigerians observing the COVID-19 lockdown lack the food and income that their families need to survive,” said [Anietie Ewang](https://www.hrw.org/about/people/anietie-ewang), Nigeria researcher at Human Rights Watch. “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.” Nigeria has the biggest economy in Africa, with gross domestic product per capita of [$2,028 in 2018](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=NG), more than twice that of its neighbors Benin, Chad, or Niger.Economic [data](https://wid.world/country/nigeria/) suggest that levels of inequality have not improved since.The lockdown does not apply to those providing [essential services](https://twitter.com/MBuhari/status/1244326530374938624?s=20), such as food distributors and retailers, including market stalls selling food and groceries, which[the government has said](https://www.tvcnews.tv/covid-19-lockdown-markets-to-open-from-10am-to-2pm-daily-fg/) can operate for four hours every 48 hours.

The lockdown, however, [prevents many Nigerians working in informal sectors](https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/31/africa/nigeria-lockdown-daily-wage-earners-intl/index.html) from traveling to work or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have [expressed fears](https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/31/africa/nigeria-lockdown-daily-wage-earners-intl/index.html) 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,” said Felix Morka, executive director of the Social Economic Rights Action Center, a Lagos-based nongovernmental organization. “Any disruption to their daily livelihood has a huge and significant impact on their ability to meet their most basic needs.”The informal sector, in which [more than 80 percent](https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20the%20Informal%20Economy%203rd%20Edition%202018.pdf) of Nigerians work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. In Lagos alone, according to research by nongovernmental organizations, [65 percent](https://ng.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2017/02/budgit_final_report_30.1.17.pdf) of the estimated [25 million](http://mepb.lagosstate.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2019/11/11.0-LAGOS-SOCIO-ECONOMIC-PROFILE.pdf) 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](https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20the%20Informal%20Economy%20-%20A%20Statistical%20Brief%20-%20for%20web.pdf) are poor.

On April 1, the Humanitarian Affairs Ministry [began paying](https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria-government-begins-distribution-of-n20000-relief-fund-to-homes/) 20,000 Naira (US$ 52) to families registered in the National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households set up by the Buhari administration in 2016 to combat poverty. The government said that each family on the register will receive monthly [cash payments for four months.](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/385440-nigerian-govt-pays-n20000-to-5000-abuja-households-minister.html)These payments are likely to reach only a fraction of the Nigerians who will need economic assistance, Human Rights Watch said. Farouq [said](https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/n20000-for-vulnerable-no-section-of-nigeriall-be-left-says-farouq/) on March 31 that the National Social Register included 11,045,537 people from 2,644,493 households, far fewer than the [over 90 million Nigerians](http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/NGA) [estimated](https://worldpoverty.io/map) to live in extreme poverty, on less than $1.90 a day. Buhari [said](https://twitter.com/MBuhari/status/1249763175463084036) on April 13 that the National Social Register would be expanded from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million in the next two weeks.The government’s failure to disclose key details of the cash transfer program has also cast doubt on how many people it includes and who will benefit, Human Rights Watch said. On April 4, the Social and Economic Rights Accountability Project (SERAP), a nongovernmental organization, [filed a freedom of information request](http://serap-nigeria.org/serap-asks-fg-cbn-to-provide-spending-details-on-covid-19-relief-funds-school-feeding.ngo/) seeking details on the government’s relief funds. “We are seriously concerned that millions of the country’s poorest and most vulnerable people have not benefited from the announced palliatives, donations, reported cash payments, cash transfers and other benefits,” the [group said](http://serap-nigeria.org/serap-asks-fg-cbn-to-provide-spending-details-on-covid-19-relief-funds-school-feeding.ngo/).

Under international human rights law, Nigeria’s government has an obligation to protect people’s right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and nutrition, the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to social security. In times of economic crisis, countries must demonstrate that they have made every effort to mobilize all available resources, including international assistance, and allocate them in the way that maximizes respect for human rights, including by taking into account the precarious situation of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals or groups. Governments are obligated to ensure access to food, water, health care, and other basic needs for everyone at all times, and in particular those subject to lockdown and other severe restrictions on movement.

Nigeria’s federal government should urgently develop a plan to deliver social and economic assistance to the tens of millions of people who will lose income due to COVID-19, particularly informal workers who lack an adequate social safety net, Human Rights Watch said. Their exclusion from social protections violates their right to social security enshrined in international human rights law. This plan should be developed in consultation with community-based organizations with experience serving people living in poverty.The government should also clearly communicate its economic relief plans to the public and clarify eligibility, timelines, and procedures.“Nigeria’s federal and state governments have acknowledged the devastating impact that COVID-19 will have on the food and livelihood sources of the most vulnerable Nigerians,” Ewang said. “Now, they need to deploy more resources, creativity, and transparency to ensure the basic necessities of life for everyone.”

**REFERENCE**

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