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EFFECT OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. There are several Coronaviruses ranging from Middle East Respiratory Syndrome(MERS) to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome(SARS). The most recently discovered Coronavirus causes an infectious disease called COVID-19. The virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

Since the outbreak of the disease, there has been a worldwide lockdown as to which Nigeria is not an exception. Although, the lockdown has been enforced in the best interest of its citizens, it has come with unforeseen downsides.

The imposed lockdown has inadvertently put at risk the means of livelihood of virtually every citizen—public servants, self-employed workers, road-side sellers, hawkers amongst others. According to a research, 41.4% of household members were self-employed, 26.5% were in paid employment, 2.8% were employers of labour, 15.7% were unemployed while 13.6% were non-active in the labour force. A vast number of government workers were dismissed prior to the lockdown without payment of their salaries with some lucky ones being paid a percentage. Also, many workers were dismissed without job securities and without assurances of resuming their jobs in the event of the lockdown being lifted. Even if the lockdown were to be lifted, the chances that the Government would be able to pay-off its debts to its workers are appallingly low. This, according to the research means that 26.5% of Nigerians will have difficulty in providing for their families.

Numerous self-employed require the physical presence of an individual to facilitate trade. To the detriment of the owners of these businesses, the lockdown has resulted in the folding up of their businesses and consequently the lockdown of their sources of income. The lower class, which comprises of hawkers, roadside sellers and the likes, have it worse when it comes to getting the means the means by which they'll cope with the lockdown. The lower class majorly live on hand-to-mouth from their daily proceeds. People like this would inevitably starve during this lockdown because their major source of income has been cutoff. The middle and lower class are forced to go out with risk to their health and ultimately, life, to find a means by which they can provide basic needs for their families.

Also, according to a former Department of State Services boss, Dennis Amachree, there were indications there would be a sharp increase in criminal activities during and immediately after the COVID-19 lockdown. A great percent of the perpetrators of these crimes are youths whose major sources of income come from a variety of jobs on the streets such as drivers, road side sellers, to mention just a few. Of a truth, some of these said criminals might be involved due to

their despotic tendencies but it is however important to note that amongst them are also ones who have lost their livelihood and have resorted to crime as a means of fending for themselves. It is also important to note that in contrast to conventional items stolen during robberies, most items stolen during this lockdown are food items. This only emphasizes the negative effect of the lockdown on people who previously lived on hand-to-mouth. Crime, however, is not limited to youths as Nigerian police officers and soldiers have been reported to be abusing human rights through illegal practices like extortion, illegal detention, use of excessive force, arbitrary arrests and so on. It is obvious that these officers are abusing their authority and continuously harming citizens through their activities.

Lastly, there has been a spike in incidences of domestic violence since the lockdown, especially against women. These violations range from physical abuse to emotional abuse and the worst of them all, sexual violence. Gender-based violence has been reported increasingly with almost no one to curb them. There was a reported case of the alleged rape of an infant by a 34-year old man somewhere in Lagos. Also in Ekiti, an NGO known as GRIP has reportedly responded to 54 cases of domestic violence.

The Lagos State Domestic And Sexual Violence Response Team is using technology(video conferencing) to solve these issues in homes where they have arisen and there have been reported successes. The coordinator in the state, Mrs Titilayo Adeniyi claimed they have had an increase in reported cases of domestic violence and are dealing with them accordingly.

It goes without saying that the Government needs to find a solution to all these difficulties which have arisen from the lockdown.