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

The Corona virus pandemic is an ongoing pandemic of the Corona virus disease tagged COVID-19. The first outbreak was recorded in Wuhan, China in December 2019. It was declared a pandemic by the World Health organization on 11th March, 2020. As of March ending, 1.7 billion people worldwide have come under some form of Lockdown(The guardian, 2020) and Nigerians were no exception

According to the World Health Organization, 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 first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced by the Nigeria center for disease control (NCDC) on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen according to PM news.

On 18 March, the management of the National Youth Service Corps suspended the 2020 Batch A stream one 21 days orientation exercise indefinitely. The orientation exercise commenced on 10 March and was expected to end on 30 March, before it was suspended after just 8 days. Later the same day, Nigeria placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high cases of the virus, the countries are; United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Japan and Iran. Lagos State government banned religious gatherings of over 50 worshippers for 30 days, Ogun State also banned any gathering of more than 50 people for 30 days. Kwara State and Lagos State announced the indefinite closure of their public and private schools, while Zamfara State, Sokoto State, Katsina State, Niger State, Kano State, Jigawa State, Kebbi State and Kaduna State also closed down their schools for 30 days from 23 March. The Nigeria Football Federation suspended all football activities for four weeks.

As at 31st March, most state government have placed their state either on total or partial lockdown with most state borders closed from outsiders. The lockdown meant that only essential businesses or aspects of businesses were allowed to be open and this has affected Nigerians in several ways.

During this lockdown, the vice-president of Nigeria had tweeted that research showed that many Nigerians are daily income earners. This assertion is of course true according to a survey by Renaissance Capital in 2011. With the lockdown in full effect, Nigerians in this category have found it difficult to earn wages that would be able to sustain them. Most of them have beckoned to the state and federal government to come to their help.

Consequently, the need to survive has led to an increase in the crime rate in the country. In Lagos for instance, it is reported that a robbery Gang known as "One million boys" has made life a living hell for most residents. The members of this gang are boys from the Ajegunle area known to house the very low income earners in the city. These boys engage in activities ranging from raping, robbery, maiming and so on.

Furthermore there has been reports of brutal treatments from the police and armed forces. A good number of Nigerians are defying the Stay at home order in search of food and earning opportunities. This has been met with an overwhelming brutality from the armed forces and as a result, the force that should be protecting lives are now in enmity with the very lives they seek to protect. On Sunday, 18th April, a businessman was shot by a police officer in Ohafia area of Abia state. While on Friday, 3rd April, Joseph Pessu was also shot by a police officer. The tragedy took a different twist when a Police officer working with the Lockdown task force shot another police woman who pleaded with them to allow traders sell.Human rights activists in Nigeria say that at least 18 people have been killed by security forces enforcing the lockdown.

The above stated facts underlines the fact that the Lockdown has had a devastating effect on the average Nigerian citizens. This therefore begs for sustainable plans for the citizens of Nigeria to prevent further harm.