



POST COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERSPECTIVES AND RECOVERY PROCESS IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of Corona virus since December 2019 in a city called Wuhan in China has brought a nightmare in the world that can never be forgotten in a hurry. Developed nations of the world have been on the receiving end with more fatalities that nobody can ever imagine or believe. Quality and sophisticated health facilities could neither stop the spread and high mortality rates especially in advanced nations with standard hygiene and good living styles. The sudden entry of the COVID-19 in Africa took the continent by storm with predictions of devastating effects and highest death rates. State emergency rules and lockdowns were declared across various nations in the continent in order to arrest the pandemic velocity on the poor citizens. During these periods, different perspectives and contradictions came up on how to cushion the effects on the economy and proper safety measures after the pandemic. This research is to critically analyse various opinions and my personal contributions on what African leaders need to put in place for quick economy recovery. Looking inwards on how to reposition our poor health facilities and other abandoned projects for the progress of each nation within the continent.

KEYWORDS: *pandemic, lockdown, covid-19, virus, outbreak, diseases, symptoms, economy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 nicknamed (COVID-19) emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, China. While the outbreak in China is almost over, this highly contagious disease is currently spreading across the world, with a daily increase in the number of affected countries, confirmed cases and infection-related deaths. Updated data are published on a daily basis on the ECDC, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) websites. On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of COVID-19 constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Based on the high levels of global spread and the severity of COVID-19, on 11 March 2020, the Director-General of the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. COVID-19 is an acute respiratory disease caused by a newly emerged zoonotic coronavirus.

The virus is transmitted from human to human via droplets coughed or exhaled by infected persons and by touching droplet-contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. The most commonly reported clinical symptom in laboratory-confirmed cases is fever (88%), followed by a dry cough (68%), fatigue (38%), sputum production (33%), dyspnoea (19%), sore throat

(14%), headache (14%) and myalgia or arthralgia (15%). Less common symptoms are diarrhoea (4%) and vomiting (5%). Around 80% of the reported cases in China had mild-to-moderate disease (including non-pneumonia and pneumonia cases), 13.8% had severe disease and 6.1% were critical (respiratory failure, septic shock, and/or multiple organ dysfunction/failure).

The corona virus landed in Africa in the month of February 2020 with first contact experienced in Egypt. For Africans, it was like a death sentence but speculated symptoms gave them more consolation which seems to be prevalence among the people.

The general belief was that coming to Africa will be more devastating with presumption of having the highest death rate according to WHO predictions. This view came as a result of not having good medical facilities and other needed equipment to contain with the spread of the virus. Current pictures show, Africans might escape the worst of the pandemic, but will have to be cautious about it.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office has reported South Africa, Algeria and Nigeria are countries with the highest COVID-19 cases in Africa as cases increased to about 86,000 as at Tuesday 20/05/2020.

This disclosure was made via an update on its official Twitter account, @WHOAFRO dated



Tuesday 20/05/2020. According to World Health Organisation Lesotho, Comoros and Seychelles were countries currently with the lowest confirmed cases in the region.

It said that Lesotho had only one confirmed case with zero death; Comoros had 11 reported cases and one death while Seychelles recorded 11 confirmed cases with no death.

“There are over 86,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases on the African continent – with more than 33,000 recoveries and 2,700 deaths,” it said.

According to the report, South Africa had 16,433 cases and 286 deaths followed by Algeria with 7,201 cases and 555 deaths, while Nigeria had 6,175 confirmed cases and 191 deaths.

It added that Ghana had 5,735 reported cases and 29 deaths, while Cameroon recorded 3, 529 confirmed cases, and 140 deaths.

2. CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACTS OF TOTAL LOCKDOWN IMPOSED BY AFRICAN LEADERS

Social Distancing

According Professor Charles Soludo (2020), social distancing in most parts of Africa will remain impractical. Communal living is not just about culture, it is a matter of economic survival. The question is the end game for a poor society such as Africa? New infections have re-emerged in Wuhan, and both Singapore and South Korea are going back to the drawing board. Since we cannot sustain lockdowns indefinitely or even until the spread stops/declines, it means that we would sooner or later remove the restrictions. What happens then? There would still be infections, which can still spread anyway. Why not then adopt sustainable solutions early enough without weeks or months of avoidable waste and hardship?

Funding And Provision Of Palliatives During Lockdown

Next, African states cannot pay for lockdowns. Many countries depend on budget support from bilateral and multilateral donors, and with acute balance of payments problems. They do not even have leg rooms to simply print money. Most are now begging for debt relief and applying for urgent loans from the IMF and the World Bank. In Africa, both the governments and the people are begging for “palliatives”. In the western societies from where we copied the lockdown/border closure, their citizens are literally paid to stay at home (by silently dropping monies into their accounts plus other incentives). Despite these, check out the restiveness/protests in several of these countries and the unrelenting pressure to eliminate the restrictions (even in countries where thousands are dying each day due to Covid-19).

Level Of Proverty In The Continent

With some 80% of Africa’s population living from hand to mouth on daily toil and struggle, complete lockdown would never be practicable, almost impossible in our social settings. In most cases, the orders simply create opportunities for extortion for the security agencies: those who pay, move about! Attempts to force everyone into a lockdown for extended period may indeed be enforcing a hunger/stress-induced mass genocide. More people could, consequently, be dying out of hunger and other diseases than the actual Covid-19. In normal times, thousands die every day in Africa due to other illnesses and communicable diseases.

Lockdowns worsen these as many of the victims of these now have little or no cash to attend to themselves. Soon the pharmacy shops will run out of imported drugs. Even local pharmaceutical manufacturing firms need imported inputs but cannot efficiently source them under lockdowns/border closure (even more so with restrictions in China and India). Soon local, adulterated ones may fill the gap. A summary point is that the millions of persons in the street, who are struggling between life and death each day with numerous other challenges do not, and will never, understand why so much additional hardship is being foisted upon them because of the novel coronavirus. For most of them (wrongly though), it is an elite problem since for them, the “hunger/other disease virus is more dangerous than corona virus”. The hungry and desperate millions may be forced to take desperate actions to survive, and little surprise that crime has spiked in several African countries with lockdowns.

Other Impacts:

According Lukman AbdurRaheem (2020), other strategic impacts will be experienced as follows:

Political Impact:

1. Weakened governance capacity
2. Suspension of direct diplomatic relations.
3. Delayed signing of bilateral and multilateral agreements.
4. Prevent governments and their agencies from discharging direct oversight functions because of fear of infection and death.

Economic Impact:

1. Shutdown of business activities.
2. Inflation and hike in prices
3. Cut-off of supply chain
4. Disruption of business activities of artisans.
5. Fall in oil prices
6. Temporary unemployment for some and permanent loss of jobs and incomes for others.
7. Value of various currencies would crash and is crashing already.
8. Savings of ordinary people will vanish because they will keep on withdrawing their



money for food and basic things of life that are already inflated.

Social Impact:

1. Shutdown of places of worship.
2. Shutdown of recreation centres.
3. Compulsory observance of social distancing including self-isolation for some people.
4. Evolving new ways of social and cultural interactions.
5. Disruption of weddings, concerts, sports, conferences, parties and other social events.
6. Restriction on freedom and social liberty of people.
7. Emergence of new ways of greeting and strange social interactions.

Technological Impact:

1. Widespread E-activities: E-governance. E-commerce etc.
2. Increased relevance of ICT softwares and application.
3. Increased online social interaction.
4. Increased acceptance of online education and training for students.
5. Emergence of forced online Communities.

Environmental Impact:

1. Increased environmental awareness for the people.
2. Growing concerns about personal hygiene by the people.
3. Increased used of sanitizers and disinfectants.
4. Proliferation of dangerous substances in the public domain as sanitizers and protective masks.
5. The earth is heavily abused with toxic materials, pollutants and life-threatening biological weapons.

Legal Impact:

1. Curtailed fundamental human rights.
2. Delayed dispensation of justice
3. Increased use of force on people.
4. Close down of courts.
5. Inability to conduct due diligence on legal aspects of businesses.
6. Forced decongestion of prisons/amenity

1. Preparing For Post Lockdown Advocacy Using An Office Setting Post Covid-19 Lockdown; Safety And Health Advisory

The last couple of months have seen us all locked at home as part of official steps to contain the spread of the killer Covid-19 especially in Africa. From all indications, Nigeria, Ghana is likely to relax

the lockdown very soon, and may replace with a daily curfew. Part of the plan is to now insist on the facemask in public etc. It will become mandatory. In readiness for this new regime, we should be well advised and prepared. In addition, we also need to put all measures in place towards guaranteeing maximum protection at the work place for everyone. For everyone's safety, it will be necessary to ensure the fullest compliance. Truth is this Covid-19 is too deadly to joke with.

Wearing Of Face Masks:

It is now mandatory to wear this within the office. Indeed from all indications, everyone must now wear the facemasks outside our homes. The Company will make arrangements for all staff to have the masks to be worn within the office. There will be no excuse for not wearing the mask within the office at all times.

Sanitizers, Hand Washing Et Al:

All citizens must mandatorily apply the sanitizers before going and coming home. We must have them at the gate house for visitors, the reception, and at key points within the offices, marketplace etc. No visitor comes into the agency without washing their hands with soap and water or applying the sanitizer. Staff are more encouraged to wash your hands with soap and water, which is also a strong preventive. Every time anyone goes out of the office, on return, the sanitizer must be used. The receptionists will ensure full compliance. This is also one of the must-do expectations from the government.

The plan should be to create reasonable spacing between individuals to comply with the social distancing instruction. In addition, let us suspend hugging and handshakes. Also all shared cups, plates and eating utensils need to be well washed and kept dry. Please don't share your cardigans or jackets as well. If anyone is cold, they must use their personal clothing to keep warm.

Other Safety Measures:

Staff must observe routines like coughing into our elbows. Office assistants must regularly wipe door handles, toilet seats etc., with methylated spirit and disinfectants.

Agency Vehicles:

The inside of official and pool cars must be regularly wiped with sanitizers or methylated spirits (steering wheels; gear knobs; hand brakes; door handles etc.) Drivers must also use sanitizers before they drive these cars. For those who have official or private drivers, please ensure your drivers comply. There is enough proof to show that these are serious contact points.

Vitamin C:

Staff are encouraged to buy and take regular doses of Vitamin C to build the immune system. This is critical. Recommended dosage is 1000mg daily. Staff are also encouraged to consume fruits rich in



Vitamin C. The objective is to boost and build up the immune system. Sadly, many patients reportedly died because of weak immune system.

Fluids:

You are also encouraged to hydrate very regularly by drinking lots of fluid, especially room temperature water. In addition, at least early in the day and late in the evening, staff are encouraged to take hot beverages. The reason is that in the early period of the C-19, the virus spends between three and four days around the throat area before moving to the lungs where it does the main damage. Taking lots of room temperature fluids and hot beverages at least twice daily helps flush it down to the digestive area where the digestive fluids reportedly can neutralize it.

Vigilance:

For everyone's sake, staff must be observant and remain vigilant. Should you notice any member of staff showing symptoms like persistent cough, sneezing, showing signs of being generally unwell etc., please notify management immediately, so that such a staff is assisted towards seeking medical observation and help. Such staff must promptly present relevant medical reports before they are allowed to return to work.

Others:

Screen savers must be developed to remind all staff of the need to regularly comply with these instructions. We must also design and paste posters in strategic positions within the office conveying these key instructions and the need to comply.

Office Sanitation:

Organisations must liaise with the relevant state authorities to come and disinfect our offices with their special disinfectants. This must include the external and internal spaces. We also want to confirm from them how regularly we need to do this. We are doing all these and more to ensure that we are all kept safe. Coronavirus is deadly.

2. Imperatives Of Working Remotely From Homes- Post Covid-19

For some months now, surveys after survey have shown that the majority of people want to work from home. While this world-wide shutdown didn't happen to test out just how effective working from home is, it's been a nice side effect. And some people have discovered that they hate it.

Now, it's important to remember that Corona-commuting is not the same as normal tele-commuting. When you work from home in regular times, your kids are at school, the cafés are open, and you're not concerned about you or your loved ones maybe. So, don't think this is how working from home has to be. It isn't. But, even working from home during normal times isn't something that works for everyone.

On the flip side, while some people are finding that they hate working from home, in their eyes, as the thoughts of giving up expensive leased office space dances before them. If everyone works from home, then overhead costs drop. It's not an insignificant expense.

But, before businesses decide to increase working from home, think through these things.

If you live in a large house where you can easily have dedicated office space, working from home can be great. If you live in a small apartment with four roommates, working from home is not a practical long-term solution. Depending on what you do, sitting at the kitchen table for hours on end can wreak havoc on your back and your roommates' patience.

Working at home works better for higher paid people with more resources at home. While working at home can save commuting costs (which can be substantial in some areas for some people), if you don't have enough space to have a dedicated desk and appropriate office chair, it won't work well.

Teamwork can be harder at home □

I'm not going to argue that you can't build a strong team remotely. I've worked from home for a month plus now and have built strong relationships with people who I've never actually met in person. It's possible. But it's harder.

It can seem awkward and like a huge time waster to ask at the beg- video conference if everyone is caught up doing something else. But, when you walk into the office in the morning and say, "Oh my word, please tell me you're watching this!" it's a casual conversation.

Those kinds of conversations do help for team building. When you get to know your coworkers as individuals, you're more willing to listen to their ideas and ignore their flaws.

People need people in Africa context □

Even though we like to say people are either extroverts or introverts, it's not that black and white. Human contact is an essential aspect of mental health. Some people need more contact than others. When working from home during normal times, you can go to a café, meet friends for lunch, or fulfill your people-needs with your healthy social life. That's enough for a lot of people! But, for some people, it's not enough. They need more contact, and working in an office

Work never ends □

When you work from home, boundaries can become confusing on all sides. Your neighbors see you at home and (if you're female) think you're available for free babysitting. Your boss knows your computer and all your materials are right there, so surely you can knock out this one project at 9:30 p.m at night via African time! It's easier to set boundaries with other people, though, then it is with yourself. It can be challenging to make yourself step away from



the “office” when it’s next to your bed. Days blur into nights, and there are no bright lines for off-and-on the clock.

All of this doesn’t mean I’m not a champion for working at home. I am! I love it. Or at least, I did love it, and I’ll love it again when children go back to school, and my favorite cafés re-open. But, if you have found that you hate working from home, there’s not something wrong with you.

If you’re a business owner that is tempted to go to a 100 percent remote model, think about how that moves will impact your business and your employees. It may be fantastic. It may not be. Talk with people before you make final decisions. And no matter what, everyone keep safe out there.

I am also putting forward arguments in favor of remote working (where this is possible):-

The environment is better off when we work from home, let’s do it for future generations. Our families are better off too, let’s do it for loved ones. Office politics is harder when you can’t grovel, let’s try it. The extra time from giving up our daily commute is good for our health, that’s a good reason to. Our wardrobe is much cheaper too, none of those ties & suits, I vote yes.

We eat healthier when we eat at home, that’s certainly an excellent reason. We spend less when we don’t have to commute, that should feel like a salary increase. Office bullying is harder when you work remotely, and when it occurs, easier to prove. Operating cost is lower when staff work remotely, and that should help businesses in these difficult times.

3. LOCKDOWN REFLECTIONS

The Big Picture In Lockdown*

In as much as COVID-19 pandemic is regrettable by what it portends for inclement times, I also want to say it can also be a blessing in disguise.

Brainstorming with a friend, we came to the conclusion that this is the best time to ask ourselves serious questions so as to reinvent oneself.

If you have been working for a company for more than 5yrs and you don't have 100k savings ... *You Need To Think*

If you have been doing a particular hustle for more than 5yrs and nothing to show for it... *You Need To Think.*

If you've spent one month at home under Lockdown drawing from your reserves without cash inflows from other sources.....*You Need To Think.*

IF You've spent 30 days at home browsing the internet, responding to greetings in Facebook, looking up pictures in Instagram, watching YouTube videos, responding to WhatsApp chats, calling everyone and nobody is calling you.... *You Need To Think.*

IF you've spent 30 days at home eating delicacies ,drinking choice wine, sleeping, watching movies and

exercising in your gym without reading a word from any book....*You Need To Think*

*30 days Lockdown means 720 idle hours. *720 idle hours translates to 43,200 minutes of idle time.

*8 Man hours work-time per day translates to 240 hours lost time or capacity under- utilization or inefficiency index.

Life has given us almost three months to think about ourselves and come out with a Grand Strategy and productive plan to stem the tide. What we are facing now is almost the same thing retirees face when they retire and even worse.

One thing to note for sure is that, at the end of this pandemic, many businesses will suffer severe setbacks and new ones will emerge out of thick skin. Start-Ups will swallow SMEs, Digital media will bury traditional media, and Artificial Intelligence will take out unskilled labour.

Billionaires will feel the heat and new ones will need longer time to emerge. So, ask yourself, which side will I belong to when this Lockdown is over?

Meanwhile, as we speak, most companies are also typing their own *redundancy* letters to be distributed. Don't spend your time waiting for *COVID-19* daily statistics and doing all manner of social media challenge.

It is only in the third world Africa inclusive that the Lockdown is considered holidays without electricity, ventilators, test kits and face masks.

4. WAY FORWARD

Summary And Recommendations:

As a matter of urgency, African countries should urgently open their borders for free flow of economic activities as well as quickly remove the stay at home/lockdown orders. Africa cannot sustain lockdowns measures.

Government should provides incentives like tax break and holidays for organisations in order to kick-start economic activities.

Banks should provide moratorium and lower interest rate on loans so that investors can go back to the draw board and map out strategies to revive the economy.

Companies will stay execution on retrenchment and take some hit on their profit margin. Jobs loss should not be considered now to avoid traumatic and psychological postures on the citizens.

A renewed push for economic diversification to ensure most of consumptions is provided locally and reduces pressure on our local currencies and create a balance trade margin.

Africa needs to shut her doors to develop inwards in order to revolutionize their economies. This is imminent because global economy has been negatively affected so nowhere to run to because every nation or continent is struggling to find a new road map.



Expanding or looking at International business at this point is not achievable as the coast is not clear and very rough at the moment. The International Business World is in jeopardy and still struggling to find a new footing through this Covid-19 pandemic. They are yet to focus on the effect of Covid-19 and how to navigate through its negative impact.

Looking inwards to develop local contents to ignite local economy in the communities where they are found and further development for international market is the way to go. This will create employment and grow local community and a summation of this in the continent will reflate the economy faster.

Massive development of the country's agricultural products with added value for export will bring foreign earnings. In Nigeria for instance, there are identified agricultural products from various communities that have been abandoned, undeveloped. This is the time to rejuvenate them. A mass agricultural programme to be put in place.

Policy relaxation to encourage MSMEs businesses is important particularly in community commercial activities. The use of locally fabricated component should greatly be encouraged. This is a product being looked for internationally. Intervention funds from governments and other international agencies should be shop for immediate rescue of the economies. These will engage part of our 65% young population in local content manufacturing and secure the future economy of African youths.

We need a total change in our mindset from leadership to citizenship. We need those that are committed to stemmed down or properly provide structures for poverty alleviation. This means, all intervention funds particularly for rural dwellers should be given through their local Microfinance Banks who can follow up on the financed projects. Too many unco-ordinated special purpose mechanisms for financing do not really provide expected results.

African leaders at different levels should be able to tackle weak health systems and infrastructure through establishment of standard laboratories, intensive care units, and isolation centres across their boundaries. The health infrastructure should be recalibrated for the good of the people, and in readiness for future emergencies. As long term measure, emphasis will be placed on integrating local content in proven researches in cure, and production of materials in the health sector.

Major rural road construction programmes and Mass housing programmes should be put in place to avoid more rural to urban drift. Large scale installation of residential solar systems, utilizing mainly local materials.

Governments should be time-sensitive on expenditures and to be prioritized over less critical spending and possibly financial controls are to be strengthened to detect, eliminate and sanction

instances of waste, funds misappropriation and corruption.

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