



**COVID-19 pandemic in Africa**  
**Our point of view**  
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## **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: A Brief Analysis of Three African Countries**

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### **Overview**

Over the past few months, the world has seen the phenomenon of COVID-19 outbreak. Countries have implemented a lockdown with the view to slow or halt the spread of coronavirus. Human movement has been restricted, the pandemic has disconcerted millions of lives, companies across the globe have been shut down, hospitals have been overwhelmed with high number of patients and death rates. Scientists around the World have been working tirelessly to find a solution to the pandemic. World leaders are confronted with the challenges, control and management of the disease has been a confusion to the leaders as they keep rattling with what to be done to put an end to the crisis.

However, the proliferation of COVID-19 in Africa will endanger millions of lives if the leaders do not wake up to the challenges. Most African countries lack the resources and infrastructure to sustain the lives of the citizens and to combat the disease. Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, most of the developed nations have supported their citizens in many areas, ranging from giving loans to businesses and providing financial assistance to their citizens. In Africa, where there are limited resources available to the citizens, overcoming this problem is questionable.

This report tends to assimilate the responses provided by three leading African countries - Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt. The report briefly analyses what the leaders have put in place to support the population since the lockdown.

Before the corona virus outbreak, many Africans make a living through a combination of agriculture, domestic animal keeping, daily wages,

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vending of small commodities, craftwork, taxi and bus drivers. Many of the people have housing, employment, and social services problem. Locking down the continent will not only increase the hunger crises; crime rate will also increase as a result of inadequate resources available to support the ever-growing population of the continent.

### **How Nigerian government responded to the crisis**

Healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria is poor and if not contained, there may be an estimated 20 million death in the country as a result of coronavirus pandemic. The lack of infrastructure and social services will invariably escalate the situation. It should be the responsibility of the government across all states to face the challenges we have never experienced in our generation and to ensure the citizens' rights to food, shelter, and other basic necessities due to the lockdown.

Despite the situation and condition in which the citizens were subjected to, as a result of the lockdown, the citizens were meant to rely on savings they do not have. It is on record that over 82 million people in Nigerians live on less than 1\$ a day and live from hand to mouth on a daily basis. The 23% of the middle class and rich people may be able to sustain the situation. But, how would the very poor survive the crisis? The amount of money the richest Nigerians earn annually from their wealth is sufficient to lift 2 million people out of poverty in a year. But the rich are self-centred; and are not interested in helping the poor citizens. At the start of the lockdown, the government of Nigeria announced economic assistance in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This unfortunately exposed inadequacies in Nigeria's social protection systems. The announcement gave room to those in power to enrich themselves more at the expense of the country's poorest and most vulnerable people. Millions of Nigerians during the lockdown lack food and income that their families need to survive according to Anietie Ewang – a Nigerian researcher at the Human Rights Watch. Despite Nigeria having the biggest economy in Africa, her citizens still wallow in abject poverty. The package unveiled by President Buhari to combat COVID-19 has raised series of uproar in social media about the challenges the citizens are faced relative to the hunger crisis since the lockdown. President Buhari promised the citizens financial assistance and food items to those most affected. But

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the reality is far from the promise. The assistance ended up in the hands of the very few in government.

### **What did South African government do differently?**

The President of South Africa – Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa has received praises for displaying a decisive leadership skill during this COVID-19 crisis so far. This has displayed the promise he made during his presidential campaign in 2019. At the end of March 2020, President Ramaphosa announced one of the toughest lockdowns anywhere in the world could not implement. He banned every movement except for people going to buy food or medicines. He also prohibited alcohol sales. He deployed military in the street to enforce the law.

He also announced a lock down package as done by many nations, despite the rescue package, the situation gradually translated into a sharp increase in national levels of poverty and malnutrition, as the distribution of fund may not have been well distributed due to corrupt practices. However, the lockdown prevented the spread of the coronavirus, but there was a spike in burglaries of unoccupied buildings. According to Anthony Egan, at least 183 schools and a number of churches were robbed and vandalised as the extension of the lockdown continues. This is the result of frustration from people and lack of fund for the people to continue their daily lives.

In South Africa, only the middle class and wealthy people have been able to spend some of their savings to buy necessities during the lockdown, the vast majority among the working poor and the unemployed have been unable to do so since they do not have the income and no reserves for them to tap into to buy their basic needs. Those who work in the informal or casual sectors become unemployed, unlike most European countries where the government provided a rescue package to protect jobs and financial support to those without employment.

### **The Case of Egypt**

The steps taken by Egypt to stem the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic did endanger the country's poor who without jobs, are struggling to make ends meet. The lockdown measure introduced by the Egyptian

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government to control covid-19 outbreak which included closing of businesses left many unemployed.

As practiced by many European countries, Egyptian authorities took some measures to help provide a cushion for the poor who are struggling to cope. Banks were ordered to delay debt repayment and to accept requests for financial support from irregular and self-employed workers. The Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi fund allocation for national response has so far fallen short of meeting needs of the citizens. Many casual workers have complained of not having enough money to provide food for their families. They complained that the essential workers who have to go to work struggle to have enough money to pay a taxi fare.

**Conclusion:** In the light of the ways in which African countries responded to the crisis, the continent has failed her citizens in many facets. This test of COVID-19 should have been a wake-up call for the continent. Despite the continent's vast natural resources, the so-called leaders have continued to fail the citizens. Allan Ntata and James Woods-Nkhutabasa registered their disappointment about Africa in 2013, claiming that, centuries ago, corrupt African leaders and Western traders made an unwitting yet deliberate business pact. A few Africans made fortunes; Western interests found cheap labour, and 12 million people then lost their freedom. To this moment, Africa perspective has still not changed as a result of bribery and corruption. After half a century, Africa still can not solve its own problems. The so called politicians utilise every opportunity at the expense of their citizens to enrich themselves. Taking example of Nigeria, the recovered looted money from the past leaders would have been enough to use as a rescue package for the working poor. Unfortunately, most of the recovered money were re-looted by those that recovered them. South Africa and Egypt are not exempted from corrupt practices as well. Though, the rate of corruption differs from country to country.

Africa's main problem is corruption, not until corruption is wiped out of the continent, Africa will never see light.

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