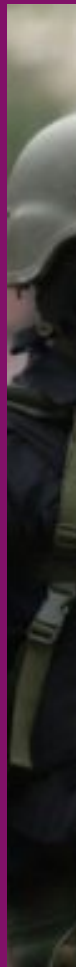

An Assessment of the
**IMPACT OF THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

On Members Of The
Security Sector Institutions
(SSIS)



Rule of Law And Empowerment Initiative
also known as
PARTNERS WEST AFRICA NIGERIA

Introduction

On December 8, 2019, pneumonia cases of unknown origin were identified in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China. The pathogen has since been identified as a novel enveloped Ribo Nucleic Acid (RNA) beta coronavirus that has currently been named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

This novel coronavirus (nCoV) was identified by Chinese authorities on 7th January 2020 and was temporarily named “2019-nCoV”. Corona viruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. The nCoV is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

The disease which reportedly spread like wild fire across the city of Wuhan in China, was plague-like and had a very high death rate. The ongoing outbreak of the respiratory disease that was recently given the name Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) is the latest threat to global health.

The outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World

Health Organisation (WHO) on 30th January, 2020 and on 11th March, 2020, the WHO Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during his opening remark at a media briefing on Covid19, declared the disease a pandemic.

Coronavirus disease spreads primarily through contact with an infected person's body fluids and droplets which are emitted when he or she coughs or sneezes. It also spreads when a person touches a surface or an object that has the virus on it, then touches he or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

As at March 16th the world had recorded 167,515 confirmed cases and 22 African countries including Nigeria had been affected



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Covid-19 in Nigeria

Following the developments of Covid-19 pandemic in mainland China and other countries worldwide, the WHO listed Nigeria among other thirteen (13) African countries as high-risk for the spread of the virus.

The first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Nigeria was announced on 27th February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. On 9th March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, it was a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the index case.

Amongst the initial group of persons to test positive to the virus, were the son to a former Vice President of Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria-Mallam Abba Kyari, the Governors of Bauchi and Kaduna States-Bala Mohammed and Mallam Nasir El-rufai, amongst others.

The Federal Government of Nigeria undertook the following measures to combat the spread of the Covid-19: The President on March 29, while delivering a Presidential address on Covid-19,

ordered a lockdown for an initial period of 14 days specifically in the states of Lagos, Ogun, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, while other states across the country followed suit with total and partial lockdown, preventing inbound traffics as a measure to curb the spread.

A 12-member Presidential taskforce was constituted, led by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Mr. Boss Mustapha, other states equally constituted their own taskforces. Isolation centres were set up in Abuja and Lagos, while state governments were encouraged to set up their own, all public places were mandated to provide hand sanitizers and washing materials, social distancing measures were also propagated, as both public and private workers were made to stay-at-home, with the exception of essential service providers including security agents and health personnel.

All Federal schools were also closed, although most had shut down before the presidential address. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) also rolled out measures to contain the spread of the disease. As the number of persons

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testing positive began to rise especially in Lagos and Abuja, the measures were strengthened, with religious and social gatherings completely banned and stringent enforcement of the lockdown directed nationwide.

On 13th April, 2020, the President in a nationwide broadcast on the Covid-19, extended the lockdown for another 14 days effective from same date in the same two states and the FCT.



Effectiveness of the Security Sector Institutions' (SSIs) Response in the Lockdown Enforcement Including Inter-Agency Collaboration

The enforcement of the lockdown order as pronounced by the President for Lagos, Ogun states and the FCT is the primary responsibility of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

It must be noted that several other states across the nation replicated the lockdown orders with the respective governors signing executive orders. The Police as the lead enforcement security agency initiated taskforces working in collaboration with other security agencies.

Key security institutions which form part of the support for enforcement of the lockdown orders both federally and within the various states include: The Armed Forces, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Correctional Service, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and the Department of State Services (DSS).

It is critical to note that similar to the provisions of the Electoral Act 2010 on security during elections, the NPF will utilize all the security agencies as support to ensure the protection of all

citizenry for as long as the lockdown orders are in effect. A majority of state and interstate borders including that of Lagos, Ogun and the FCT have been closed especially to human traffic, but transportation of cargo and essential services personnel are allowed.

Roadblocks have been set at strategic points especially entrance and exit points, manned by teams made up of police and other officers of various security agencies already mentioned. It is important to emphasize the increased support especially from the Nigerian Army to the Police, noting its constitutional role of defending Nigeria from external aggression, maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders, amongst others.

The NSCDC performs similar roles to the Police and forms a major support agency, especially within taskforces that operate in the states. All security agencies have continued to jointly perform various tasks aimed at ensuring full compliance of all citizens to the lockdown orders, including providing security to private and government sector while distributing palliatives.

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The Inspector General of Police (IGP) M. A. Adamu, NPM, had cautioned officers and men of the Nigeria Police Force to maintain high standards of professional conduct and desist from trampling on citizens' rights while enforcing the lockdown and social distancing order.

Similarly, the head of the Federal Covid-19 taskforce Mr. Boss Mustapha had at a media briefing of the taskforce on 3rd April, 2020, warned all security personnel against manhandling

citizens who disobey the stay-at-home order. Both senior government officials had equally urged citizens to be law-abiding and exercise self-restraint while the lockdown lasts.

The effectiveness of the SSI response in enforcement of the lockdown despite the good collaboration among the three SSIs, has been marred by several issues including human rights infringements. Equally, the three SSIs are already plagued with manpower depletion noting the

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existing security situations in some parts of the country, specifically the Boko Haram in the North-East and banditry in the North-West. This could be evidenced in a recent directive by the Chief of Army Staff, suspending leave passes for all personnel to ensure adequate deployment when the need arises.

In recent history, Covid-19 is the second pandemic after the 1918 Influenza caused by the H1N1 virus. Clearly, no present security institution especially the three SSIs envisioned or have in place any existing training module or operational response to deal with this present healthcare crisis.

Informal discussions with some senior officers of the NA and NPF indicate that it is now that strategies and implementations thereof are being formulated to address their response to this

pandemic. The Nigerian Army is developing strategic operational directives and instructions to guide their personnel on Covid-19.

The NPF is also about to publish The Police Response to Covid-19, which will guide Police personnel both medically and operationally. This research was unable to find any competent source with regards to the NSCDC but one can assume that they must also be taking steps to develop some form of a Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) to guide their personnel operationally during this pandemic.

Despite the efforts being made by the SSIs to tackle this lockdown order based on healthcare concerns and the burdens of the enforcement, the NPF still have their statutory responsibilities of crime prevention.

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Criminality During the Lockdown

The lockdown has exerted enormous pressure on majority of the citizenry, especially those that depend on incomes from daily sales and supplies. This has led to wide-spread calls for the complete lockdown orders to be varied, to stem the rising economic pressures on most Nigerians.

Consequently, crime index including incidents of domestic violence of most states in the country is on a gradual increase. In a bid to enforce the lockdown, the security agencies are being overwhelmed by these debilitating factors.

The reluctance of the courts and even the Police to take more criminals into custody ostensibly to limit the chances of infection may have exacerbated the situation. In parts of Ogun and Lagos states for example, the alarming increase in crimes, notably looting of shops by the notorious “Awawa/one million boys” allegedly without adequate response from the security agencies has led to various demonstrations by the residents.

On 16th April, 2020, some angry youth in Lugbe a satellite town in the FCT, vandalized a truck containing food items donated by a philanthropist

as palliatives to the residents of the area. In response, the IGP through the Force Public Relations Officer DCP Frank Mbah, warned of dire consequences for the perpetrators of these crimes.

Furthermore, the IGP deployed an intervention squad led by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG) in charge of the South-West to help devise a superior strategy to stop and nab all the hoodlums with a view to battling the crime wave in the region.

The IGP had also in a press release, enjoined the members of the public to be weary of perpetrators of fraud and Cybercrime, as such cases are expected to be on the rise during the lockdown period, with scammers using fraudulent websites, e-commerce platforms, fake social media accounts and e-mails claiming to sell or deliver Covid-19 medical products.



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The Impact on Members of the Security Sector Institutions

The members of the SSIs are by virtue of their enforcement duties exposed to the dangers of Covid-19 because of their daily interaction with members of the public.

The officers who form part of the various lockdown enforcement taskforces, engage with countless numbers of people whose Covid-19 status are unknown. They also provide security for some hospitals including the Covid-19 Isolation Centres and guard groups distributing palliatives nationwide.

These personnel are vulnerable to attacks as well as contacting the disease. At the time of this research, one cannot find evidence of any official provision of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as face masks and gloves to the security personnel. Most of the security agents either privately source such, or have private individuals or groups donate to them.

Equally at this time, it is expected that special budgetary allocations may be eventually made to accommodate special allowances for the task forces or members of the SSIs involved in the

enforcement. Oral discussions with some senior officers indicate that some state governors are making such provisions. It is also expected that as the testing capacity is being increased by the NCDC, the personnel of the SSIs seen as frontline responders would benefit from the tests which may give a clear data on their infection status.

Recently, policemen guarding the Ejigbo Isolation Centre lamented over what they termed poor welfare and lack of protective wares in the discharge of their duties this is even as the Isolation Centre located at the Unity School, Ejigbo town in Ejigbo Local Government Area (LGA) of Osun State, has been deserted by the inhabitants including the isolated one hundred and twenty-seven (127) returnees from Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The aggrieved persons who overwhelmed the security operatives at the Centre, left in protest over the perceived lack of authenticity of the test results carried out at the facility and lack of proper disposal equipment at various test centres in the State.

The enforcement no doubt exerts psychological strain and extra financial pressure on the officers,

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as transportation and other services are irregular at this time and at very exorbitant prices. Food prices are also high, yet purchasing power remains the same. Their families who are also part of the wider society, not only live in fear of the virus, but in danger of contagion, in event of the agent's contacting the disease.

Their duties are essentially continuous even as other sectors are shut down. The pressure of the increasing crime trend also exerts pressure on their effectiveness especially in the enforcement of the lockdown orders.

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Infringements by Security Agents in the Course of the Enforcements

The lockdown enforcement teams especially those led by the Police and the Army have recorded several incidents of human rights abuses including alleged extrajudicial killings. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) confirming this in a report listed out the following human rights infringements involving police and army personnel nationwide:

- Thirty-three (33) incidents of torture,
- Twenty-seven (27) incidents of violation of right to freedom of movement, Unlawful arrest and detention,
- Nineteen (19) incidents of unlawful seizure of property,
- Thirteen (13) incidents of extortion.
- Eighteen (18) extra-judicial killings, of which Police was responsible for seven (7) deaths, Nigeria Correctional Service was responsible for eight (8) deaths, Nigerian Army was responsible for two (2) deaths

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while Ebonyi State taskforce on Covid-19 in Afikpo South was responsible for one (1) death.

Furthermore, incidents of alleged compromise/ extortion by security agents who allow unauthorised vehicles to pass their points in exchange for illegal financial gains inundate the cyberspace, vehicles carrying food stuffs are also reportedly extorted, despite that they are authorized to operate. On 10th April, 2020, a police inspector identified by his name tag as Talaju Martins was filmed counting the sum of

forty thousand naira purportedly extorted from a motorist at Ago Palace Road Okota axis of Oshodi/Isolo Local Government Area of Lagos state. This incident was confirmed by the Lagos State Command Police Public Relations Officer who stated that the erring officer had been arrested for appropriate disciplinary actions. Similarly, there are reports of traffic build-up at check points without diligent checks, causing some essential service providers especially healthcare workers to be unnecessarily delayed.



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A Gender Analysis of the Socio-economic Impact of the Pandemic Situation

About 90 million people almost half of Nigeria's population live in extreme poverty, according to estimates from the World Data Lab's Poverty Clock. The scourge of poverty is more pronounced on the female gender than male in Nigeria.

Statistics on poverty in Nigeria indicate that 70% of poor Nigerians are women. Indeed, more than a half of rural women live below the nationally defined poverty line, lacking access to basic education, decent nutrition, adequate health and social services.

Nigeria's 40 million women of childbearing age (between 15 and 49 years) suffer a disproportionately high level of health issues surrounding birth. While the country represents 2.4% of the world's population, it currently contributes 10% of global deaths for pregnant mothers.

Latest figures show a maternal mortality rate of 576 per 100,000 live births, the fourth highest on Earth.

At a time when nations across the world are implementing "stay-at-home" measures, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) warned that women are more likely to shoulder higher proportions of the domestic burden during lockdown.

Rising tensions due to economic losses could lead to a spike in domestic violence behind closed doors during a period when counseling and support services may be stripped back to a minimum. Women in the towns are engaged predominantly in the informal sector, in commerce and distributive trade.

Most women involved in paid menial jobs such as housekeeping, hawking and petty trading have their incomes severely affected by this lockdown.

The socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic is most likely to be felt by women across the country. Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), warned that the coronavirus outbreak has "severely disrupted" access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-Based



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Violence (GBV) services “at a time when women and girls need these services most, it could also exacerbate existing financial inequality between men and women.

The socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 would affect more women than men in Nigeria especially in the North East, where the plight of women and girls are already perilous, particularly in Internally Displaced Persons’ (IDP) camps.

Meanwhile, before the Covid-19 pandemic,

domestic violence was already one of the greatest human rights violations. There has been an increase of 243 million women and girls (aged 15-49) across the world being subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner.

The wellbeing of women considering the impact on their sexual and reproductive health and mental stability should the pandemic continues will inadvertently affect their ability to participate and lead in the recovery of our societies and economy. Women are increasingly, subjected to

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sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, and numerous relationship problems, but due to the subsisting movement restriction as a result of the lockdown, their access to the SSIs for the purpose of lodging formal complaints is greatly restricted.

This is against the backdrop of the existence of the Police Rapid Response Unit: an online crime reporting platform. What begs the question is the response time of the dispatch teams of various rapid response lines of the SSIs as well as other emergency response agencies of government, the legitimacy of evidence and ease of its collection.

Furthermore, a number of medical issues ranging from pregnancy complications, child birth and other emergencies mostly peculiar to women are

likely to occur at this time. Nigeria had the second highest number of annual maternal deaths in the world in 2010 and contributed 14% of all maternal deaths globally.

Nigeria is also the country where nearly 20% of all global maternal deaths happen. Between the year 2005 and 2015, it was estimated that over 600,000 maternal deaths and no less than 900,000 maternal near-miss cases occurred in the country. The unavailability of regular transportation systems during this lockdown is preventing a lot of women from access to healthcare and invariably predispose them to maternal mortality, thereby increasing the above statistics.

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Recommendation

01



Government palliatives to be well-articulated and transparently shared to all LGAs for onward delivery to their indigenes.

02



Families of the SSIs especially the junior cadres to also benefit from the government palliatives.

03



Alternative reporting mechanism with rapid response to be activated by SSIs especially the NPF.

04



There is the need to train members of the SSIs and ensure adherence to Standard Operating Procedures for engagement with members of the public during the lockdown.

05



Federal and state ministry of health to improve primary healthcare facilities to better care for Covid-19 patients and prioritize health concerns of pregnant and nursing mothers and their babies.

06



Supplementary budgets to allocate not only special hazards allowances for the SSIs taskforces, but also to provide PPEs for all personnel.

07



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the media and other existing complaint response sectors of the SSIs to collaborate to forestall exploitation/extortion of the citizenry.

08



The Human Rights Commission (HRC) to set up oversight teams to monitor and handle cases of extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses.



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