



COVID-19 Pandemic: How the Poor Countries Should Respond

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Introduction

Since the outbreak of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on 31 December 2019 in Wuhan, China, the global community has witnessed unprecedented sensitive or specific policy responses to curtail, contain and control the disease [1-3]. Many of these responses have proven to be successful while others required critical context consideration. The situation is a learning curve for most countries of the world. The policy measures have further demonstrated that all nations of the world are indeed developing countries - some are rich while others are poor. Hence, there is need for partnership for sustainable development [1,4].

Policy Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic

The broad global policy responses are largely monetary or fiscal or a combination (IMF, 2020). The policy measures are consistent with recommended social and hygienic practices including (i) staying at home, (ii) regular washing of hands or use of sanitiser, (iii) social and physical distancing, (iv) wearing of protective mask and kits, (v) limiting number of people in public gathering (essentially 5 - 50 persons, depending on the physical area or space), (vi) restriction of human and vehicular movement or curfew or travel ban, and (vii) total or partial lockdown (WHO, 2020). However, it is instructive to note that public policy responses should not be a blanket recommendation without making recourse to socio-economic heterogeneity of rich and poor countries. For instance, staying at home has implication and responsibility for the homeless, internally displaced persons, students and farmers, to mention a few.

Context is the Contest

Although, some of the policy responses have proven to be effective in some cases like China, Germany and Switzerland, most other places show that the policy responses cannot be a one-size-fits-all. That is, the local realities of each country in terms of financial, socio-cultural and environmental contexts should be considered. For instance, the system of implementation of a total lockdown requires a proper system of data and information management of people and place. Health facilities and personnel in most countries have been overstretched with poor countries requesting external funding and debt reliefs. Case to fatality ratio has not performed better in rich economies, too. Therefore, poor countries in Africa and other continents would need to look inward by developing their health facilities, as medical tourism to other countries in Americas, Asia and Europe becomes increasing difficult during COVID-19 pandemic.

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