



UWS Academic Portal

Coronavirus outbreak and the impacts on African economy

Adewole , Adebisi

Published in:
Scroll Report

Published: 25/03/2020

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Adewole , A. (2020). Coronavirus outbreak and the impacts on African economy. *Scroll Report*.
<https://www.scrollreport.com/2020/03/coronavirus-outbreak-and-the-impacts-on-african-economy/>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Coronavirus Outbreak and the Impacts on African Economy

Adebisi Adewole (PhD)

The ravaging Coronavirus Pandemic has effectively brought the whole world to its knees. The outbreak of the disease known as COVID-19, has led to the mass fear and panic world-wide including Africa. The dare devil disease has hit the re-set buttons of global activities as it spread from one continent to another. Coronavirus has rewound human life in a way that has never happened before since the era of Noah when the earth was flooded. Since the outbreak in February 2020 or thereabouts, things have changed in just a matter of weeks. Institutions have closed down, Schools have shut down, entertainment centres closed down, public places and houses of worships are empty, there have been fewer cars and public transports on the road, air travels halted, factories shut, pollution levels have come down, even against the will of those advanced countries that do not believe in keeping the environment safe, tourists cities, sports centres and beaches are empty, water and air are cleaner because of less pollution due to most people staying at home with their families. Europe and America, considered as the epicentres of the dreaded disease, suspend democracy and reverted to using Martial laws and decrees to keep their citizens safe from contracting or spreading the disease further.

Extreme, draconian and aggressive approaches were taken in China to ensure public safety. Germany banned public gathering to just two people to ensure the social distancing rule. United Kingdom in the like manner declared social distancing and strict restriction to movement of people. The British Government warned of full lock-down if people are not complying with the social distancing rule. As a result of the viral storm, Italy, Spain, the Republic of Ireland, the United States of America and Australia have been in incredible social and economic turmoil of which no-one would have ever imagined as the pandemic disease effectively brought with it an unprecedented global crisis.

One fundamental rule of the invisible dragon is, it does not respect or recognise national borders or nationalities of humans, no respect for colour or creed, political systems or cultural beliefs, nor does it spare anyone of social status. Rich or poor, it hits everyone human just as hard. Coronavirus has come to teach the world that it is time we began to appreciate all the values of things we usually take for granted in life. It has taught us that all humans are born equal and that the artificial barriers erected by humans can easily be removed without the barrels of gun. Nations, powerful and weak; Monarchs, emperors and royals; political leaders; religion clerics and worshipers; the wealthy and the poor; young and old; all bow and scamper for safety on the mention of the unseen enemy called Coronavirus. What a world of vanity.

Although Africa seemed to be the last continent to be hit, and the speed with which the spread of the newly unseen global enemy has been spreading in Africa has been minimal compared to the rest of the world, the prospect that it will peak very quickly is a major worry, with the view that the economic consequences on Africa could be monumental and extraordinary. Now the stock market has started to collapse. This is particularly going to be a double jeopardy for Nigeria with the sudden drop in oil price. The unavoidable slow down in China will affect African export of oil to China, and direct consequence is likely to be deep economic recession across Africa. The fact that Africa may be unprepared for both the spread and the fall out, as the situation had been in previous epidemics outbreaks such as HIV AIDS and recently Ebola, creates the fear that Africa might be left out in the cold. The panic that the potent virus pandemic could spread rapidly across the continent due to the preponderance limited access to healthcare facilities, even to combat the continual malaria, polio, measles and Ebola diseases, is of major concern. The assumption here is that the pandemic will put Africa in jeopardy and worsen the economic prospects of the continent as revenues are likely to fall

dramatically. The occurrence will slow down the recovery of those African countries currently experiencing economic struggle, whilst the resultant social effects may be immeasurable.

Other severe economic consequences from the Coronavirus disease on Africa will manifest in the closure of borders against Europe and America. Many African countries are shutting their airports and land borders to keep out people from countries that have a high number of coronavirus cases. Hundreds of international flights have been cancelled and some African countries like South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, among others have announced outright ban of flights from coronavirus-hit countries in Europe and America to their countries.

These measures will cause major disruptions to the supply chains of food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, electronics and textile products among others, whilst demand for many of these products will continue to rise. On the other hand, export of commodities such as agricultural produce, crude oil, iron ore and many other raw materials will be buckled. This simply means Africa is likely to be most disproportionately affected by the current pandemic given its relatively underdeveloped, ill-equipped or inadequate logistics infrastructure. Major bull-whip in supply chains processes and activities as a result of the effect of Coronavirus pandemic, will lead to negative economic impact which will be severe and long-lasting.

Many African importers and exporters are already worried that products from overseas may be in short supply. Merchants are already apprehensive in a situation where there is little anyone can do to help them. The volatile value of the currencies of many Africa countries and their weak balance sheets are likely to cause more uncertainty, spreading across the social, economic, political and security life, leaving the citizens with confusion as they jostle to cope with the consequences of COVID-19.

The key challenge facing Africa in the Coronavirus environment is to lack preparedness to tackle the uncontrollable consequences of the viral storm, although this is not peculiar to Africa alone in the current circumstances. However, governments in Africa must be quick to mobilise their national fiscal and monetary resources to contain the spread of the virus. They must show a robust approach to slowing down the spread of the pestilence that has appeared in all sectors of national life. The fact that the pandemic is late to arrive on African soil should leverage the continent to be prepared for full containment of the killer virus. Africa should not be caught unawares and must discourage the notion that African heat will automatically kill coronavirus. Policy and strategy must be focused on the emerging new world normal. Banning inward flights from high risk countries is good, but African governments must do more. The healthcare sector must be prioritised to cater for the threats of the disease ravaging the world. Coronavirus phenomenon has offered Africa the opportunity to develop strong intra-African approach at the time that the world democracies are reverting to draconian, Martial laws to bring their countries to safety, a situation that has effectively put a big question mark on the superiority of democracy over other systems of government. It is time we reverted to and developed African communal approach (Africom) embedded with the moral doctrine that values human dignity, rights and responsibilities, as solutions to African problems. Intra-African trade must be encouraged and economic trade blocs in Africa should be strengthened to reduce the level of dependency on extra-African economies. African governments must demonstrate the leadership and the preparedness to tackle corruption and be communally accountable to their citizens by releasing funds for infrastructure development that will cater to the needs of the African people. Africa must be more resilient and take advantage of COVID-19 outbreak to build a strong continental-wide economy through the encouragement of intra-African trade.

Dr Adebisi Adewole is a professor of Business Logistics and Supply Chain Management at the University of the West of Scotland, United Kingdom.

