NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF
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DG NIALS, Professor Muhammad Tawfiq Ladan, Explains Why Citizens' Complementary Response to Combating COVID-19 is for Collective Survival.

(Citizen's Advisory Brief)

As at midnight of Monday 4th May, 2020, Nigeria, witnessed a sustained surge in the number of confirmed infected and death cases (2,802 and 93 respectively), accounting for 5.9% of Africa's total Laboratory confirmed cases, (47,580) and 5.0% of the total deaths recorded in Africa (1,862). Nigeria accounted for (417) or 2.6% of Africa's total recovered/ discharged cases (15,901). Accordingly, Nigeria tops the COVID-19 virus impact chart in West Africa, the second most impacted by COVID-19 virus in Sub-Saharan Africa (next to South Africa with 7, 720 confirmed cases and 138 deaths), and the fifth overall on the African continent (following South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria).

Of the total number of COVID-19 Samples tested (19,512), Nigeria's total active cases stood at 2,292 out of the total laboratory confirmed cases of 2,802. In terms of demographics, 68% of the most affected by gender are males (1,913) and 32% females (889). While 23% were the most affected age group of 31-40 years in 35 states including the FCT, Abuja.

The above trend justified the Concerns expressed by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) about a possible explosion in the number of cases if Nigerians continue to flout physical distancing guidelines as witnessed across the federation on Monday, 4th May, following a partial relaxation of the lockdown earlier declared by the President on FCT, Abuja, Lagos and Ogun States.

It further underscored the rationale behind the challenge posed to Nigerians on 28th April by the Presidential Task Force on COVID 19 Pandemic, that Nigeria's national response efforts against COVID - 19 depends largely on the personal and collective actions of citizens towards the prevention and control of the pandemic.

The above facts and figures necessitated the explanation and advice given by the Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Prof. M.T. Ladan, on why citizens' complementary response actions to government's public health, social protection, legislative, policy, institutional , fiscal and monetary response measures to COVID-19 is for our collective survival as a people and as a nation. While section 14(2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution obligates government primarily to promote the security and welfare of all people, the same constitution under section 24 provides for the duties of citizens, among others to:-

a) respect institutions of governance and legitimate authorities;
b) abide by their constitutional obligations by respecting the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interest of others;
c) live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood;
d) make positive and useful Contribution to the advancement, progress and a well-being of the Community where he/she resides;

e) render assistance to appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order,

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, citizen's complementary response actions required include: -

- Taking personal responsibility, by heeding to medical advisory notes of social distancing, personal hygiene, wearing of masks, avoiding unnecessary travels and visitations or stay at home;
- Ensuring we organize ourselves to mitigate the risk of possible Spread of COVID-19 infections and limit community transmission.
- Cooperating with your employers to adopt a safe and healthy work behaviour as part of collective responsibility;
- Understanding the fact that to respond to COVID-19, many national governments including Nigeria are using a combination of containment and mitigation activities with the intention of delaying major surges of patients and levelling the demand for hospital beds, while protecting the most vulnerable from infection. Activities to accomplish these goals vary and are based on national risk assessments that many times include estimated numbers of patients requiring hospitalisation and availability of hospital beds and ventilation support.
- Comprehending the fact that most national response strategies include varying levels of contact tracing and self-isolation or quarantine; promotion of public health measures, including hand washing, respiratory etiquette, and social distancing; preparation of healthcare systems for a surge of severely ill patients who require isolation, oxygen and mechanical ventilation; strengthening health facility infection

prevention and control, with special attention to postponement or cancellation of large-scale public gatherings.

- Appreciating the fact that Nigeria's health system is weak and poorly funded, far below the African Union Abidjan Declaration of 15% budgetary allocation to health sector and cannot afford to get overwhelmed before we start asking for whatever can be done to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus by identifying people who are positive, quickly isolating them, and improving testing capacity to identify more positive infectious cases. Unfortunately, of the total 10.59 trillion naira budgeted for 2020 by the Federal Government of Nigeria, 4.16% (#440.73 billion naira) was allocated to health sector. Compared to the 2019 approved budget, it increased by 3.94% from #423.03 billion naira to 440.73 bn naira, far from the required African Union Abidjan Declaration of 15%.
- Noting the fact that greater attention to COVID-19 national response efforts though urgent, necessary and extreme, complicates food security, malaria and other ailments' response.
- In all the above, the citizens complementary response to COVID-19 pandemic is urgently needed to enable government finalise its post-COVID-19 strategic sustainability plan aimed at stimulating local production, saving jobs, creating new ones where possible, and continuing to protect the most vulnerable and the working poor in society.

(Dated, 5TH May 2020) Prof. M.T. Ladan