

The coronavirus pandemic currently shocking the world gained entry into Nigeria with its first case confirmed on the 27th of February, 2020 in Lagos state. The discovery spiralled into a frenzy of misinformation as the NCDC and Federal Ministry of Health worked to allay citizens' fears and contain the outbreak. It is important that we all play a role in beating the virus by sharing only validated information and promoting effective preventive measures.

The Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC) gathers rumours, concerns and questions from communities across Nigeria to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, NGOs and citizens. By providing the public with facts, the CCC ensures a better understanding of needs regarding the coronavirus and debunks rumours before they can do more harm. Information sharing will be critical to defeating the virus, due to the diverse cultural backgrounds and drawbacks in national education.

Coronavirus poses a serious threat to Nigeria's population of over 180 million people given the country's weak healthcare system, high level of poverty, crowded living conditions and deep-set corruption in government. Economic and insecurity conditions in Nigeria were already tenuous before this outbreak, and Nigeria already fares badly against any health indicators, with high mortality rates and poor life expectancy. When and if coronavirus hits the highly populated communities of Nigeria's cities, it could be a disaster.

It is absolutely critical that Nigeria deals with this pandemic in forward-thinking, open, transparent ways to ensure the well-being of citizens, build resilience and rapidly curb the potential for social conflict. In Nigeria, this is a huge challenge but also a real opportunity to reimagine public health systems, redefine the relationship between citizens and those in power, and reinvigorate governance.

## Combating fear of COVID-19 testing and isolation centres

The two major challenges to the coronavirus response as explained by the NCDC and the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 have been the fear of testing for the virus and dread of staying at an isolation center.

On the 17th of August 2020, NCDC Director General, Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu explained that there was no incentive whatsoever for increasing COVID-19 figures on daily updates and they are presented as they are without manipulation. He also singled out Lagos state as the prime example of consistency in COVID-19 testing, calling it one of the only states he can give an informed opinion on, based on the numbers. Lagos is responsible for 50% of the testing numbers in the country. Other states he mentioned as having encouraging testing rates are Kano, FCT, Plateau and Borno.

It is important to know that it is only through testing the numbers of people that may have the virus that we can understand how widespread the infection is. Confidence in the Nigerian health sector has been identified as the primary issue with coronavirus testing, now that testing capacity has been ramped up to adequate levels.

There have also been multiple concerns raised on the underutilization of COVID-19 testing labs. On the 13th of August, the NCDC announced that they had scaled up their testing capacity to a network

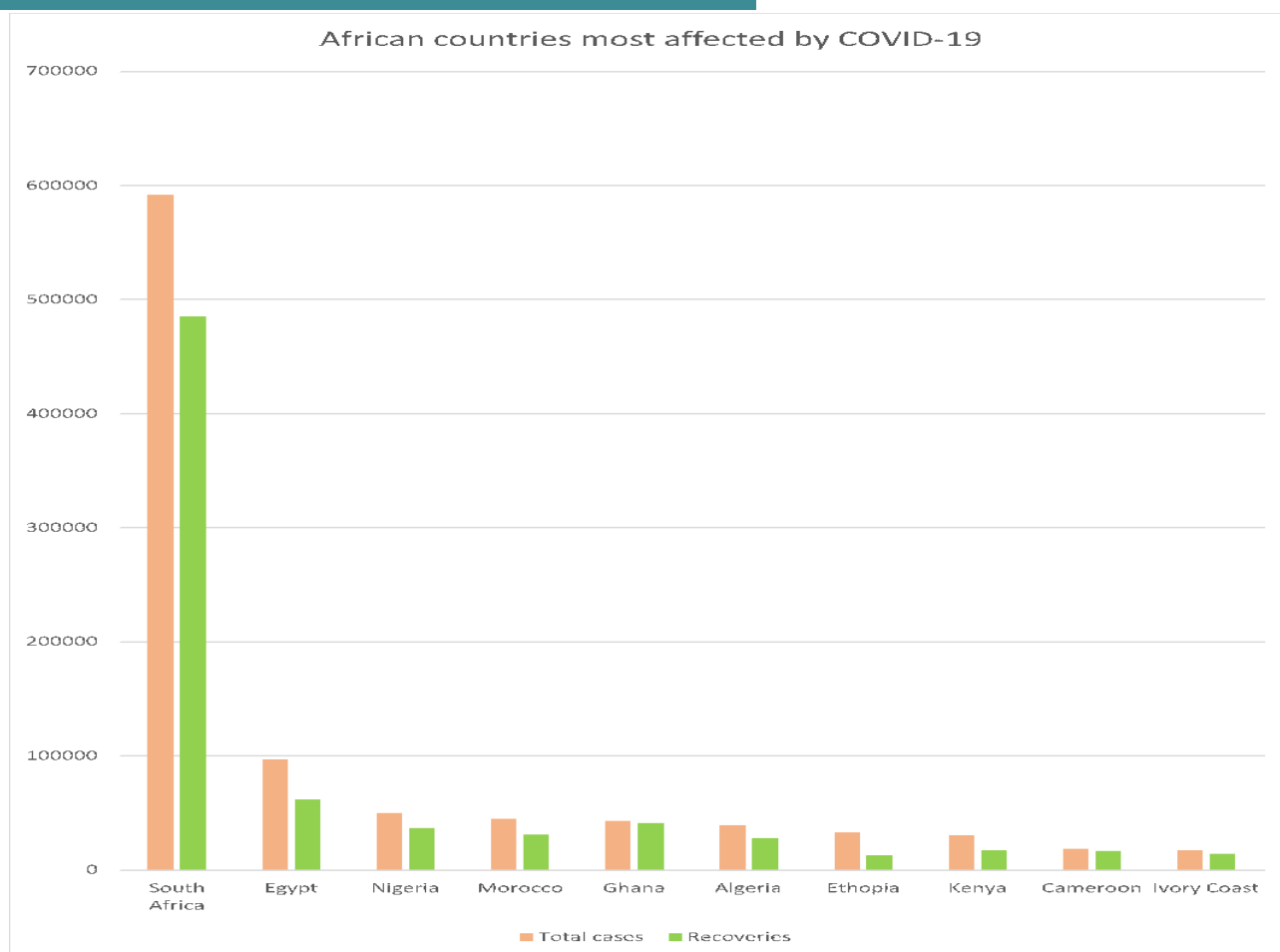
of 63 laboratories. However, many of these labs were not collecting enough samples, resulting in low numbers which could be mistaken for a flattening curve. 85 Local Governments nationwide have not been tested at all.

The second challenge in the COVID-19 response is that of confirmed COVID-19 patients avoiding isolation centres. On the 6th of July, the Lagos commissioner for health, Prof. Akin Abayomi raised the alarm that more than 2,000 patients who tested positive for the virus in the state have not turned up at the isolation centres. Prof. Abayomi himself tested positive for the virus on the 24th of August, 2020. The cost of coronavirus patients avoiding isolation could be more infections as they would interact with others, making them susceptible by association.

### Some Important notes to take away to avoid fear of testing and isolation include:

- COVID-19 is not a death sentence, is treatable and about 80% of infected cases experience only mild symptoms or are asymptomatic.
- COVID-19 is nothing to be ashamed of. 213 countries around the world have reported 23,839,010 cases so far and are trying to tackle the virus spread.
- It is safer to seek treatment for the virus at the isolation center than by yourself as health professionals have more experience treating the illness. On the 21st of May, the health minister revealed that nearly half of COVID-19 deaths in the country occurred at home.
- The COVID-19 sample collection is a swab to the nostril performed by a health professional and does not require any other form of invasive investigation.
- COVID-19 can only be confirmed by adequate testing because the symptoms it manifests are too similar to symptoms of other diseases.
- COVID-19 can also occur together with other diseases with similar symptoms like Malaria and Typhoid fever.

### Africa COVID-19 Infection vs Recovery chart



## RUMOURS



People living with HIV are more likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus

People with asthma are more likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19

COVID-19 is only prevalent in America and Europe, not in Africa

COVID-19 deaths are negligible and not to be worried about

COVID-19 is just another flu

## VS



## FACTS

If you are living with HIV and on effective treatment there's no evidence that you are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 symptoms

There is currently no concrete evidence that patients with moderate to severe asthma could be at greater risk for more severe disease.

There is a large disparity in testing capacity and record collection between Africa and western countries; because of this it is difficult to compare the extent of infection between the continents. For context, as of 18th August, 2020 South Africa is the African country with the highest number of cases at 590,000 from 3.4 million tests, while the USA has registered 5.6 million cases from 71 million tests.

As of the 18th of August, 2020, there have been 778,000 confirmed deaths from coronavirus from 22,000,000 confirmed cases with 6.4 million active. Numerous countries have reported large rises in deaths from 6 months compared with the last 5 years.

The major similarities between COVID-19 and influenza viruses are that they both cause respiratory disease and they are both transmitted by contact, droplets and fomites; however, they differ in speed of transmission and high-risk groups, with COVID-19 having a mortality rate of about 3-4%, while the seasonal flu has a mortality rate well below 0.1%

## Number of COVID-19 cases confirmed

