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## **COVID-19 Lockdown Measures on Least Developing Economies in Africa-a case of Malawi Economy**

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**Abstract.** The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has caused the entire world at standstill affecting all the sectors of economies in the whole world. In order to reduce the spread of the cases and the mortality rate of this pandemics many economies have implemented a lot of social distancing measurers with the aim of separating people direct and indirect contacts as the Virus can be transferred through physical contact and is also an airborne, these isolations measures have proved to be effective in many countries. One of the most measures that the developed and developing economies are using is partial or full lockdown, despite being effective way of reducing the impact of the Virus, lockdown measures has also its own cost that the economies are to bier especially when it's a total or full countrywide lockdown which policy makers must look into too. The approaches of lockdowns and attitudes of people towards lockdowns has been seen differencing in many countries depending on the political system of the government which is in that jurisdiction economic status of the country. This perspective recommends that Countries like Malawi and any other when implementing these lockdowns measures the authorities should consider the political system, costs and other the measures to carter for helping the people like proving stimulus package in order to have a successfully and effective lockdown which is highly recommended to be an effective way of combating the Virus

**Keywords.** COVID-19, Social Distance Measures, Lockdowns Measures, Malawi Political System. COVID-19 Prevention and Control Measurers

### **Background**

The whole world currently is at stand still with many Countries being on regional or parts and full lockdown as one of the isolation measures put in place by the authorities to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus which started late December last year of 2019 in Wuhan the capital city of Hubei, in the Province of People Republic of China (1). COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, with symptoms of fever, coughing, shortness of breath (2–5). Since the declaration by the World Health Organisation as the pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the Virus has continually being spread across the world at the faster rate causing many mortality rates among the people mainly with underlying health conditions like, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung diseases, cardiovascular disease, obesity etc. (6,7). As a zoonotic pathogens kind of Virus which means that its able to transmit between animals and people and that it can also be transmitted through as an airborne infection, the effective way of combating it has been demonstrated that it's to isolate people using different

social distancing measures (8,9).

### **Social Distance Measures**

Social distance measures are designed to reduce the social interactions among different people within an area and reducing the spread of infectious diseases like this of the COVID-19 that can spread through direct contacts and indirect through the air transmissions, some of the social distance measures are Curfew, quarantine & isolations, closure of many institutions like schools, restriction of gatherings of people in public places, work place separations, lockdowns etc. (3,10,11). Many Country have employed most of these social distancing measures with the recommendations from the WHO, while others implementing partial or total lockdown measure. Lockdown measure is the most extreme measure which involves Government giving orders restricting people movements, especially in and out within a defined areas of interested in its jurisdiction, this measures attracts more attentions from the citizens as it has constitutional issues attached to it especially those in democratic political systems of governance (3,12,13). Despite, lockdown measure as an one way of social distance measures has been proved through research and recommended by WHO and many other Health Organisation as the most effective way of reducing the spread of infectious cases and mortality rates in the world to fight the COVID-19 (10,12,14) they is still more to look into when authorities are implementing these lockdowns especially in the least developing countries in the world where its citizens live on low level of standards and depends on daily activities on their survival, this perspective tries to analyses and compares the lockdown approaches and attitudes towards it of the developed countries as compared to those of the developing countries with Malawi as a case study and lastly recommendations are given.

### **Developed World Lockdown measures approach and attitudes**

COVID-19- as a global pandemic declared by the WHO has seen that at least all the developed and developing countries currently are applying social distance measures including partial or full lockdowns, some of the developed countries that have been heavily hit by the Virus and are on partial and full lockdown are USA with 2,078,605 confirmed cases and 139,515 death, Italy with 168,941 confirmed cases and 22,172 deaths, France with 107,778 confirmed cases and 17,899 deaths, Germany with 133,830 confirmed cases and 3,868 deaths, Spain with 182,816 confirmed cases and 19,130 deaths, Brazil with 28,320 confirmed cases and 1,736 deaths and UK with 103,097 confirmed cases and 13,729 deaths, etc as at 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (15). These developed economies have been using different approaches according to the political systems of the government, but many of these economies has a common way of helping its citizens by coming up with a stimulus packages or policies that would help its citizen in one way or another in different ways, for example in USA and other European countries have been giving tax reliefs and other economic impacts payments, health plans to its citizens, furthermore many Non Organisations (NGO) have come in to help those who needed to be helped with special attention to those in health services in order to fight the pandemic. (16,17). The attitude towards lockdowns have not been the same across many developed countries as some of the major power have stressed the importance of protecting the economy than emphasising on the lockdowns and many people have come out openly to demonstrate on their rights on these lockdowns like in Brazil, Germany calling an end or necessary involvement by all stakeholders to the extent of getting injections to stop these lockdowns, while other countries due to their political system being silent out which positively has speeded the effectiveness of the social distance measures like lockdowns itself (Aljazeera, 2020b; DW, 2020; NPR, 2020; World, 2020).

### **Developing Countries in Africa approach**

Although the impact of the COVID-19 on Motility rate of Africa continent has not been like that of other Continents as at 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 45 out of 47 of the countries in Africa have all registered COVID-19 cases having total of 10,759 confirmed cases and 520 deaths, with only Lesotho and Comoros being the Countries that had not registered any cases (22), with this fact, almost all the countries in Africa have implemented the social distance measures including partial and full lockdown measures that would help to reduce the spread of the Virus. Most of the developing countries in the world are in Africa where the majority in the rural areas live under poverty lines and depend on social programs from the government, having this status many African authorities have been put in difficult situations in implementing these social distance measures as its forecasted that if not properly handed many people would die of hunger than COVID-19 itself as the end results of some measures that could be put in place (23,24). Furthermore, implementing lockdown in Africa has been seen as a problem because of the political system that many African countries are operating on, for example its reported that in some economies the resistant of people would lead to more death than COVID-19 its self too (25). On the other hand, Many African countries have followed up the approaches used other developed countries by providing some of the stimulus packages to its citizen like in South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya etc to help its people to be sustained during the lockdown (26–28). By understanding the economic capacity of many African countries it's difficult for themselves to stretch their economic muscles in providing these helps to people as such many countries have also benefited from International Monetary Fund (IMF), World bank, NGOs and other Business organisation like of Alibaba Foundation get loans and donations that have been provided to cater for the COVID-19 (29–31).

### **Malawi Lockdown approach and its attitude of the people**

Malawi is located on the southern part of sub-Saharan Africa, sharing boarders with Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique, with a population of close to 18,932,282 as of 2020, ranked among least developing countries in the world mainly depending on agriculture for its foreign currency and GDP which comes from the cultivation of tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar and other agriculture products, the country is divided into three regions of Northern, Central and Southern with a total number of 29 district hospitals across all the regions that are dominated by the Ministry of Health (MOH) as the main service provider with private health providers also helping the Ministry (9,32,33). Malawi registered its first two case of Corona Virus on 3 April 2020, as of now Malawi has registered a total of 17 cases with 2 deaths, 9 cases, including 1 death, in Blantyre. 6 cases, including 1 death, in Lilongwe 1 case, no death, in Chikwawa. 1 case, no death, in Nkhotakota (34,35). Since the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic the authorities in Malawi have been taking necessary preventative measures before it registered any cases. In March the nation was declared as a state of disaster, furthermore more social distance measures were also implemented like school closure, restrict of gatherings and more awareness campaigns were increased on the preventative and control of COVID-19, and the government formulated the National Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Preparedness and Response Plan with a budget of K15 billion was set by the government (36). Furthermore, in continuing combusting the Virus, on 13 April 2020 the government of Malawi announced 21 day a total lockdown of the Country from 18<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020, which includes suspending most of the gatherings, moving in and out of people, prohibiting of gathering of more than 5 people, closing central markets, and allowing with precautions some of the essential activities to be taking place (37), despite this move by the authorities, as one of

the country that is under democratic leadership they has been a lot of protest across the country by the citizens through human rights groups that are calling on authorities to address some issues before the declaration of the lockdown, this has seen the Human Rights Defenders Collation (HRDC) group obtaining an injunction on late of 17<sup>th</sup> which was granted by the High court demanding a 7 day inter party hearing (13). On their statements previously issued the HRDC are arguing that the authorities should first address and consider other means of providing cushions to help the vulnerable people as other countries in the region and beyond are doing before lockdown, also they should be mutual negotiations between different parties on how well the presidential re-elections will be handled which is expected to be conducted on July, furthermore they argued that all other stakeholders should be involved in the decision making especially those that affect human and constitutional rights like lockdowns (38,39). On the other hand Malawi is also among the listed of the countries that has benefited from the IMF fund to help in fighting which has helped in procurements of essential medical supplies and equipment in line with COVID-19, and that the Research bank of Malawi and other financial institutions has also relaxed its lending rates and applied some tax reliefs (29,34,38).

### **Lockdown cost benefits analysis on Malawi**

Studies have found that social distance measures especially the lockdowns measures being partial or full is an effective way to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic through limiting the physical contacts of the people, these studies further suggest that in many cases before an exist plan is done the country should asses its heath capacity, cost benefits analysis and even looking at forecasting using trend analysis to avoid recurring of the cases after an exist (8,14,40), for example its estimated that lockdowns if implemented quickly within the an economy could reduce the increase of spread of the cases by 98.9% and 99.3% of deaths (10). Taking into account for these facts its believed that as it stands now with only 17 cases and 2 deaths if Malawi would adopt the Lockdown measures this would help the country to control the spread of the Virus as its now registered with low numbers as compared to other African and developing countries in the World. This would be of more advantage to the Country as it can be struggle to cope with large numbers of the cases if the cases may rise due to the economic status, heath system capacity and social factors. However, these benefits have a lot of the costs that needs to be beard like of economical, food security and heath, to the extent that the damage that the lockdown and the Virus would bring would take time to recover as the country is already struggling in many other areas of the developments. As agriculture dependent country majority of the farmers are yet to harvest their crops from the farms, other have but their preparing them for sale especially those cash crops like Tobacco which bring the high percentage of the GDP to the country (9,33,41), having lockdown will mean the disruption of the agriculture chain which will have a huge negative impact on the entire Country. Furthermore, having a total Country lockdown in Malawi will heavily affect the villages people, small scale business people who everyday life they need to go out and source for their daily living without having works that could support them at any time.

### **Recommendations**

It's well and clearly seen fact that the COVID-19 has halted the world developments in at least all areas at micro and macro level due to the interdependence of nationals in trade and relationships as many people are left at home without moving and doing their daily activities that may have an economical and other benefits to their lives due to fear to contact the Virus if they go out and measures put in by different authorities in many jurisdictions. Upon looking at the impact of the COVID-19, the effectiveness of lockdown measures and the costs associated

with it, this perspectives recommended that the authorities could implement these lockdown measures as they have proved to be effective and recommended by the World Health Organisation, but necessary measures should be taken before the lockdown which may include, tax reliefs and preparing stimulus packages for people. Depending upon the type Political system within the jurisdiction consultations and involved from all parties is also encouraged and recommended to avoid protests and negative attitude from the citizen.

### **Conclusions**

Social distance measures are the most effective ways of combating infectious diseases like COVID-19 as it separates the physical contacts of people, depending on the political system of the countries necessary arrangements should be done that would help the citizens before implementing the lockdown measures in order to avoid people dying of hunger than the COVID-19 itself especially in developing countries in Africa like Malawi where hunger is still a challenge to fight.

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