

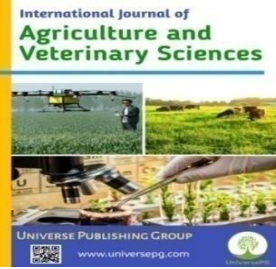


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The Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Security, Environment and Social Vices: Global Perspectives

Dada Abiodun^{1*}, Tasnim Ahmad², Sumona Sharmin³, Nasrin Tamanna⁴, Md. Mosharraf Hossen², Ogunyemi Kayode¹, and Odeyemi Taye¹

¹Dept. of Environmental Health, College of Health Sciences and Technology, Ekiti State, Nigeria; ²Dept. Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, Islamic University, Bangladesh; ³Dept. of Sociology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh; and ⁴Dept. of Life Science, Kongju National University, South Korea.

*Correspondence: bigg_daad@yahoo.com (Dada Abiodun, Department of Environmental Health, College of Health Sciences and Technology, Ijero Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria).

ABSTRACT

The Pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus 2019 has made the governments of both developed and developing countries introduce various restrictive mechanisms in an attempt to lessen the menace and its rapid spread, Nigeria is not an exception. In Nigeria, the Federal Government restricts interstate travel, locked all offices, closed all commercial markets, and imposed a dusk to dawn curfew on the people. Security task forces were deployed across the country to enforce the restriction. Hence, this resulted in an increase in the rate of extortion and corruption among the security operatives, the volume of waste unrecycled was on the high side, ecotourism was affected as well as an increase in the occurrence of sexual assault, cyber fraud, abduction and other related vices in Nigeria. This article intends to review the security issues and social vices on the increase in Nigeria owing to the COVID 19 lockdown as well as provide possible solutions and prevent future occurrences.

Keywords: Social vices, Security, Environment, Lockdown, Global perspectives, and Covid-19 lockdown.

INTRODUCTION:

The first country to introduce lockdown was China where the new species of the Corona virus originated from, the fish depot and commercial market at Hubei and Huanan provinces which forms the major sources of transmission, after series of investigation, were closed, Afterwards, by middle of January, 2020 China started introducing restrictions of movements because of the incessant and rapid transmissions of this virus. Towards the final week in January, 2020, over 20 countries across the universe had reported COVID 19 cases, including possible human transmission. World Health Organization named it Corona Virus Disease 2019 meaning "COVID 19" (Susanto *et al.*, 2022; Adelani, 2020).

Nigeria reported its first case on the 27th February, 2020 which was an imported case, a returnee from Italy who resides and works in Nigeria. After four weeks, the list of established cases had raised to 24 across few states in Nigeria with no recorded death. At this point, The Federal Government had sought for the support of all Health and security agencies, media and telecommunications to increase the tempo of health awareness and sensitization even at community level because of the fear of local transmission. Contact tracing of the confirmed cases were established and monitoring and surveillance system was initiated across different states, especially Lagos and Abuja, for those that returned from overseas. The Port Health agency, a parastatal

under the Federal Ministry of Health increased the rate of monitoring at all air, land and sea borders which forms the points of entry into Nigeria and adapted specific protocols and the travel guidance issued by the Presidential Task Force on Coronavirus (Ahubelem, 2020). In an attempt to curtail the transmission of this disease and protect the health of the populace, several restrictive measures were introduced by the Presidential Task Force Advisory committee on COVID 19 and Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) which include lockdown on non-essential activities and ban on local and international flight. In addition, all offices, government or non-government related are closed, all institutions are under lock and key, commercial activities and social gathering are prohibited, in a nutshell, people were advised to stay indoor (Symum *et al.*, 2022; Ahubelem, 2020; Alex, 2020).

The lockdown was officially introduced by the middle of March, 2020, Government security forces were deployed to various regions in Nigeria to watch the activities of the people to ensure they do not violate the

lockdown, However, in that process, the security operatives violated a lot of order by engaging in some corrupt practices, killing of harmless citizens which led to riot and chaos in some areas in Nigeria, there were also increase in robbery incidence, rape against minor and other social vices, hence the authors intends to explicitly describe some social vices on the increase in Nigeria as a result of this lockdown, and provide the possible interventions that can be adopted in order to reduce the menace and prevent future occurrences.

METHODOLOGY:

The method adopted was basically on evaluation of information from secondary data and observed official reports from Government’s proceedings and meetings on COVID 19, bulletins and news report from Nigerians newspaper. Data and figures were obtained from Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), Pictures were obtained from various Campaign Organizations against social vices in Nigeria.

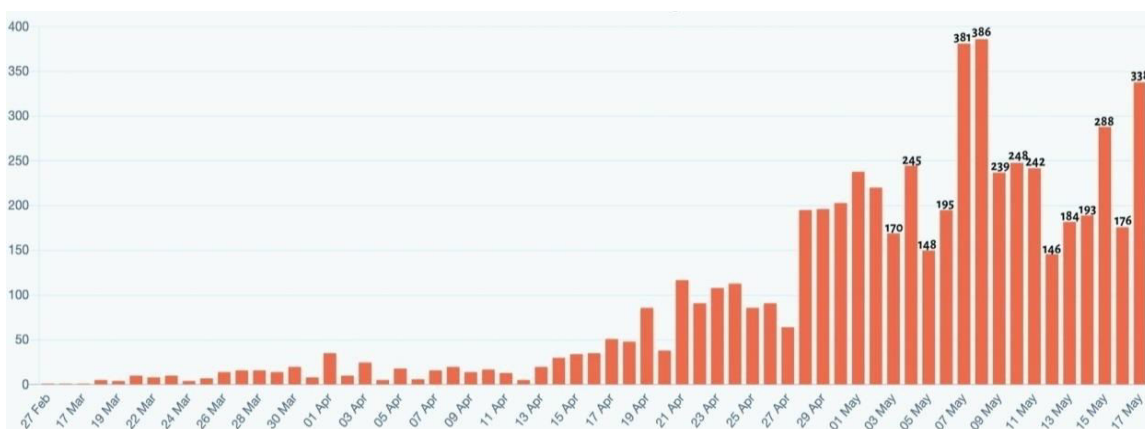


Fig. 1: Daily case Profile of COVID-19 in Nigeria (Feb 27th - May 17th 2020) (Ahubelem, 2020)

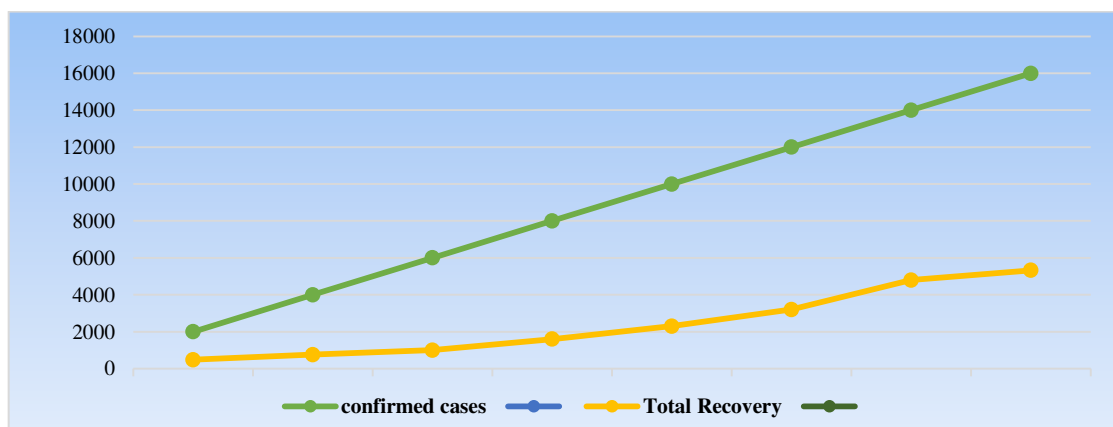


Fig. 2: Confirmed cases vs Total Recovery (Mar, 2020- May, 2020) (Ahubelem, 2020; Alex, 2020)

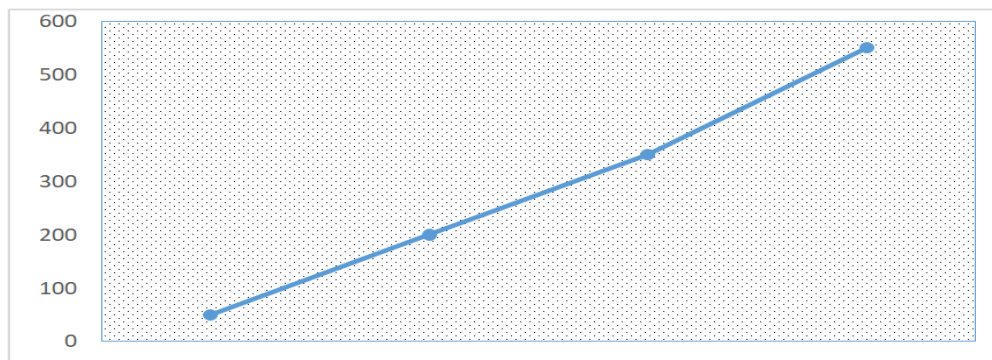


Fig. 3: Death Rate of COVID 19 in Nigeria (Mar, 2020 – June, 2020) (Ahubelem, 2020).

Impact of COVID 19 Lockdown on Environment in Nigeria

The stay at home order as a result of the pandemic in Nigeria has led to the total closure of industries, restrictions in transportation systems, & reduction in gridlock and traffic congestions especially in highly populated areas. These resulted into decrease in carbon emission, particulate matter, temperature, noise, atmospheric toxic gasses like sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, aerosols hence improving air quality, surface water quality and the aesthetic value of the environment (Islam *et al.*, 2021; Dada *et al.*, 2020).

However, this lockdown is a blessing and a curse to the environment because it also have some negative consequences, which includes increase in the volume of households and communal waste unrecycled, this is because waste scavengers are not working and many recycling centers are shut down, as a result, emerging communicable diseases may be imminent in the near future. Another major challenge to the environment is the amount of agricultural and marine commodities that cannot be shipped or exported out of Nigeria. Many export-oriented producers produce volumes far too large for output to be absorbed in local markets, and thus organic waste levels have mounted substantially. They undergo decomposition, the level of methane and other greenhouse gasses increases causing more damage to the environment (Daniel, 2020). The halt in ecotourism activities had put the natural ecosystem and protected species (animals or plants) at risk. This is because environmental conservationists who are meant to protect these species are not coming to work as a result of the lockdown. This has resulted in illegal encroachment, deforestation and illegal fishing and wild life poaching

The Impact of the Lockdown and Curfew on Security issues and Social Vices in Nigeria

In an attempt to fight the spread of the corona virus disease and safeguard the health of the Nigerian Populace, The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria directed the cessation of all movements and declared an overnight curfew from 8 pm to 6 am across the country. Despite the introduction of various restrictive measures, COVID 19 Cases continues to rise as observed in **Fig. 1** and **Fig. 2**. This had exposed the loop holes in Nigeria’s commitment to health system. World Health Organization recommended 1 doctor to 1000 patients in a non-crisis conditions but Nigeria is operating at 1 doctor to 4000 patients, with an estimated total number of doctors in Nigeria to be 50,000 to a total population of about 200 million which means that Nigeria has less than half the doctors it should to adequately respond in a non-crisis situation (Rahman *et al.*, 2021; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020).

There are few COVID 19 Laboratory centers in Nigeria with low capacity for quick test, the test are only available to the internationally travelled returnee and people suspected to have come in contact with confirmed cases. The Hospitals in Nigeria are not well equipped with COVID-19 devices and underfunded with limited infrastructure. The budget allocated for Health system in Nigeria is very low, In 2108, 3.5% of the budget was allocated but in 2020, there was a disproportional increase to 4.5% and the budget does not take into consideration unseen health crisis like COVID 19 pandemic. During the period of the lockdown, the Nigeria Human Right Commission reported incessant increase in the mal handling of the Nigerian citizens by the security operatives who are meant to protect lives and properties. In April, 2020, a Covid-19 security task force

shot and killed a fellow officer at the commercial market in Rivers State, Likewise in Delta State; a Nigerian Police Officer shot and killed a harmless youth on a motorcycle, this incidence led to major riots in some cities in Nigeria. Extortion and corruption by security officers were very high. Cyber-crimes, rape against minor and armed robbery were very common in Nigeria during this lockdown (Lokhandwala and Gautam, 2020). The common security challenges and social vices that occurred in Nigeria during this lockdown are discussed below;

Rape

Gender based violence against women and rape against minor has increased drastically in Nigeria during this lockdown, According to Human watch, the occurrence of rape has tripled during the corona virus lockdown. This development had sparked nationwide protest by various women's right activists and humanitarian organizations. In mid-June 2020, the Governors across States in Nigeria declared the state of Emergency over rape

and other gender based violence (Human watch, 2020; Nigeria Center for Disease Control (COVID-19): situation report June, 2020; Uddin et al., 2022).

According to the police reports, 717 rape incidents had been reported in the last three months across the country during the Covid-19 lockdown, it is believed that the vulnerable individuals which are women and children are locked down with their abusers, which could be family members, neighbors, street wanderers, frustrated and jobless people (National Human right commission, 2020). In response to the rising number of such cases, thousands of Nigerians marched in major cities to demand justice for victims. The demonstrators' demands include the establishment of sustainably-funded sexual referral centers in Nigeria's 36 states and the swift persecution of cases of sexual assault devoid of external pressures from affected parties (Nigeria Center for Disease Control and COVID 19 presidential Taskforce "briefing", June, 2020; Nigeria Police: Rape cases, Weekly analysis June, 2020).



Fig. 4: Women's activist in Osun State, House Of Assembly Service Complex in Osun State (Nigeria Police: Rape cases, Weekly analysis June, 2020)



Fig. 5: Ekiti State Human Right Organizations at the State Secretariat, Ado Ekiti (Nigeria Center for Disease Control and COVID 19 presidential Taskforce "briefing", June, 2020)

Cyber Crime

Cyber fraud is on the increase as a result of the Corona virus pandemic. Fraudsters in other part of the world including Nigeria are already setting up fake apps, creating domain names and fraudulent websites, quack social media platforms. Some fraudsters are engaging in business email compromise (BEC) schemes defrauding unsuspecting people around the world and exploiting the international financial systems and institutions. Some methods adopted by the cyber criminals are; Phishing campaigns, COVID 19 relief packages, impersonation and creating fake and malicious apps for UniversePG | www.universepg.com

example: corona-live 1.1 which claimed to be a live tracker of cases of Coronavirus. The people using the app thought that they are monitoring the spread of the pandemic, but the malicious app was actually encroaching their privacy: which in turns accessing the device's photos, videos, location and bank accounts. The number of COVID 19 registered domain in Europe and North America in March, 2020 was about 15,500, 24% are malicious and 14% are suspicious in one way or the other (Oladele, 2020; Habiba, 2022; Osun State Women's activist, 2020).

Every company are forced to work from home as a result of the lockdown, there is increase in the security risk when accessing companies' data and information from home because most of the home Personal computers and laptops may not have the same level of protective firewalls and securities compared with in-office computers. In June 27, 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) listed 6 Nigerian Nationals among its most wanted cybercriminals in their contribution in business email compromise scheme running to over \$6 million misfortunes. In early June, 2020, two Dubai based Nigerian nationals were arrested by the UAE Interpol for their alleged involvement in money laundering, banking fraud, hacking, and identity theft, incriminating documents were found of planned frauds worth a total of \$435 million (Robert, 2020).

Killing/Kidnaping by Fulni Herdsmen and Boko Haram

Boko Haram insurgencies are armed rebellious group against the Nigeria Government, their activities continue to rise aggressively and they are beginning to take over large areas in Northeastern Nigeria. However, Fulani herdsmen are nomadic or semi nomadic Fulani tribes that are involved in raising livestock like cattle.

Because of change in the pattern of climate and increase in the number of livestock, many herdsmen have migrated to other part of the country. This insurgency and movement of the herdsmen comes with a heavy price on the Nigerian populace during this pandemic lockdown. Due to the inhumane activities of the Boko Haram in the northeastern Nigeria, over 1.8 million people are internally displaced and almost 9 million people need urgent life-saving assistance, including food, health care, and water. These nomadic herders engage more in a nonchalant act by kidnapping, raping and murdering innocent citizens across the country. Kidnapping in Nigeria most times comes along with extortion and taking of ransom and if the family of the victim is unable to negotiate and pay the ransom demanded, such victims will be killed. The incessant violent movements by the Fulani herdsmen and boko haram had sparked various peaceful protests across some parts in Nigeria and abroad. In May, 2020, Nigerians who resides in the United Kingdom staged a protest at the UK Westminster parliament to condemn the killings by armed herdsmen and also call the attention of the global bodies to support the Nigerian Government (Timothy, 2020).



Fig. 6: Nigerians protesting against herdsmen killing at the Westminster parliament, London (Timothy, 2020).

Corruption and Abuse of Public Offices

This COVID 19 pandemic is seen as a means for some corrupt public office holders to siphon and steal the funds that could serve as a palliative or relief for the people during these difficult times. Every country like Nigeria is expanding their funds in order to provide solutions to this pandemic and as well cushion the economic fallout, some funds are geared towards research, vaccine production, relief materials and various stimu-
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lus packages. In this vain, corruption and abuse of public funds is inevitable. United State of America introduced 2 trillion dollars stimulus packages, Germany set €656 billion as relief funds; France set aside €350 billion for her people. All these funds will be spent with accountability and transparency knowing that not a penny of this money will be misappropriated.

In Nigeria, as the pandemic began to spread, Central Bank of Nigeria released #1 trillion stimulus package especially for small/medium enterprises and agriculture, In April, 2020, #500 billion intervention fund was approved by the National Assembly as well as \$150 million from sovereign wealth funds in an attempt to cushion the economic backwash of COVID-19. Here is the point, there is absolutely no credible evidence where all this cash is going to, no report that majority of the Nigerians on lockdown actually receives any stimulus packages. There are no records that Nigeria Government injected funds into food production because the value of food commodities has increased. The private organizations and philanthropists who engaged in corporate donations are also giving money to Governments, whereas in other countries, philanthropists and organizations give to charities that are actually helping people in needs. Some public office holders and politicians sees an avenue to steal money meant for the people, hence COVID-19 is increasing the risk of aggressive corruption in Nigeria (Tunde, 2020).

Mal Handling and Extortion by Security Forces

As the Pandemic soars, curfew, lockdown, ban on interstate crossing and restrictions of movements were introduced. Security agents were deployed across the country to monitor and ensured the lockdown is enforced. Nigeria Police has a bad reputation for brutality, extortion and harassment even before the current pandemic lockdown. In June, 2020, National Human Right Commission reported it received more than 100 complaints across 26 states out of 36 states in Nigeria with 13 incidents of extrajudicial killings leading to over 21 deaths and many are injured (Mia and Hassan, 2021; Lokhandwala & Gautam, 2020).

There is alleged extortion by the Nigerian Police in enforcing the directives on COVID 19. Someone who walks by the roadsides will be arrested and demanded for certain thousands of naira for his release. Despite that there was interstate ban; security forces will demand for money so the individual can cross to other states. Many victims of extortion and brutality during this lockdown have spoken out; among them are musicians, health workers, civil servants and artisan workers, accusing the police and their auxiliary forces of illegality and abuses (National Human right commission, 2020; Hasan *et al.*, 2021; Allauddin *et al.*, 2021).

Robbery and Gang Formation

The rate of robbery and banditry has tremendously increased during this lockdown across the country. This lockdown has changed the way crime & robbery occurs, there are various bandit gangs being formed during this period. These bandit groups are terrorizing different states in Nigeria, for example: One million boys in Oyo State, 1000 boys in Lagos State, Indomie boys in Ogun State, Motor cycle-riding armed bandits in the North-west of Nigeria, to mention few. These bandits invades streets and homes with clubs, machetes, iron rod and local guns, they ransacked various households carted away valuables and injures selective residents who resist invasion. The North-western bandits targeted villages who must have received donations and food palliatives from the Government. These activities of the bandits had sprouted protest in some Northern states in Nigeria. The persistent robbery by the bandits led to the formation of armed self-help group called the “vigilantes”, by the residents specifically for protection of life and properties. The group of anxious residents, mostly male, set up makeshift checkpoints with burning tyres in border communities and streets, kept night watch on their streets and they are armed with machetes, bottles and household items (WHO, 2016).

Abortion

There are unprepared pregnancy caused by the COVID 19 lockdown, the rate of abortion especially through unsafe methods among Nigeria women, married and unmarried, had increased in the last four months. This is because of the limited or poor access to public or private hospitals involved in medical termination of pregnancy or family planning services, low access to drugs to control conceptions and superstitious beliefs surrounding abortion, many women stand the risk of future maternal health problems. It was noted that women had stopped visiting hospitals for maternal services due to the fear of contacting the virus; this could also pose future consequences on maternal health in Nigeria.

Combat the Social Vices during Lockdown in Nigeria

Governments must ensure the protection of women and girls right from the beginning of a pandemic. However, a top-down approach is not enough. Prevention and mitigation initiatives need to be integrated across sectors -

a) Establishment of Protocol during lockdown: The authors observed that protocols were never established to protect girls and women from sexual assault and gender based violence during the lockdown leaving women and adolescent girls vulnerable to coercion, exploitation and sexual abuse. Domestic violence hot-lines, safe spaces, sexual and reproductive health services, referral pathways, and justice mechanisms should be regarded as “essential services” especially during the crisis so that people who are involved in protecting the girls and women will be allowed to move from one spot to another without any hindrances by security forces. Attention must be given to the threat on environment and natural resources, environmental protection workers in national parks, land and marine conservation areas should be given permissions to work so they can continually monitor the natural ecosystem and prevent undue poaching and harvesting.

b) Establishment of women/girls supportive group: This group should be developed across the country where they will be involved in the development and distribution of supportive services during the COVID 19 pandemic, assist the government and private firms to distribute palliatives in their various states and communities across the country, in view of this, they will not be idle and the rate of violence against them will be reduced. Governments should identify organizations already focused on sexual and gender-based violence and give them the tools and resources to continue supporting women and girls during the pandemic.

c) Creation of advisories against cybercrime: Government should create awareness, instruction and guidelines, with the support of the Nigerian Police and private sectors, against online fraudulent activities during this pandemic and protect the masses. At this period of lockdown, there is a lot of Email compromise; fake job alerts from Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), links and attachments associated with COVID-19, fake relief packages that people had already been duped. There is need for individuals to be vigilance and diligence in ensuring that their files are properly backed-up online and offline in a secure manner and use of strong passwords for protecting emails and other social media handles.

d) Setting up Monitoring, Evaluation and stiffened Penalty scheme: Transparent and accountability of Public

offices are at risk during this COVID 19 Pandemic. These risks may be associated with procurement systems, bribery, and fake medical supplies like face mask, ventilators etc, maniacal distribution of palliatives and more. In order to avert these problems, decisions and policies associated with relief packages should be made available and accessible to public, keeping the records of all the distribution, procurements and supplies and monitoring/audit mechanism should be in place and encouraging whistleblowers. Strict prosecutions and penalties should be created specifically for any individuals found to have misappropriated public funds.

e) Active Government responses: The federal government should improve on the approach to security of life and properties during this lockdown and end impunity for assailants. There’s need to decentralized security forces and create more regional security groups across the country, like the newly created “Amotekun” in Southwestern Nigeria. These groups will assist the Nigeria police and other security agencies in fighting banditry, terrorism, armed robberies and insurgencies. Security personnel found to have recklessly brutalized civilians should be investigated and if found guilty, should be castigated.

f) Education: An adage says that “Charity begins at home”. Previous studies showed that most youths involved in social vices are both from a broken homes or poor parental watch and from peer pressure, poverty and economic recession, they delve into wrong act. The parents should train their children in the right direction, so they will be useful to their society. Also, Society stakeholders, like religious leaders, community leaders and community based organizations should be involved in regular sensitization of the youths so that they will be informed about the inherent pitfall associated with social vices. Primary School curriculum should be re-designed to include introduction of practical on the practices and dangers associated with social vices and how to stay away from them.

CONCLUSION:

It is certain that the lockdown associated with COVID 19 has dramatically skyrocketed insecurities and social vices. There are heightened rapes, cybercrime and corruption at all levels in Nigeria due to corona virus. With a little vigilance and due diligence we can protect our data and privacy. Independent women right groups

need to be formed in accordance with the law so as to protect the right of girls and women during crisis. Standard guidelines should be created across the country in the distribution of relief materials to the people especially in the inner communities and Government should actively respond to security challenges, provide daily updates on the epidemiological situation and response in order to safeguard lives and properties.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no competing interest.

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