

COVID-19

The OTHER SOLUTIONS' Newsletter

LOCKDOWN AND PHASE-OUT

SUMMARY

1. The economic toll of lockdowns is surging and is prompting increasing defiance through demonstrations and legal actions. This trend should strengthen and contribute to a variegated landscape.
2. As several countries have started or are pondering phasing-out from current lockdown, uncertainties about the actual signification of serological tests linger. Compounding such concerns, manufacturing constraints on an even roll-out suggest there might not be enough testing capacity in most places to make sure phase-out protocols are consistent with public-health concerns.
3. As growing evidence suggests that only a minor fraction of the population has contracted the disease, phase-out will inevitably increase the virus reproduction rate as physical barriers on its spread temporarily disappear. A second wave is therefore a serious possibility, along with renewed crude control measures that remain the only tool available until an effective vaccine has been developed and rolled-out. The timing of a return to normalcy remains speculative at this stage.
4. In the short-term, following Easter, the holy month of Ramadan should further spur divergent perspectives on how to address the inherent tension between religious gatherings and lockdown measures. It is expected there will be great local variations in how any resolution plays out.

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Covid Landscape

Note: Readers should keep in mind that most scientific publications that are referenced have not been peer-reviewed yet. While we believe such documents represent solid material to inform decisions, caution is advised.

As of writing, more than 2.3 million people had tested positive for Covid – 19. The official caseload has doubled in two weeks.

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/?utm_source=jhu_properties&utm_medium=digital_link&utm_content=ow_jhuhompage&utm_campaign=jh20

78 vaccines are currently being researched, 5 of which had entered clinical trial as of April 8. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01083-4>

Note however that, when found, manufacturing constraints will make vaccine production and roll-out very unevenly distributed, fueling a persistent asymmetric landscape well after the richest countries have controlled the epidemic.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01063-8>

The treatment landscape can be found here:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNjQxZWZhOTItYzU1ZS00Y2QxLWE1ODAtOTViZjhmNjEyZjNiliwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQ0tNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIsmMiOjh9>

Note in particular the positive and negative outcomes for ongoing research, which provide a rational perspective on ongoing rumors about the success of this or that particular drug.

The medical aspects of lockdown phase out all emphasize the important of antibody testing vs. PCR testing and all

countries considering phasing out have enhanced testing capabilities as a core pillar of their strategies. Yet, it remains unclear whether testing positive confers immunity or whether it prevents further infection of others or of being reinfected. Forthcoming medical research on the matter as well as manufacturing delays could significantly alter current strategies.

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930788-1>

One US and one French study have estimated the actual number of infections and concluded that in Santa Clara, CA and France, respectively, about 3% to 4% of the overall population have contracted the disease. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.14.20062463v1.full.pdf+html>

<https://hal-pasteur.archives-ouvertes.fr/pasteur-02548181/document>

This is well short of the required 60% to 70% required for the virus to stop circulating and suggests that any lockdown relaxation might lead to a second wave of infections and thus to subsequent lockdown reintroduction as long as this remains the only effective control measure.

“A return to standard operations remains a distant prospect as a second wave remains a clear and serious possibility. It should be accounted for in ongoing planning efforts.”

Lockdown and Human Rights

The lockdown landscape is now fragmenting. Some countries are cautiously phasing out current protocols, while others have extended it significantly. Divergences between public health and economic considerations are already resulting in unrest in Lebanon, Iraq and the United States. Such tensions are expected to intensify in coming weeks, including in countries where lockdowns are not in place, such as Kenya.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/coronavirus-protests-lebanon-india-iraq/2020/04/19/1581dde4-7e5f-11ea-84c2-0792d8591911_story.html

The economic consequences of lockdowns have already spurred legal battles, with a Human Rights NGO winning a significant legal challenge when the Supreme Court in Malawi ruled that lockdown was unconstitutional.

<https://monkeyviral.com/court-suspends-lockdown-in-malawi/>

Ramadan is scheduled to start on April 24, concluding with Eid on either May 23rd or 24th. As seen for Easter (for the Christian denominations, but especially Protestant evangelicals and Orthodox) perspectives on religious gatherings vary greatly within one faith, and Islam should be no exception. In Baghdad, Al Sadr and Grand Ayatollah have taken opposite viewpoints, the former encouraging gatherings, the latter discouraging them sternly.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/iraq-coronavirus-covid19-najaf-sistani-religion.html>

It is recommended to follow the pronouncements of major religious leaders during Ramadan, as well as those of Imams at local Mosques, in order to plan appropriately.

“We anticipate that the tensions between public health, religious and economic concerns are only going to grow more acute in coming months. Lingering uncertainty over the medical meaning of serological testing as well as unevenly distributed access to testing kits should translate in a very fragmented landscape in terms of security and movements. Planning locally will soon become paramount.”

Donors and NGOs

Donald Trump’s abrupt and petulant suspension of US payments to WHO should not obscure the fact that the WHO’s appeal had been funded at 95% levels as of April 15. Meanwhile, other specialized UN agencies are struggling, with WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR’s appeals funded at 12% at the same date, for instance.

https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/04/15/who-funding-us-freeze-covid19?fbclid=IwAR0K0Io9ropa6BTBoY-HXvqmFka4_zopUxx0kNT0qTWChC3xD333oAaUPc

MSF is now deploying Covid 19 related programs in 40 countries.

https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/covid19?fbclid=IwAR1Tc2gT_IobVfHsW-RF3scjy4SQYksisda8ZF21xdMJf8U9QWwWlg60N7dE#How%20is%20Doctors%20Without%20Borders%20responding%20to%20Covid-19

Africa

The continent at large does not appear to be as affected as other areas, according to latest official counts showing the number of infected persons at over 22,000. With the exception of Comoros and Lesotho, all other African countries have now recorded at least one case. Algeria, Egypt and South Africa are the hardest hit, while the virus appears to be spreading in West Africa and the Sahel.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-4a11d568-2716-41cf-a15e-7d15079548bc?fbclid=IwAR3I_P7-2klcgHPIMLXoa7Jwx6nsVV4d8qp5aiFwaKi0JAepeoc5B0Zgv1c

Public health capacities to deal with severe cases are very limited, with an estimated 2,000 ventilators available for the entire continent.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/18/world/africa/africa-coronavirus-ventilators.html>

Further, the number of ICU beds is estimated to be very low in low-income countries, of which Africa hosts a disproportionate share.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4305307/>

Lastly, the continent does not have the resources to partake in the competition for basic equipment that the pandemic has spurred.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/18/world/africa/africa-coronavirus-ventilators.html>

Taking 9 factors into account, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies estimates that South Sudan, DRC, Nigeria, Sudan and Cameroon are the five countries most vulnerable to the Coronavirus.

https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mapping-risk-factors-spread-covid-19-africa/?fbclid=IwAR2U5_0XRB-qCj0WN6F9bnwGCJMDz_UmnM0E7kkYquljAmb94TDIDoEIxX0

Security

Zoom's security flaws have led several Governments to either ban its use for official business or discourage its use. The Government of India recently joined Australia and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, along with the US Senate and the New York City Board of Education.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/technology/features/story/indian-govt-advisory-says-avoid-using-zoom-why-and-what-to-do-if-you-have-to-use-zoom-1667631-2020-04-16>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52200507>

The app remains popular, however, and Zoom has released security patches. For organizations using the app, it is recommended to upload most recent versions and follow strict digital hygiene protocols.

The economic impact of lockdown will most likely be compounded by the steep fall in oil prices and therefore revenues in Nigeria and Algeria. On April 20, oil traded in negative prices in some locations.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/20/oil-barrel-below-zero/>

It is doubtful this anomaly is more than transient and almost certain it will not affect price at the pump. It should however weaken oil-dependent States further and exacerbate the toll lockdowns are taking. In Lagos, Nigeria, anecdotal reports suggest increasing concerns that corruption and criminality might rise.

https://laboratoireparallele.com/2020/04/17/lagos-nigeria/?fbclid=IwAR2Tp5AUvd7ugSn_lC2CVY4crdEyrHIKn7Zex0Pzx6jWGvZPF_PuWIeQ3Pjg

Consultation with NGOs

OSC is surveying the humanitarian NGO landscape in terms of training and coaching needs.

Coupled with interviews, preliminary analysis suggests that coaching needs are higher during the lockdown phase (immediate to 2 months from now) and training needs should increase during phase-out (2 months to 6 months from now).

Most of coaching and training activity should overwhelmingly support field staff. Priorities include Crisis Management and Operational Continuity, Stress Management and Security. It appears that support to international and national staff differentiated along separate timelines. As an illustration, while Stress Management is viewed as an immediate training need for international staff, it is viewed as an intermediate (2 to 6 months) need for national staff.

Interaction with a trainer is reported as the most important aspect of trainings, be they on site or on-line.

OSC will keep on sharing key insights from its analysis in forthcoming newsletters.



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