



BUILDING BACK BETTER

Policies for Building Resilient Economies in Post-COVID-19 Africa

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ABSTRACT

As countries turn the corner on COVID-19 daily confirmed cases and death rates, the need for strategic re-opening of economic activities become imminent. This opinion paper, based on policy dialogues held under the auspices of the African Development Institute's Global Community of Practice (G-CoP) established to harness and synthesize knowledge and experiences globally to inform policy responses to COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, argues that COVID-19 presents a unique opportunity for Africa to re-think its development policies. It presents policy options to help African countries to build back better - more inclusive, equitable and sustainable economies post-COVID-19. Countries are encouraged to follow the science and prioritize policies that deliver mutual benefits and co-benefits for social, economic, and environmental resilience – building back better.

At the national level, recommended policy options include scaling investments in testing, contact tracing and isolation of SARS-CoV-2 Carriers especially at key ports of entry; implementing social distancing, wearing masks in public, personal hygiene; and investing in strategic communication to build public and private trust in the science and policies on COVID-19. Other national level policies recommended include incentivizing proactive labor market policies to protect workers and their jobs; investment in digitization of key economic sectors (agriculture, health and education); and scaling investments in one health infrastructure, clean technologies and research for development. To succeed, countries should enact policies to enhance proactive public - private sector participation as well as inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination at national, regional and continental levels.

At the regional level, there is need for accelerated investments in the domestication and implementation of the African Development Bank Group's Hi-5s Strategies and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA).

There is need for a Marshal Plan on Inclusive Health in Africa and the establishment of an African Phenome Centre to facilitate disease profiling, research, and enhanced precision public health care services in Africa. Increasing investments in Africa-led institutions such as Centers for Disease Control (CDCs) and other policy research institutions is a key to preparing Africa's readiness for future exogenous shocks such as COVID-19. Finally, there is need for structured debt relief and targeted debt forgiveness to mitigate the economic hardships caused by the pandemic in African countries. While short-term debt moratoriums are helpful, considering the massive impact of the pandemic on African countries' already constrained fiscal balances before COVID-19, debt forgiveness would be ideal.

There is no magic bullet or one-size-fits all policy for mitigating the effects of COVID-19 on African economies or indeed any other policy challenge facing the continent. Decisionmakers need to follow the science and carefully consider the local social, economic, environmental and political realities for informed decision-making. To build resilient economies, it is crucial to consider implications of each policy action on economic, social and environmental goals today and tomorrow. This can be achieved through effective cost-benefit and trade-off analyses to determine the potency, positive and negative multiplier effects (benefits, co-benefits and negative externalities) of each policy option across sectors within local and national contexts. Decisionmakers are encouraged to engage local experts to inform policy design and implementation for each community based on local realities not politics.

Key words: COVID-19; Economic Resilience, Building back Better.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 began with what seemed to be a brief stint of nature fighting back when humans crossed boundaries. For the past 40 years or more, many Environmental Economists have highlighted the risks associated with the current geological age of the “*Anthropocene*” – one in which human activity has become the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

The scientific literature is now awash with publications on the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and other forms of anthropogenic impacts on nature, as well as the self-destructive impacts of social inequalities, poverty and deprivation that characterize human societies everywhere. Beyond the science, these negative impacts have all too often been evident in human societies over time. Millions of life forms and treasured assets (economic, social and natural capital) worth billions of US dollars are lost annually. Incidences of increasing extreme climate events (cyclones, wild fires, melting of the glacier that holds the poles of the earth together, floods, droughts, increased temperatures and heat waves, and the growing sea level rise), other forms of pollution and environmental degradation (depletion in air quality, plastic litter in oceans – stifling the blue economy, etc.), and heightened social fragilities (hunger pandemics, social insecurity and growing terrorism) that social inequities and environmental degradation engender, have become regular news everywhere.

However, the incidence of COVID-19 has been very different. Like other supranational challenges such as climate change, COVID-19 is a *global commons problem*. However, unlike climate change, the impacts of COVID-19 have been more urgent, more globalized. Its immediate devastating impacts on global, regional and national health systems, economies, trade, cultures, societies, and systems of cooperation has been unprecedented.

It has impacted all cultures, races, and economies with no respect to social, economic, or political status or class- calling into question the contemporary systems of interaction and cooperation in human societies. It has fully demonstrated our common humanity and the inherent inequities within and between countries more than ever before. It has also called into question, the relevance and sufficiency of the current social, economic and environmental governance systems in very fundamental ways.

This is a crisis that Africa and the world must not allow to waste. As aptly noted by His excellency President Emmanuel Macron, “*This period will have taught us a lot. Many certainties and convictions will be swept away. Many things that we thought were impossible are happening. The day after when we have won, it will not be a return to the day before, we will be stronger morally. We will draw the consequences, all the consequences.*”ⁱ “*We are all embarking on the unthinkable.... We all face the profound need to invent something new, because that is all we can do... But it will change the nature of globalisation, with which we have lived for the past 40 years...*”ⁱⁱ.

Furthermore, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that: “*Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other global challenges we face - recovery from the COVID-19 crisis must lead to a different economy.*”ⁱⁱⁱ

This call is even more necessary in Africa and the developing countries than anywhere else in the world today. Compared to its population and natural capital endowments, Africa has not benefited enough from the existing global order before COVID-19.

Africa hosts 30% of the world's mineral reserves and accounts for more than 20 percent of global annual production of five key minerals: 80 percent platinum, 77 percent cobalt, 51 percent manganese, 46 percent of diamonds, 39 percent chromium, and 22 percent of gold^{iv}. Africa also possesses 60 percent of world's arable land, 13 percent of the global population and is the most youthful continent with about 60 percent of its population under the age of 25 as well as abundant energy potentials.

Despite this wealth in natural capital endowments, African economies remain among the least developed countries in the world with the size of economies amongst the lowest compared to other regions (Figure 1).

The Caribbean and Small Island States, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Europe, and the Baltics regions rank among the least developed economies when measured in terms of the size of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), each below 2 trillion US \$ as at 2018. This is much less than the fiscal stimulus that has been doled out by the United States of America to bolster its economy from the impacts of COVID-19.

In terms of environmental impacts of development, Africa receives an unfair share of the impacts compared to its contributions to global environmental change. It is, therefore, a win-win strategy for Africa to heed the call to build more inclusive, equitable and sustainable economies and societies post-COVID-19.

BUILDING BACK BETTER IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

The impacts of COVID-19 in terms of morbidities and mortalities remain a significant concern in many countries and second waves of infections are being experienced in countries that are rapidly re-opening their economies. However, Scientists now have a better understanding of the epidemiology of the virus and its transmission mechanisms. There is also increasing hope for a vaccine and therapeutic

cure for COVID-19 possibly in 2021 or 2022. The impacts of lockdown have proven to be significant and unequal among communities and countries – sparking significant political considerations. Countries and businesses are increasingly turning their attention to re-opening strategies.

In Africa, several demographic and natural factors – especially the youthful population of the continent, the human settlement patterns in rural communities, and other preconditions have helped to stave off the confirmed cases and mortality rates due to COVID-19 so far.

Compared to the rest of the world, African countries have reported lower rates of confirmed cases and deaths. As at 29 August 2020, South Africa which ranked 5th in the world with regard to confirmed COVID-19 cases (629,961), coming after Peru (629,961), Russia (982,573); India (3,542,733); Brazil (3,846,153) and United States of America (5,961,094), is the only African country that falls within the top 20 countries in terms of confirmed COVID-19 cases^v (Figure 2). Available data suggest that the confirmed cases of COVID-19 and mortalities due to the disease appear to have peaked in July 2020 and is now trending downwards (Figure 3). A 7-day average analyses of the confirmed cases and deaths in Africa show downward trends (Figure 4). Even in South Africa, which has reported more than half of the reported cumulative positive cases in Africa, the 7-day average analyses by WHO shows that confirmed cases and number of deaths appear to have peaked in July 2020 (Figure 5). As at 29 August 2020, South Africa recorded 241 daily deaths from COVID-19, Morocco (41), Egypt (20) and Algeria (13) with the rest of the continent recording less than 10 deaths per day.

Some argue that this may be due to lack of testing capacity in Africa and inability to carry out autopsies, but there are no cases of unusual reports of COVID-19 related illness and deaths in most rural communities of the continent. Others argue that this

is due to the youthful population and dispersed settlement patterns in rural communities of the continent. Whichever perspective one may hold, there appears to be a growing consensus that as Africa has started to turn the corner on COVID-19, attention is now turning to re-opening economies.

As Africa begin to turn the corner on COVID-19 and Governments start to consider policies for building back better, there is need to address the social, economic and environment trade-offs in COVID-19 impacts. While the COVID-19 lockdown has led to gains in environmental sustainability indicators – reduced CO₂ emissions, improved air quality, reduced plastics littering, etc., it has also decimated economies and livelihoods, and disproportionately impacted the poorer segments of society. The International Energy Agency estimates that global GHG emissions might fall by 8% or 2.6 GtCO₂ in 2020^{vi}. By comparison; annual CO₂ emissions fell by an average of 4% during the Second World War (1939 – 45), 3% during the 1991–92 recession, 1% during the 1980–81 energy crisis, and 1% during the 2009 global financial crisis. UNEP estimates that global GHG emissions must fall by 7.6% every year from 2020 to 2030 to keep temperature increases to less than 1.5°C^{vii}. So, one may argue that the COVID-19 lockdown has delivered some environmental sustainability gains.

But there is a trade-off. The halt in economic activities has caused significant harm to the global and national economies, livelihoods, and societies everywhere. Countries are experiencing deeper recession than in recorded history, the lockdowns have caused hunger pandemics and pushed millions into poverty. Unemployment rates in many countries is higher than in record history and many Central Banks and Finance Ministries in Africa have limited fiscal and monetary space / headroom to intervene decisively with rapid burst of fiscal stimulus or quantitative easing than ever seen before. The inflationary impacts of the massive easing of fiscal and monetary policy to provide social safety nets for households and economies are yet to fully un-

fold. The African Development Bank Group^{viii} estimates that Africa could suffer GDP losses in 2020 between \$145.5 billion (baseline) and \$189.7 billion (worst case), from the pre-COVID–19 estimated GDP of \$2.59 trillion for 2020.

Some countries have seen a sudden uptick in inflation of up to 5%, and expansionary fiscal spending could double by the end of 2020.

Remittances and foreign direct investment could plunge significantly. Between 28.2 and 49.2 million more Africans could be pushed into extreme poverty and an estimated 25 - 30 million jobs could be lost by the end of 2020. The opportunity costs of the environmental gains in terms of impacts on economic and social welfare of people are therefore too severe for countries to bear.

Building back better would require a careful but balanced triangulation of the three pillars of sustainable development: the social, the economic and the environmental. Framed around the global sustainable development goals, building back better will lead to more inclusive, efficient, resilient, and sustainable economies, if and only if, we develop policies that balance the three objectives. Economies that leave no one behind. Leaving the poor in poverty while growing GDP and/or conserving nature is not sustainable development.

Events of the past 40 years of the age of the Anthropocene have shown that social, economic and environmental fragilities are mutually re-enforcing. Actions of one agent and/or within one sector without proper consideration of the multiplier effects on the other (including positive and negative externalities) cannot lead to a sustainable solution. Just like greenhouse gas emissions that circulate freely in the atmosphere and warms the global climate for all irrespective of the geographical boundary of the emitter(s), *if there is COVID-19 anywhere, there is COVID-19 everywhere*. Like COVID-19, *when there is fragility anywhere, there is fragility everywhere*. Questions of moral and distributive justice, as well as intersectoral cooperation and coordination become inevitable in finding a lasting solution.

The African Development Institute’s Global Community of Practice (G-CoP) inaugural policy dialogue on macro-economic policy responses to COVID-19 in Africa hosted on 29 April 2020 called for African countries to aim, not just to build back their economies post COVID-19, but to plan to build back better. Two subsequent events that focused on food systems and inclusive health emphasized the same position. Participants emphasized

that there is need for Africa to build more resilient economies that are inclusive and efficient to ensure Africa is able to absorb future exogenous shocks, adapt itself to maintain its core functions during such shocks and rapidly transform itself to remain competitive aftershocks. Some key policy recommendations are highlighted in the subsequent section of this paper.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING BACK BETTER IN POST COVID-19 AFRICA

National Level Policies for Reopening Economic Activities

To build back better, Countries must first ensure that the guidelines they follow for re-opening their economy are informed by science, not politics. Countries

need to carefully follow the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDCs) based the epidemiology of the disease within specific local contexts (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Guidelines for Reopening Economic Activities¹

| Gating Criteria | Threshold to Enter Phase 1 | Threshold to Enter Phase 2 | Threshold to Enter Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|---|
| Decreases in newly identified COVID-19 cases | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of documented cases over a 14-day period | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of documented cases for at least 14 days <i>after entering Phase 1</i> | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of documented cases for at least 14 days <i>after entering Phase 2</i> |
| Decreases in emergency department (ED) and/or outpatient visits for COVID-like illness (CLI) | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of CLI syndromic cases reported over a 14-day period | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of CLI syndromic cases reported for at least 14 days <i>after entering Phase 1</i> | Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of CLI syndromic cases reported for at least an additional 14 days <i>after entering Phase 2</i> |
| Decreases in percentage of SARS-CoV-2 tests positive | Downward trajectory (or near-zero percent) of positive tests as a percentage of total tests over a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests) | Downward trajectory (or near-zero percent) of positive tests as a percentage of total tests for 14 days <i>after entering Phase 1</i> (flat or increasing volume of tests) | Downward trajectory (or near-zero percent) of positive tests as a percentage of total tests for at least 14 days <i>after entering Phase 2</i> (flat or increasing volume of tests) |
| Treat all patients without crisis care | Jurisdiction inpatient & ICU beds <80% full; Staff shortage in last week = no; PPE supplies adequate for >4 days | Jurisdiction inpatient & ICU beds <75% full; Staff shortage in last week = no; PPE supplies adequate for >4 days | Jurisdiction inpatient & ICU beds <70% full; Staff shortage in last week = no; PPE supplies adequate for >4 days |
| Robust testing program | Test availability such that percentage of positive tests is ≤20% for 14 days Median time from test order to result is ≤4 days | Test availability such that percentage of positive tests is ≤15% for 14 days Median time from test order to result is ≤3 days | Test availability such that the percentage of positive tests is ≤10% for 14 days Median time from test order to result is ≤2 days |

¹ Adapted from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC).

Governments should work with local experts (Epidemiologist) to produce guidelines that are adapted to their local contexts to inform the thresholds for a phased approach to reopening economies based on local contexts. Such guidelines should include, sustained decline in newly identified COVID-19 cases; decreases in emergency department (ED) and/or outpatient visits for COVID-like illness (CLI); decreases in percentage of SARS-CoV-2 tests positive cases; demonstrated ability to treat all patients without crisis care; and capacity to implement a robust testing program.

To successfully re-open and rebuild economies, the following interrelated immediate-term policies are required:

(a) Follow the science

Rely on epidemiological data on COVID-19 incidences in the population for decision-making regarding reopening sequences and rates. Ensure that the preconditions set by the Centre for Disease Control (CDCs) are met before re-opening the economy. In this regard, evidence from WHO does suggest that based on 7-day average analyses, most African countries appear to have turned the corner as the incidences of confirmed cases and deaths are now trending downwards. But this should be a reason for continued compliance with the guidelines based on science not complacency. Evidence from other countries demonstrate that there is high risk of resurgence when economies reopen.

(b) Invest in testing, contact tracing and isolation

To successfully reopen, countries need to scale up the capacity for testing, contact tracing and isolation of COVID patients. Testing regimes should be informed by local realities, but two key areas for prioritized testing include: (i) testing at key ports of entry such as international and local airports, and (ii) community testing where there are high incidences of COVID-19. Testing at ports of entry is

encouraged to reduce importation and inter-city spread of the virus.

In communities where there are hot spots of positive cases, community testing to identify and isolate asymptomatic carriers who could become super spreaders of the virus in communities, schools and workplaces is encouraged. The current strategy based on identifying symptoms of arrivals such as heightened temperatures is necessary but not enough to identify and isolate potential spreaders of the disease. It is now known that over 40% of the SARS-CoV-2 carriers are asymptomatic and over 50% of the transmission are caused by asymptomatic carriers. Community testing is therefore crucial to identify and isolate asymptomatic carriers to break the cycle of SARS-CoV-2 in communities.

(c) Implement social distancing, wearing masks in public and personal hygiene

Frequent hand washing, wearing face masks when in public and maintaining at least 6 feet (about 2 meter) distance from each other always are crucial. Personal hygiene, water and sanitation are not just good for COVID-19 but for a lot of communicable diseases that plague Africa. Implementing social distancing and personal hygiene saves lives. This is a moral and social responsibility that we owe each other to defeat the virus. To be effective, governments and decisionmakers should invest in the required infrastructure for water and sanitation and other facilities to incentivize adoption and implementation of the policy.

(d) Communication and trust building

Countries should develop effective information sharing and communication strategies based on science to enhance the trust between society, private sector, and governments. The politicization of COVID-19 response policies has led to waning confidence in the public policy responses being implemented by governments. There is need for mass communication strategies using community champions, community leaders and trusted institutions to

build trust in science and in the policies proposed to contain the virus.

(e) Incentivize proactive labor market policies to protect workers and their jobs

Decisionmakers should encourage flexible working arrangements, retrofitting of offices to ensure effective social distancing and ventilation. Teleworking and different variants of working from home could yield several co-benefits to social, economic and environmental sustainability in a post-COVID-19 world. Workers could benefit from better work-life balance and savings in costs of transportation. Companies could achieve significant savings in capital expenditure as large high-end city offices may no longer be required. The environment benefits in terms on reduced CO₂ emissions and improved air quality achieved during the COVID-19 lockdown could be sustained, at least in part if a hybrid working system is adopted for longer. One major challenge in implementing this policy in Africa is the digital divide and lack of access to data and affordability of hardware. Governments and private companies should consider re-investing the cost savings from teleworking to provide mobile data to workers.

(f) Digitization of economic activities

COVID-19 has helped to fast track the transition to the fourth industrial revolution technologies. Digital access has become essential for participation in economic and social activities across sectors. Decisionmakers are encouraged to prioritize investments in digitization of economic activities in priority sectors, including foods systems and agricultural value chains, education systems (e-learning), public health care systems (such as telemedicine, health data systems, and mobile health delivery) through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). If there is one take home message from COVID-19, it is the fact that the digital economy is the new normal. Only those with hardware and reliable and affordable internet connections will benefit for the post-

COVID-19 economy. Digitization also delivers key cost savings and benefits for environmental sustainability through reduced transportation and unnecessary air travel. It could also lead to decongestion in cities as workers will become more willing to live in rural communities and work from home – driving greater social inclusion, equity and work-life balance. This calls for strategic investments in digitization of the key sectors of every nation's economy and building the physical infrastructure and human capacity for digital economies in all sectors, especially in the critical sectors: health, agriculture and education.

(g) Prioritize investments in inclusive one health infrastructure

This includes investments in food systems, water and sanitation facilities, and public health care for all, especially to the vulnerable households in communities where lockdown policies are needed. Also promote community-based health care to augment the traditional hospitals. Food production and distribution within communities should be classified as essential services. Governments should assist small holder farmers with personal protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizers. Investing in health systems needs to be re-conceptualized as investing in improving the human experience from conception to the grave (all keys must play harmoniously for better health and wellbeing). This is a step-change from the consumptive health systems which focuses on building hospitals to manage disease conditions.

(h) Private sector participation

To succeed, countries need to implement policies that eases the business environment to allow the private sector to proactively participate in rebuilding the economies. The limited fiscal space in Africa means that countries have limited headroom to act decisively at the pace and scale required to rapidly rebuild economies. Policies that encourage social innovations and public-private sector participation would be a win-win for Africa. This could help

create jobs and unleash the innovative talent of African youths. Macro-economic policies such as small business tax deferrals could be helpful. Policies that target bailouts to large business such as airline bailouts, assisted bankruptcy for large companies, and large business tax deferrals are known to have negative externalities on environmental sustainability.

(i) Clean Technology Investments

To drive the transition to low carbon economies, countries should prioritize clean technical investments in key sectors, such as (i) clean energy infrastructure; (ii) connectivity infrastructure such as mass transit systems, (iii) e-education; and (iv) smart quality health care infrastructure.

(j) Investments in Research and Development

Knowledge dependence have been at the roots of Africa's underdevelopment for decades. With very low investments in research for development, African countries register low patents and continue to rely on foreign knowledge for its policies and development programs. Most Think Tanks in Africa are faced with sustainability challenges as they largely depend on research grants from Donors often at the expense of undertaking relevant research that can inform context-relevant policymaking in Africa. Investments in R & D spending and capacity development will deliver significant benefits to building resilience in Africa.

(k) Intersectoral coordination and collaboration at the national and regional scales will be critical for sustainable policy design and implementation

While COVID-19 is primarily a health pandemic, the transmission channels through which it impacts economies and citizens are multi-sectoral, especially through food systems and food value chains, water and sanitation services, trade and industry. Effective collaboration among the relevant Ministries including health, agriculture, food and livestock, tourism, national planning, finance and more

is therefore crucial in designing policies to build back better.

Policies for Regional and Global Decisionmakers

(a) Invest in domestication and implementation of the African Development Bank's Hi-5s Strategies

Before COVID-19, the United Nations Development Program had released a report which confirmed that if Africa implements the High-5s, we would have achieved over 90% of the global Sustainable Development Goals and the agenda 2063 – the Africa We Want. The Hi-5s strategies: to *light up and power Africa, feed Africa, industrialize Africa, integrate Africa* and *improve the quality of life for Africans*, present focused sector-based strategies for building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies before, during and after COVID-19.

Without universal access to electricity, Africans cannot participate in the new digital economy which has become the new normal in the post-COVID-19 world. Feeding Africa is a pre-condition for inclusive health and wellness for Africans to be able to build the anti-bodies and immunities required to withstand COVID-19. Rapid industrialization is required to ensure self-sufficiency in basic necessities such as production of personal protective equipment (PPEs), medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, food and other production. Accelerated integration of the continent provides unique opportunities for building national, regional and continental value chains in all sectors to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with over dependence on global value chains. Ultimately the goal of every policy is to improve the quality of lives for Africans. Creating jobs for African youths; invest in education, science, technology and mathematics; accelerate gender empowerment; and investments in

quality health infrastructure for Africa, are all necessary pre-conditions for an inclusive and resilient development in Africa.

Like other sound policies and strategies in Africa, COVID-19 pandemic is a call for accelerated implementation of the Hi-5s at national, regional and continental scales.

(b) Accelerate the domestication and implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement

The sudden closure of borders and the protectionist policies implemented by countries to contain the COVID-19 virus is a stark reminder of the risk exposures associated with over-reliance on global value chains. The ACFTA presents a unique opportunity for Africa to build one of the world's largest free trade zone with immense potentials for future growth. While Africa participates in global value chains (GVC) development and integration, it is mostly through upstream production which embodies production of raw materials that are then benefited in the importing countries^{ix}. With a few exceptions, the degree of processing (value addition) in Africa's commodity exports remains generally low and the share of local labor in their value is relatively small^x. Building national and regional value chains is crucial as they can bring about new forms of production, technological transfer and development, logistical development, labour skills upgrade, long-term industrial upgrade, job creation, poverty reduction, inclusive growth and global networking^{xi}. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for countries and regions to build value chains at national, regional and continental levels to reduce vulnerabilities to exogenous shocks such as fluctuations in global market prices and/or health pandemics. Like the Hi-5s, the ACFTA is already available for Africa to implement.

(c) Structured debt relief and targeted debt forgiveness

Short-term debt moratoriums are helpful. However, considering the massive impact of the pandemic on

countries' already constrained fiscal balances, debt forgiveness would be ideal.

(d) A Marshal Plan on Inclusive Health for Africa

The African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the World Health Organisation are encouraged to convene a dialogue to establish a Marshal Plan for Inclusive Health in Africa, to prepare the continent for future pandemics after COVID-19.

(e) Establish an African Phenome:

Africa needs to develop its own knowledge, especially in health profiling and management, and harness its rich biodiversity to benefit its citizens. Understanding the interactions between the human phenome and genome with the environment is a sure way to building an inclusive one health system for a health population that eats well, lives well and can withstand future pandemics. This is necessary for disease profiling, research, and development and enhanced precision public health care services in Africa.

(f) Invest in Africa-led institutions including regional and national Centers for Disease Control (CDCs) and other policy research institutions.

To be resilient, Africa's health and economic systems need strengthened absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacity in times of both endogenous and exogenous shocks such as COVID-19. COVID-19 is a pandemic among pandemics in Africa and it is likely not going to be the last. It has demonstrated that reliance on external institutional capacities and aid for development is risky. Countries and regions need to strengthen own capacity for early warning systems, policy research, governance and risk mitigation to secure the welfare of citizens today and tomorrow. Future economic headwinds and new health pandemics will come when it will.

The key test of resilience will be the capacity of a system to absorb shocks, adapt to shocks and transform itself within the broader context to remain competitive in the new normal after the shock.

POLICY PRIORITIZATION

There is no magic bullet or one-size-fits-all policy for COVID-19 or indeed any policy challenge facing the continent. Decisionmakers need to follow the science and carefully consider the local social, economic, environmental and political realities for informed decision-making. To build resilient economies, it is crucial to consider implications of each

policy action on economic, social and environmental goals today and

tomorrow. This can be achieved through effective cost-benefit and trade-off analyses to determine the potency, positive and negative multiplier effects (benefits, co-benefits and negative externalities) of each policy option across sectors within local and national contexts. Decisionmakers are encouraged to engage local experts to inform policy design and implementation for each community based on local realities, not politics.

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Figure 1: Gross Domestic Product by Regions, 1995 – 2018 (Constant US\$ 2010)

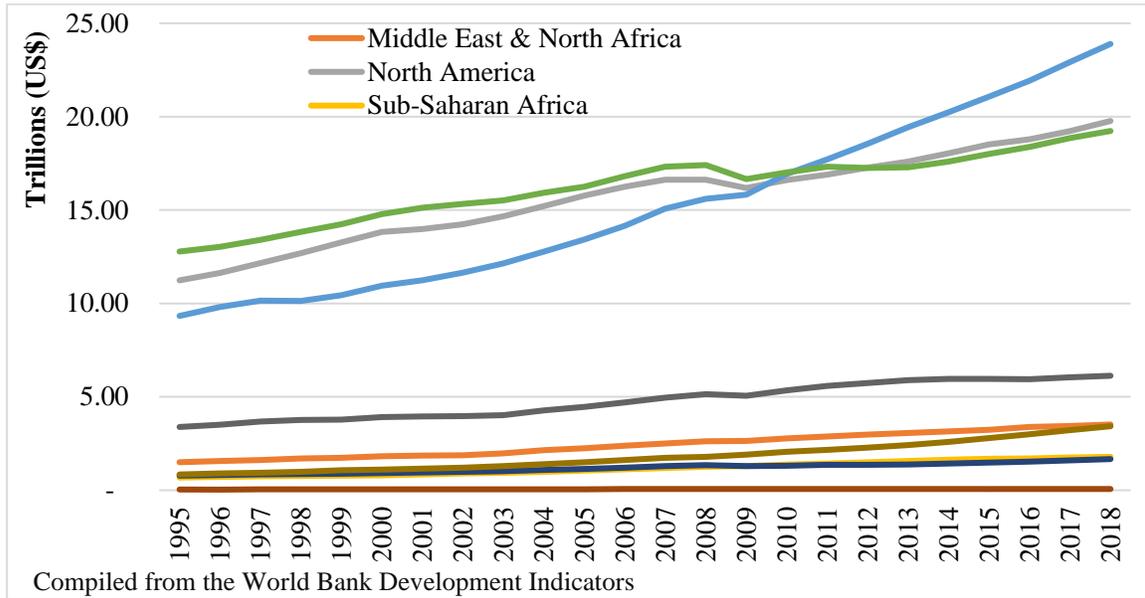


Figure 2: Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in 20 impacted countries as at 29 August 2020^v

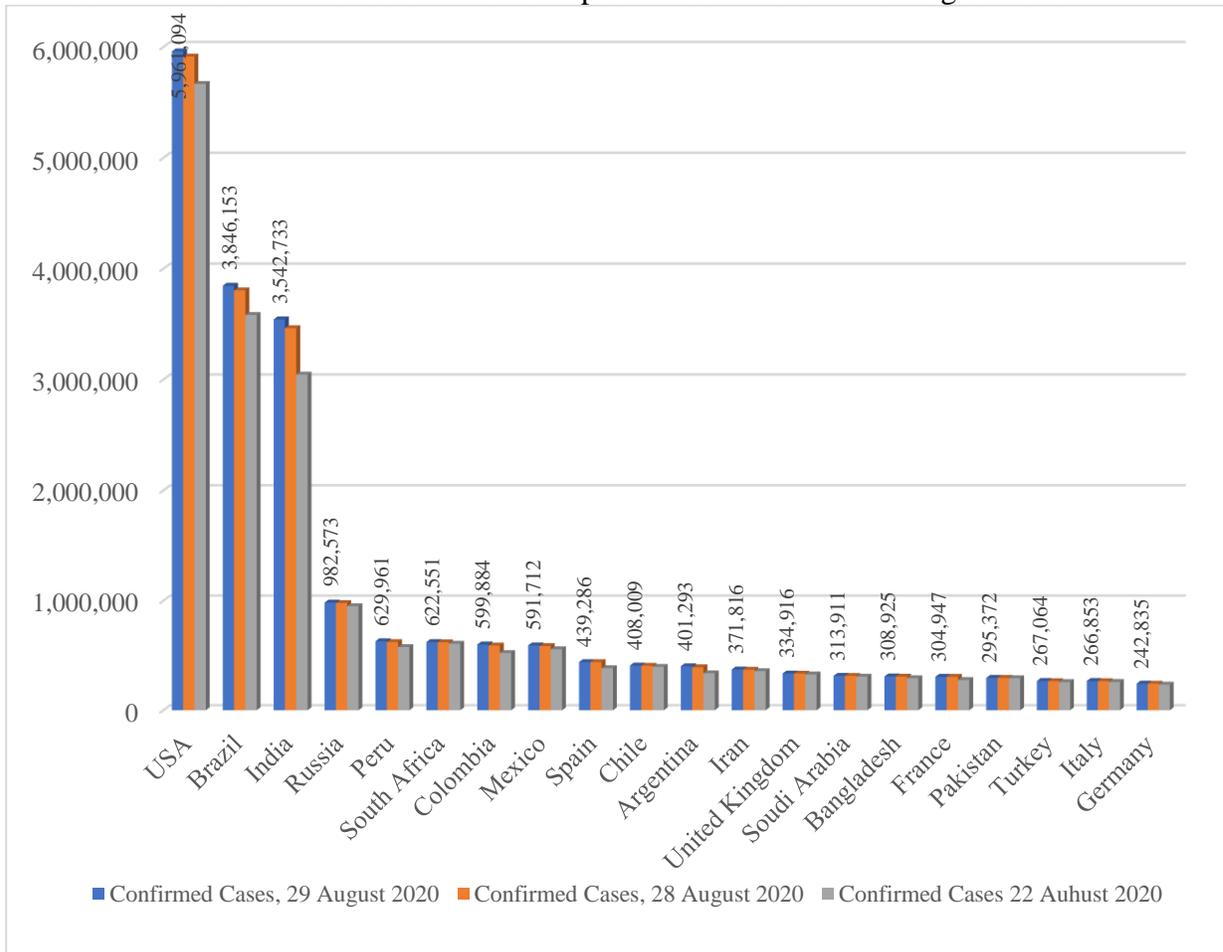


Figure 3: COVID-19 Death Rates and Confirmed Daily Deaths in Africa ^v

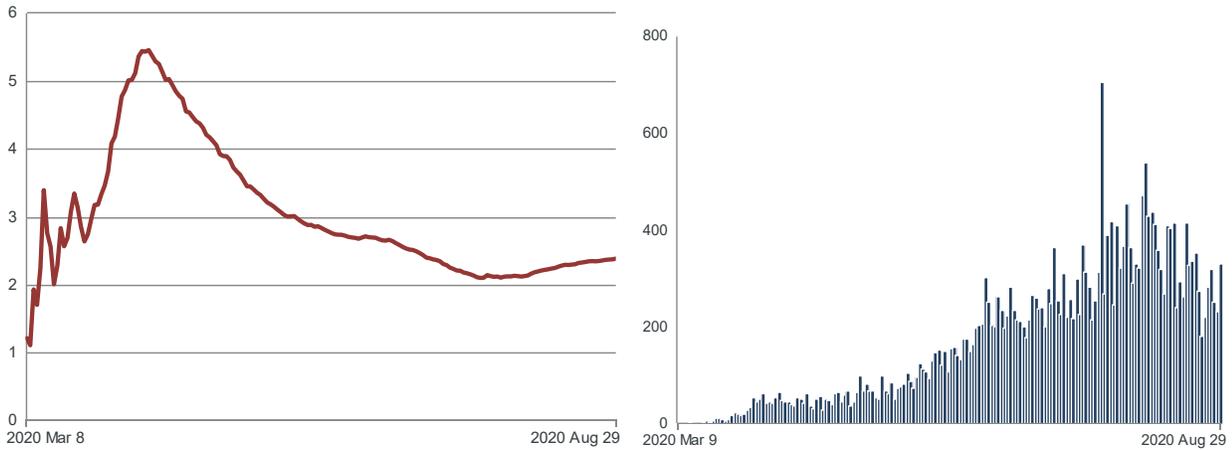


Figure 4: Confirmed COVID-19 Daily Cases and Deaths in Africa: – 7 Day moving Average^v

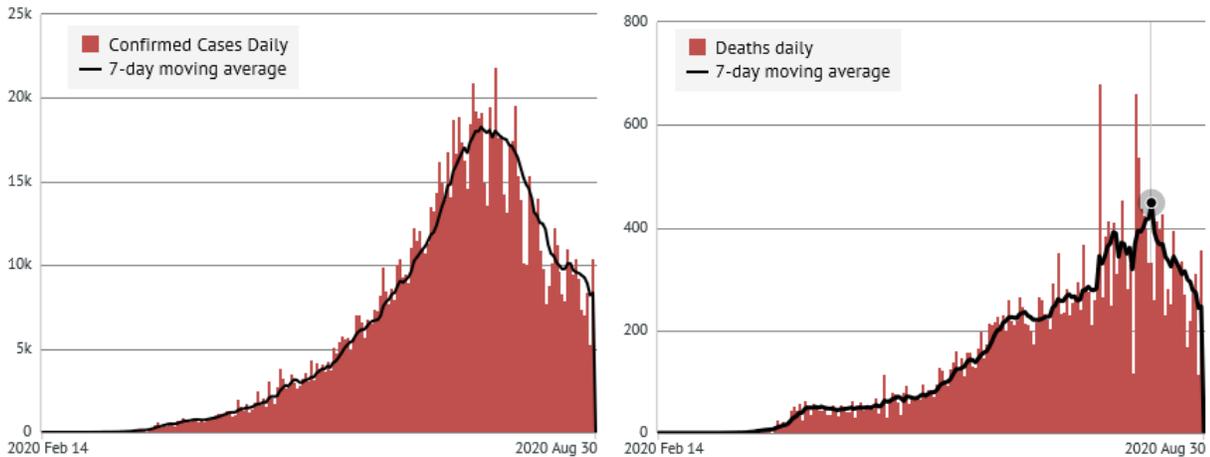


Figure 5: Confirmed COVID-19 Daily Cases and Deaths in South Africa: – 7 Day moving Average^v

