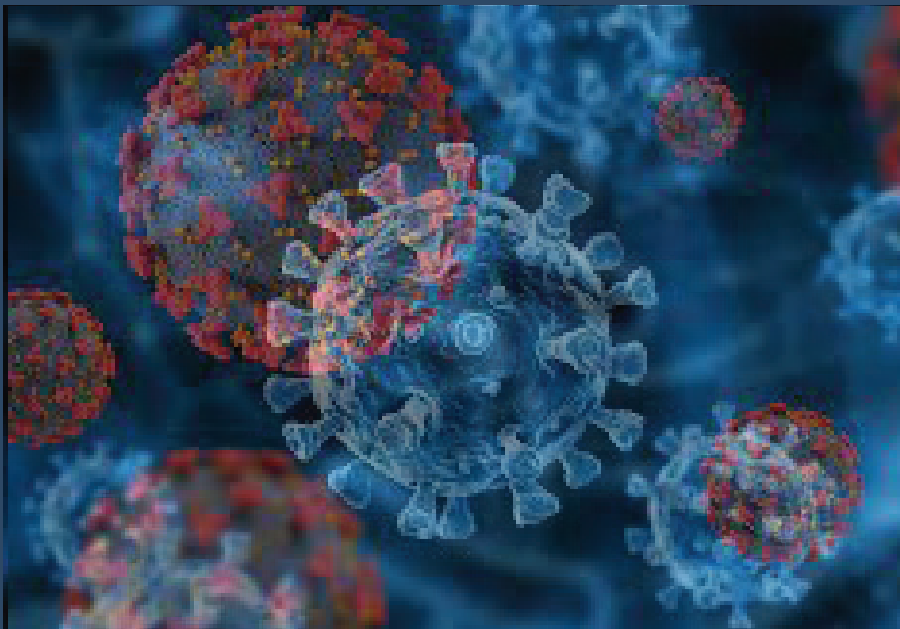


# The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and its Implications for the African Economies



*Senior Policy Seminar XXIII*

*Bringing Rigour and Evidence to Economic Policy Making in Africa*

AFRICAN ECONOMIC RESEARCH CONSORTIUM  
CONSORTIUM POUR LA RECHERCHE ÉCONOMIQUE EN AFRIQUE



# The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and its Implications for the African Economies

AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXIII  
Virtual Meeting  
March 30, 2021

## **Seminar Report**

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### **About African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)**

African Economic Research Consortium, established in 1988, is a premier capacity building institution in the advancement of research and training to inform economic policies in sub-Saharan Africa. It is one of the most active Research and Capacity Building Institutions (RCBIs) in the world, with a focus on Africa. AERC's mission rests on two premises: First, that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy. Second, that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed cadre of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research. AERC builds that cadre through a programme that has three primary components: research, training, and policy outreach. The organization has now emerged as a premier capacity building network institution integrating high quality economic policy research, postgraduate training, and policy outreach within a vast network of researchers, universities, and policy makers across Africa and beyond. AERC has increasingly received global acclaim for its quality products and services and is ranked highly among global development think tanks.



### **The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies – AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXIII**

Virtual Meeting

by: African Economic Research Consortium  
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Nairobi 00200, Kenya

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# Abbreviations

AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
AfDB	African Development Bank
AIDs	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
CAPOD	Policy Analyst, Centre d'Analyse des Politiques de Développement'
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CREA	Le Centre de Recherches Économiques Appliquées
CSO	Central Statistical Office
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
EGH	Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart of Kenya
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations'
FCDOs	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIC	Growth Incidence Curves
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
GNI	Gross National Income
GoU	Government of Uganda
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOSTAT	International Labour Organization Databases
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy research and Analysis
LMICs	Low Income and Middle-Income Countries
LSMS	Living Standard Measurement Surveys
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPP	Public Private Partnership
REO	Regional Economic Outlook
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Scale Enterprises
SPS	Senior Policy Seminar
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UCAD	L'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Daka
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nation Economic Commission for Africa
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
WDI	World Development Indicators
WHO	World Health Organization

# Preface

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) convenes Senior policy seminars to provide high level African policy makers the opportunity to come together to dialogue on the results of research conducted by AERC and its affiliates, exchange policy experiences and interact with the researchers in an atmosphere of peers. The themes of these seminars are selected based on topicality and contemporary interest to African policy making.

AERC Senior policy seminars are forums where policy makers and researchers to engage in uninterrupted deliberations on a set of important issues considered significant to policy making in Africa. The seminar format insulates the policy makers from pressures related to their responsibilities and, thus, creates an environment for lively professional discourse on the selected issue. Aside from the specific aims of bringing researchers and policy makers together, the seminars are directly useful to AERC because they help identify research imperatives crucial to transforming Africa. They also improve prospects for policy involvement of the researchers and enhance AERC's visibility in the policy community. Thus, serving to highlight the growing capacity in the region for policy research and, overall, provide important feedback to AERC for its research and training programs.

Exchange of country-specific experiences is particularly important in these seminars. The policy makers are normally identified for their interest in policy research issues and the level of seniority of the policy makers is generally right, leading to detailed discussions. Researchers are reasonably well balanced between Anglophone and Francophone, and attendance by Francophone policy makers is always encouraged.

Policy makers report that they have found their experiences in the seminars very useful. The information exchanged helps them update their knowledge on current research and sieve out issues that are relevant to their duties. Some have even been embarrassed to find that during negotiations with international financial institutions, they have agreed to certain policies without understanding the full implications of the policy package. Seminars of this kind, while not intended or able to make the policy maker an economist, nevertheless afford the opportunity of considering the wider ramifications of their policy decisions.

AERC is hugely indebted to Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya who was the Chief Guest, Dr. Arqebe Oqubay, Senior Minister and Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Amb. Erastus J.O. Mwencha, Chairman, Equity Bank & Former who also chaired the opening session. Other dignitaries included Prof. Sir. Paul Collier, Oxford University, UK, Prof. Ernest Aryeetey, ISSER, Ghana, Dr. Frannie Léautier, Former Vice President, AfDB and Moazzam Malik, *Director General for Africa*, FCDs who gave talks in the Honoring Prof. Benno Ndulu.

A total of 307 participants from 39 countries across Africa, including high level policy makers in the rank of ministers, permanent secretaries, members of parliament,

executive directors, former ministers, governors of central banks, members of parliament, managing directors of research institutions among other dignitaries participated virtually.

The conference featured four presentations by thought leaders about *The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies*. Session One on *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Poverty and Inequality in Five African Countries* was chaired by Adelaide Matlanyane, Governor, *Central Bank of Lesotho*. The paper presenter was Rose Ngugi, *Kenya Institute for Public Policy research and Analysis, (KIPPRA)*. This paper was discussed Makochekanwa Albert, *University of Zimbabwe*. Session Two was on *Trade-offs between Lockdown Measures to Control the Spread of the Covid-19 and the Economic and Social Consequences*. The session chair was Kealeboga Masalila *Deputy Governor, Bank of Botswana*. The presenter was Abebe Shimeles, *African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)*. This paper was discussed by Prosper Honagbodé, *Ministère de l’Economie et des Finances, Benin*. The Third Session was on *COVID-19 and the Health Sector in Africa*. This session was chaired by Yamungu Kayandabila, *Deputy Governor, Bank of Tanzania*. The paper was presented by Augustine Asante, *University of New South Wales, Australia*. The discussant for this paper was Aly Mbaye, *CREA/UCAD, Senegal*. The fourth paper was on *The Interrelationship between Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Some Implications for the Fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic*. This session was chaired by Wilson Banda, *Governor, Central Bank of Malawi* the paper presented by Erik Thorbecke, *Cornell University, USA*. This paper was discussed by Adam Mugume, *Executive Director, Research and Policy, Central Bank of Uganda*. The presenters produced high-quality papers, and the participants were very active, thus enabling us to produce the seminar’s policy recommendations that were shared with other African policy makers who did not find time to take part in this event.

We are grateful to all those who made the seminar a great success. Dr. Abebe Shimeles, Director of Research, Dr. Theophile Azomahou, Director of Training, who made valuable inputs into the preparation and implementation of the seminar. In equal measure, AERC very much appreciates the hard work of Senvy Maistry, Chief Communications Officer, Dr. Charles Owino, Publications Manager, Juffali Kenzi, ICT Manager, and Edith Mutui, Communications and Publications Assistant in organizing the event. AERC also acknowledges with thanks Dr. Tom Kimani, Manager Training and Dr. Mark Korir, Manager Training for their role as rapporteur as well as Pamela Kilwake and Joel Mathia, who assisted with logistics. To these, and the many others who were involved, AERC extends its heartfelt appreciation.

**Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u**

Executive Director

African Economic Research Consortium



# Opening Session

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<b>Welcome remarks:</b>	<b>Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u</b> , <i>Executive Director, AERC</i>
<b>Official Opening:</b>	<b>Hon. Mutahi Kagwe</b> , <i>EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya</i>
<b>Keynote Speech:</b>	<b>Dr. Arqebe Oqubay</b> , <i>Senior Minister and Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia</i>

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## Honoring Prof. Ndulu

<b>Session chair:</b>	<b>Amb. Erastus J.O. Mwencha</b> , <i>Chairman, Equity Bank &amp; Former Vice Chair of the African Union &amp; Secretary General COMESA</i>
	1. <b>Prof. Sir. Paul Collier</b> , <i>Oxford University, UK</i>
	2. <b>Prof. Ernest Aryeetey</b> , <i>ISSER, Ghana</i>
	3. <b>Dr. Frannie Léautier</b> , <i>Former Vice President, AfDB</i>
	4. <b>Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u</b> , <i>Executive Director, AERC</i>

## Potential Impact of Covid-19 on African Economies from a Global Lens

**Lead Panellist:** **Moazzam Malik**, *Director General for Africa, FCDOs*

The Master of Ceremony for the day, Dr. Charles Owino, Manager, Publications, AERC, called the meeting to order, welcomed the participants and then took them through the seminar programme for the AERC Senior Policy Seminar XXIII. He then invited the session chairman, Amb. Erastus J.O. Mwencha, *Chairman, Equity Bank & Former Vice Chair of the African Union & Secretary General COMESA* to continue with the rest of the programme.

## Welcome Remarks

**by Njuguna Ndung'u**, *the Executive Director of AERC*

Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Dr. Arqebe Oqubay, Senior Minister and Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Amb. Erastus J.O. Mwencha, Chairman, Equity Bank & Former Vice Chair of the African Union & Secretary General COMESA, Prof. Sir. Paul Collier, Oxford University, UK, Prof. Ernest Aryeetey, ISSER, Ghana, Dr. Frannie Léautier, Former Vice President, AfDB and Moazzam Malik, *Director General for Africa, FCDOs*; Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to this year's AERC Senior Policy Seminar on "*The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies*," organized by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). AERC senior policy seminars are featured

annually to bring together senior policy makers from around the continent and thought leaders to have a dialogue and exchange views on the contemporary issue of policy interest. Participants are drawn from the highest echelon of policy making in Africa.

The last four (4) seminars have focussed and driven informative public policy directions: *Agriculture and Food Policies for Better Nutrition Outcomes in Africa* (22<sup>nd</sup>); *The Fragility of Growth* (21<sup>st</sup>); *Rethinking Regional Integration* (20<sup>th</sup>); and *Financial Inclusion for Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Africa* (19<sup>th</sup>). These conferences provide a timely forum for dialogue between senior policy makers and thought leaders, and among policy makers themselves. The debates are conducted in the best of AERC traditions, guided by rigour and evidence. The seminars are directly useful to AERC because they provide feedback on research imperatives crucial to transforming Africa. These forums also serve to highlight the growing capacity in the region for policy research and, overall, provide important feedback to AERC for its research and training programs.

This 23<sup>rd</sup> SPS – focuses on the Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies. The current Covid-19 pandemic is damaging business ecosystems, affecting livelihoods, and threatening to overturn sub-Saharan Africa's development progress and growth projections. The pandemic has once again brought to the fore these challenges and exposed the frailty of many of the institutions across the continent. Yet, as the virus was late in arriving to the continent, we saw governments across Africa taking decisive actions to keep citizens safe and implementing global best practices and policies. While there are obvious capacity and execution shortfalls, there have also been several successful areas of practice.

The pandemic has hit tourism-dependent and resource-intensive economies particularly hard, while also accentuating social and economic inequalities across nations. As Africa braces for the worst, many African countries are grappling on the best approach to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, the indicators on infection rates are growing rapidly and they do not seem to relent. We will thus share information on the impact of Covid-19 on African economies and its effect on health infrastructure among other sectors and provide a framework for post Covid-19 economic recovery strategy for African economies – focusing on growth, inequality, poverty reduction and redistribution. Indeed, this conference will improve prospects for policy involvement of the researchers as well as enhance AERC's visibility in the policy community.

We shall also have a Special Session in Honour of Prof. Benno Ndulu. Three speakers will make their contributions in the Special Session that has been organized to honor Prof. Benno Ndulu, one of the most celebrated academic in Africa, policy leader and founder of AERC. The speakers will be Prof. Sir. Paul Collier, *Oxford University, UK*, Prof. Ernest Aryeetey, *ISSER, Ghana* and Dr. Frannie Léautier, *Former Vice President, AfDB*. The late Prof. Benno Ndulu, passed away on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021. Prof. Benno, a celebrated Economist, Mentor and Scholar, was the first Director of Research and the first African Executive Director of the AERC. Benno was also a member of the AERC Board, Chair of the AERC Programme Committee, founder member of the AERC African Central Bank Governors' Forum, thought leader and paper presenter and discussant at AERC policy workshops. His commitment and dedication to the AERC and its mandate to build research capacity in Africa is highly commendable.

## Speech

by **Hon. Mutahi Kagwe**, *EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya*

Honourable Ministers, Central Bank Governors, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Special Advisors to Heads of State, Heads of Academic and Research Institutions, The Executive Director of the African Economic Research Consortium, Members of the Research Community, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst today, and the one to preside over the formal opening ceremony of this special conference, which is the 23rd Senior Policy Seminar of the African Economic Research Consortium. This memorable event provides a timely opportunity for African policy makers and scholars to address the opportunities and challenges in sight with regards to Africa's development.

But first, I would like to express my profound appreciation to the seminar organizers for choosing me to officiate the official opening for this very important meeting. It is my great delight to welcome each one of you to this conference, with the sincere hope that it will be pleasant, informative, and productive.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

The theme of the twenty third Senior Policy Seminar, "*The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies*" is relevant to Kenya and the rest of Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most devastating global health and economic crisis in modern history. It is a once in a lifetime crisis for people and the planet. The calamity has affected virtually every facet of socio-economic functioning and is showing us what it means to face a crisis in a world whose systems are global and interlinked.

In a matter of months, most of the world has been touched by COVID-19. In its wake, government efforts to address the health and economic impacts of the virus are exposing stark inequalities within and among countries. Responding to the health emergency is the first essential government action. Yet on the heels of the health response, governments' efforts to limit the spread of the virus have created secondary threats for their citizens. Such threats, most urgently, include threats to their food security and nutrition.

We all know that the economic and social costs of COVID-19 pandemic have been felt across the globe. The ongoing pandemic is associated with unprecedented and significant health and economic challenges to the world economy, both developed and developing countries. The latter, especially those in Africa, are expected to shoulder substantial economic and social costs because of ill-equipped and ill-resourced healthcare systems, very limited government budget and fewer public health tools available to slow the spread of the virus, and already harsh living conditions for a large segment of the population.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

The impact of COVID-19 on sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries is expected to be considerable, bringing a significant burden on the already struggling economies. Most of the countries lack the resources to combat the socio-economic disruption caused by the spread of the virus and the measures intended to combat it. Lack of adequate health facilities, under-developed testing capabilities, the peoples' livelihood structures, living conditions, and other related factors make SSA countries more vulnerable to the pandemic.

The pandemic has compromised Africa's state of public finance significantly. Firstly, it led to unprecedented contraction of tax revenue. Secondly, it has placed extreme stress on public spending as governments struggled to respond to the health crisis, including increased funding for: the health sector, social and business relief, measures to reduce and combat the spread of the virus and various other related needs.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

With new infections on the rise, it is a race against time for governments to re-look at some policy interventions necessary to provide appropriate coping and recovery mechanisms to respond to the crisis. The effects of COVID-19 cut across all the economic sectors. However, some sectors are bound to have disproportionately larger impacts. For instance, transport, wholesale and retail trade, entertainment, tourism, and personal services, including those engaged in gig economy are expected to have the immediate and largest impacts relative to public, agriculture, professional services, Information Communication Technology (ICT), financial services and some manufacturing sectors.

Within a short span of time, more cases have been recorded and, as such, the Government of Kenya introduced mass testing in addition to more stringent measures such as limiting passenger flights, wearing of masks in public places, introduction of a dusk to dawn curfew, cessation of movement in and out of some counties that recorded higher cases of COVID-19, temporary closure of bars and restaurants, among other measures.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

A central pillar of governments' response to the pandemic has been an important and necessary turn to investing in social protection programmes. Social protection is an effective way to protect immediate human needs and to cushion economic reversals by protecting productive assets. If governments have channels in place that they can use to put income into people's hands when they lose their livelihoods (as have been created, for example, for cash transfer programmes), they can forestall losses that might set economic recovery back years.

The objective is to avoid panic sales of productive assets, ensure households keep a roof over their heads, help small businesses to pay wages of furloughed staff, and to provide public works employment while the informal sector is paralyzed. These are all forms of social insurance that limit the harm created by an economic shock, such as the income loss that has resulted from the measures governments have imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

I am aware, that the mission of AERC is to strengthen local capacity for guiding public policymaking and this requires the availability of qualified and proactive professional economists who need to remain independent and objective in dealing with such matters. As a way of meeting its objective, AERC offers opportunities for African economists and researchers to carry out research and to network with their counterparts in other regions as a way of developing their skills in academic and policymaking institutions in African countries.

Evidently, the importance of local capacity and research arising from local realities cannot be over-emphasized. Too often decisions on policy and the future of Africa have been based on information from other continents. By building local capacity, AERC is taking a lead in identifying factors that will contribute to growth and poverty reduction to address the problems our economies face in ways that make sense for us in the continent, with a view of a brighter future for our people.

Over the years, AERC has amassed a wealth of knowledge through its research activities. In this regard, I commend AERC for devoting time and resources to share this knowledge, particularly the policy research findings with policy makers and economists in the continent once every year through the senior policy seminars.

I know that previous seminars have addressed various key issues like governance, macroeconomic policies, financial sector reforms among others, but what is very significant is that these seminars have informed policy makers about the latest developments in economic policy research, provided a forum for sharing of experiences, and promoted a closer relationship between researchers and policy makers.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

I am pleased to know that this seminar will be graced by the participation of senior policy makers representing over twenty African countries. Amongst these high-ranking government officials are ministers, governors of central banks, permanent secretaries, and special advisers to Heads of State. Evidently, the seminar will be a haven of fruitful discussions as you all exchange knowledge, experiences, and ideas in your deliberations. The outcome, I believe will consist of policy implications and recommendations of policy actions that will guide the continent to a bright and fruitful future.

I wish to also pay tribute to the late Prof. Benno Ndulu a notable scholar, economist, and leader, for whom the whole AERC family will be remembering and commemorating today during a special session. Prof. Benno, a true pan-africanist, and one of the most influential African economists of his generation, was celebrated as the first African Executive Director of AERC. His commitment and dedication to the AERC and its mandate to build research capacity in Africa was profound and has left its mark on the continent.

*In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen*

Allow me to once again thank the AERC, who are the conveners of this very important meeting, and the researchers and participating policy makers for making time to share and exchange experiences. As you participate in shaping the future of our economies and our people, I do wish you all very fruitful deliberations and look forward with great anticipation to receiving the conclusions of your discussions.

With these few remarks, ladies, and gentlemen, it is my great honour and pleasure to declare this 23<sup>rd</sup> AERC Senior Policy Seminar officially opened.

*Thank you all.*

# Consequences for Poverty and Fiscal Implications with Covid-19: Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda

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<b>Session chair:</b>	<b>Adelaide Matlanyane</b> , <i>Governor, Central Bank of Lesotho</i>
<b>Presenter:</b>	<b>Rose Ngugi</b> , <i>Kenya Institute for Public Policy research and Analysis, (KIPPRA)</i>
<b>Discussant:</b>	<b>Makochekanwa Albert</b> , <i>University of Zimbabwe</i>

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The COVID-19 pandemic has not spared the African continent. It has disrupted economic activity resulting in economic contraction with implications on poverty reduction. Five case studies were undertaken in Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, and Uganda. All the countries reported their first case of COVID-19 in March 2020 and instituted measures to manage the spread and cushion the vulnerable groups. Some of these measures, including the lockdowns and other restrictions on movement, had significant effects on economic activities. A uniform methodology was applied in all the case studies in estimating poverty in 2019 (before the COVID-19), the income losses and their implications on poverty with the pandemic, and fiscal implications in cushioning the vulnerable groups. The results show that income losses were higher in urban areas, but the number of affected persons was higher in rural areas. With majority of the rural population already earning lower incomes, a slight drop in income due to the pandemic is projected to increase poverty levels. As a result, gains made in poverty reduction were reversed as more people slip into poverty due to incomes losses. Inequality worsens as those affected are mainly the poor and the middle-income group. The fiscal measures instituted to cushion the vulnerable groups have different results, especially considering their inclusion and exclusion errors. Thus, a combination of fiscal measures is a more preferred approach in reducing the impact of the pandemic on poverty and inequality.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has not spared sub-Saharan Africa. By March 2021, the region shared 2.5% of the total confirmed cases in the world. As the pandemic struck, key among the issues of concern included adequacy of health facilities, testing capabilities, and generally availability of resources to respond to the crisis. Luckily, the spread was slow, giving the governments in the region time to prepare for the fight against the virus. That said, the pandemic is still unfolding, and it is therefore difficult to estimate its full impact now. An analysis of the experience provides an opportunity to draw lessons on how to prepare better and inform the appropriate strategies to attain a recovery path.

Both the pandemic and the measures instituted have affected the lives and livelihoods of all citizens. While the spread of the pandemic saw increased demands on the health systems, so did the households witness squeezed budget with increased spending in adhering to the protocols of the COVID-19, including purchase of masks and sanitizers. With social distancing demanding a reduced carrying capacity in the transport sector, fares increased to sustain the profit level. More importantly, the lockdowns and restrictions on movement slowed economic activity, resulting in unemployment and loss of income. As a result, this threatened to wipe out the gains made in poverty reduction.

The economic growth of Sub-Saharan Africa region is estimated to have contracted by 1.9% in 2020<sup>1</sup>. This is the first time in a decade that the region's economy contracted. While this is attributed to slowed activities in the domestic market, the slow growth in developed countries is compounding the situation due to constrained export market. Thus, monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on poverty becomes necessary in taking necessary actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union (AU) 2063 aspirations.

## Situation with COVID-19

The COVID-19, which originated from Wuhan, China in December 2019, did not spare countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The five countries covered in this study reported their first confirmed cases of COVID-19 almost at the same time in March 2020. Almost a year later, the countries have continued to report confirmed cases and fatalities as indicated in Table 1 and Figure 1.

**Table 1: Status of confirmed and fatality cases across the selected countries**

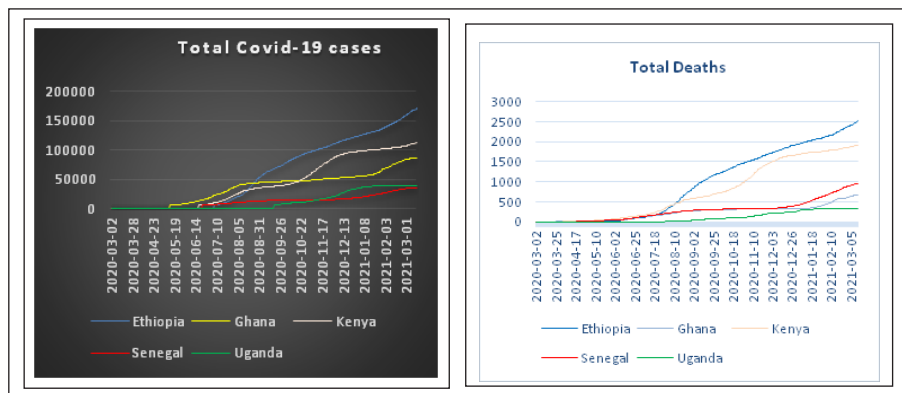
Country	Date First Case Reported	Total Cases (13 <sup>th</sup> March 2021)	Total Deaths to Date (13 <sup>th</sup> March 2021)
Ethiopia	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	174,054	2,540
Ghana	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	87,480	679
Kenya	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	112,805	1,908
Senegal	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2020	36,726	955
Uganda	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2020	40,544	334

Source: World Health Organization - WHO

<sup>1</sup> International Monetary Fund (2021), World Economic Outlook, April 2021.



**Figure 1: Trends in confirmed cases and fatalities of COVID-19**



Source: World Health Organization - WHO

Several measures were instituted by all countries to control the spread of the pandemic. The measures included lockdowns, working from home, closure of learning institutions, ban on passenger flights, dusk to dawn curfews, mandatory wearing of face masks in public, closure of bars and restaurants, bans on public gatherings, among others. This affected economic activity in various sectors.

Fiscal measures were also implemented to cushion the vulnerable groups and ensure that the health sector is adequately resourced. Budgetary reallocations were made to cater for the COVID-19 related expenditures. To cushion the vulnerable groups, social protection programmes were implemented, including cash transfers and tax reliefs. Further, stimulus packages were implemented, including labour-intensive public works programmes especially targeting the youth and urban areas. This increased fiscal pressure at a time when revenue collections were slow.

Monetary and financial policy measures were instituted to ensure there is adequate liquidity in the system, and that financial transactions were safe. This included easing monetary policy with a reduction in the lending rate and lowering the reserve requirement ratio. This also introduced flexibility in loan markets and facilitated mobile money transactions.

GDP growth projections were revised downward for 2020. This reflects the slowed economic activities especially with the lockdowns, movement restrictions and international travel bans. All the selected countries experienced a contraction in quarter 2 (Q2) of 2020 as indicated in Table 2. The impact of the pandemic started to be felt significantly in Q2.

**Table 2: Growth performance in selected countries**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Q1-2020</b>	<b>Q2-2020</b>	<b>Estimated growth rate 2020</b>
Ghana	8.1	6.3	6.5	4.9	-3.2	0.9
Senegal	7.4	6.4	5.3	-1.7	-2.5	0.8
Ethiopia	10.2	7.7	9.0			6.1
Kenya	4.8	6.3	5.4	5.2	-5.5	-0.1
Uganda	7.3	6.1	6.7	-6.3	-2.2	-2.1

Source: International Monetary Fund (2021), World Economic Outlook, April 2021

## **Conclusions and policy implications**

The paper synthesized reports of five countries looking at the effects of COVID-19 on poverty and the fiscal measures required to keep to the poverty levels before the COVID-19. The key findings are as follows:

- a) Across all the countries, the poverty levels increased with COVID-19 wiping out the gains made in poverty reduction in pre-crisis period. This is mainly attributed to reduced income especially with loss of jobs amounting to US\$ 184 million in Uganda; US\$ 330 million in Ghana; US\$ 462.8 million in Kenya; and US\$1239 million in Senegal.
- b) Inequality worsened especially in urban areas. Majority of the restrictions were felt, affecting sectors with at-risk income, and employing a significant proportion of the workers.
- c) Although income loss in rural areas was lower than in urban areas, more people were affected in rural areas. With most people already facing lower incomes, the loss of income saw higher poverty levels in rural areas.
- d) Various fiscal interventions have different effects in cushioning the vulnerable groups. To realize significant impact, a combination of policies is preferred in reducing poverty and inequality.
  - Universal cash transfer has a significant effect in cushioning the vulnerable from falling into deeper poverty. The fiscal spending varies at national level across the countries, ranging from about 2.0% of monthly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Ethiopia to 6.3% of monthly GDP in Kenya. This means that significant fiscal resources are required to protect the vulnerable groups.
  - Rebates on payment of utility bills while able to reduce poverty was not capable of restoring poverty back to pre-lockdown levels. Such rebates are susceptible to inclusion and exclusion errors.

- The labour-intensive public works programmes targeted to youth employment among the poor in rural and urban areas has a potentially significant impact when fully rolled out.
- A boost in the scope of the elderly cash transfer in Kenya and Uganda had a significant impact in rural areas where the elderly mainly reside.
- The tax relief has a significant impact on the key urban centres in Kenya, Mombasa, and Nairobi where majority of the SMEs are located.

# Trade-Offs Between Lockdown Measures to Control the Spread of the Covid-19 and the Economic and Social Consequences

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<b>Session chair:</b>	<b>Kealeboga Masalila</b> , <i>Deputy Governor, Bank of Botswana</i>
<b>Presenters:</b>	<b>Njuguna Ndung'u</b> and <b>Abebe Shimeles</b> , <i>African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)</i>
<b>Discussant:</b>	<b>Prosper Honagbodé</b> , <i>Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances,</i> <i>Benin</i>

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This paper assessed the policy responses by African governments to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and draws some lessons on potential trade-offs between the economic and social consequences and the effort to save lives. Estimates show limited but significant impact of stringency measures (that include lockdowns, mobility restrictions, etc.) and community sensitization (knowledge, attitude, and practice about the spread of the virus) in reducing infection rates. However, the economic and social consequences were also substantial, including contractions in real GDP, job losses, income reductions, in some cases driving households into starvation. There were also high incidence of lockdown related violence and criminal activities. The paper draws some lessons for optimal management of the pandemic considering sustainability, fair distribution of societal costs, and preservation of lives.

## Introduction

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Africa had been struggling to recover from the impacts of slump in the prices of major export commodities, slowdown in foreign direct investment flows, and weather shocks in some parts. Real GDP growth started to decline from a peak of 7.1% in 2010 reaching the bottom at 1.4% in 2013 and begun the long road to recovery achieving a modest growth of 3.3% in 2019<sup>2</sup>. As a result, other macroeconomic indicators, such as inflation, current account balance and budget deficit also worsened during this period. The debt burden worsened with external debt-service crossing conventional limits of 20% of export earnings in most countries. The reversal of fortunes in an otherwise

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2 African Economic Outlook, 2020, African Development Bank Group

hopeful economic performance of the past two decades exposed the structural fragility of growth in Africa and its vulnerabilities to transient shocks.

The advent of the COVID-19 sent shockwaves into the emerging new sectors, such as tourism, manufacturing and financial intermediation compromising the recovery. Several indicators from diverse studies seem to indicate that African economies may suffer significant economic contractions due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the initial conditions by the time the pandemic struck were not quite favorable. However, the full impact on livelihoods is yet to be ascertained as the uncertainty surrounding the behavior and the intensity of the pandemic is still unfolding. So far, the pandemic has forced many businesses to temporarily shut down, supply chains have been disrupted, unemployment soared, and cost of living has risen in some countries. Particularly prices of necessities have increased against the backdrop of low economic activity, lock-down and loss of employment.

Most of these economic disruptions were caused by policy and administrative responses necessitated to slowdown the spread of the virus causing the COVID-19 disease. These include restrictions on mobility of people, closing border crossing points and air travel, both within and between countries, and many other measures of lockdowns that limited travel. This paper tries to answer the following research questions: provide an update on the degree of compliance, particularly on guidelines to restrict mobility across countries and examine if these measures tended to mitigate the infection rates. Most importantly, we reflect on the hard choices confronting governments as soon as the dynamics of the pandemic unfolds and most of the restrictions imposed on mobility and disruptions in some sectors of the economy have eased.

Some of the lessons that emerge from the experiences of fighting the spread of the virus may be summarized as follows. First, mobility compliance following government decisions to restrict movements seem to be highly correlated with number of confirmed cases. Countries that experienced significant reduction in mobility of people from their normal daily routine had their infection levels also lowered. Second, lockdowns accounted for 25% of the variation in infection rates (number of confirmed cases as a ratio of total people tested). Third, lockdowns and other measures of stringency tend to reduce infection rates by about 3 percentage points for a one standard deviation increase in stringency (about 30%). Other protective measures also contributed to the management of the pandemic. For example, community understanding of the virus led to strong reductions in infection rates but require minimum threshold of close to 40% of the population aware of the pandemic to be effective. In countries where community understanding reached 50% of the population at risk, infection rates could decline by about 21 percentage points. Finally, as the uncertainty on the epidemiological pattern

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3 See the following links to the various regional reports: World Bank (2020), "<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/04/13/africas-pulse-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19-coronavirus-in-africa>", IMF (2020) "<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420>", AU (2020), "<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420>", UNECA (2020), "<https://www.uneca.org/publications/covid-19-africa-protecting-lives-and-economies>

continue to unfold, the task confronting policy makers in Africa is to ensure economic recovery while at the same time fighting the pandemic, where some difficult choices will have to be made.

The indications are that focus should shift towards scaling up testing, close follow up of confirmed cases and strengthen capacity of the health system to care for the sick to effectively manage the pandemic. The role of community compliance to the basic guidelines issued by health authorities could take countries a long way to manage the pandemic, while keeping the engine of the economy running. The optimal policy however requires implementation of reforms in a wide range of areas that have been overlooked for far too long.

## **Concluding remarks**

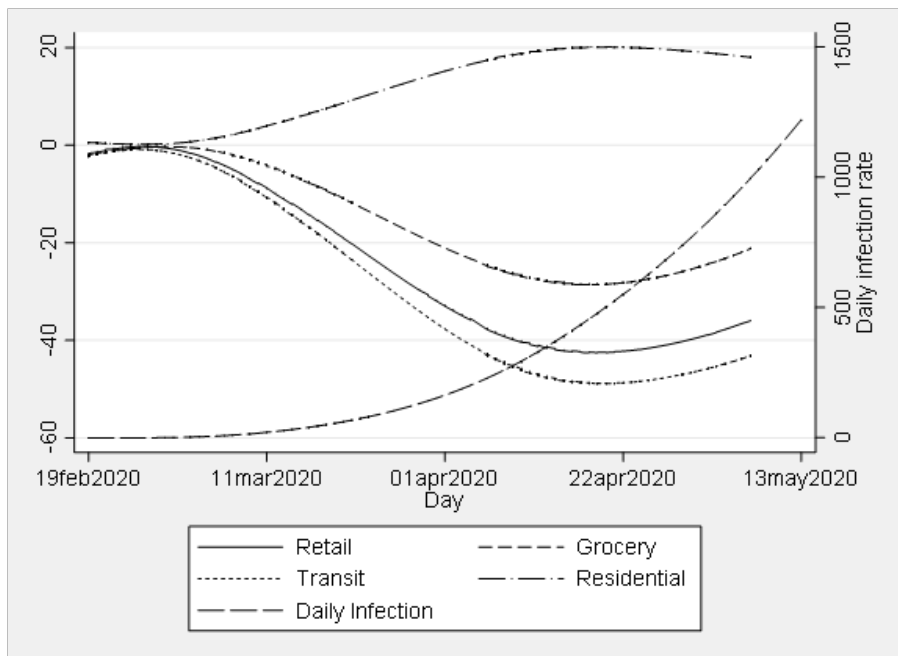
As Africa braces for the third wave, many African countries are grappling on the best approach to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, the indicators on infection rates are growing slowly and they do not show the S-curve often reported for the rest of the world. As shown in Figure 2, the trend in daily cases of new infections is growing rapidly. On the other hand, there seems to be fatigue in complying with the movement restrictions across the continent where lockdowns eased across the continent after May 2020. As the economic activity decline continues, the common approaches of containment may become difficult to enforce for extended period. Hence stepping up community level testing like in Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and other countries offers hope in identifying and quickly isolating confirmed cases. But the spread could be faster than the actions of authorities hence there may be some tragedy awaiting down the road which could force governments to take even stringent measures than had been anticipated.

One critical area is the urban slums. The lockdown in such cases and social distancing are not efficiently or even effectively applicable. Hence it will be necessary to generate applicable restrictions consistent with location, economic activity and living conditions. But we do know that in countries like Kenya where targeted social protection has been designed and implemented, this has effectively worked for limited lockdown and slowed the infection rates in slums. In addition, for such locations, it is the food supply chain protection, preventive measures like masks, targeted restrictions on large gatherings (funerals, weddings, political rallies, etc.) movements and sanitization that may matter most to contain the spread of the virus than blanket lockdowns.

The COVID-19, unfortunate as it may be, also offers opportunities for undertaking the long overdue reforms in health systems, social protection schemes, resilient food security strategies, health infrastructure upgrade and devolved to the rural set up and community participation in public affairs. In addition, the pandemic also offers an opportunity for the fragmented continent to forge ahead genuine regional integration which could be an important source of risk sharing and protection of investment, jobs and movement of goods and services as well as development of markets that will be critical for economic recovery.

There is currently a lot of discussions on taking advantage of this pandemic to reshape African economies, reform institutions and even economic management. Usually, pandemics like this generate more dynamic changes and we should use the opportunity to move towards a sustainable economic environment on agreed policy reforms (protect and develop markets that provide an inclusive economic participation, protect private investments, etc.) and a strict code of accountability for these results, fix the institutional failure problems and with it eradicate the political class the aims at self-preservation thriving on weak institutions.

**Figure 2: Monthly lockdown and infection rates in selected African countries**



Source: authors computations based on data provided by Google and Worldometer websites.

# Covid-19 and the Health Sector in Africa

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**Session chair:** **Yamungu Kayandabila**, *Deputy Governor, Bank of Tanzania*  
**Presenter:** **Augustine Asante**, *University of New South Wales, Australia*  
**Discussant:** **Aly Mbaye**, *CREA/UCAD, Senegal*

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The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has become a major global public health concern just a little over one year after its emergence. As of 1 May 2021, more than 150 million cases had been recorded worldwide, with over 3.1 million deaths. The pandemic has pushed health systems to the brink of collapse in many countries and decimated the global economy. Scenes of patients being treated in hospital hallways and makeshift treatment centres not only reflect the lack of preparedness to respond to critical public health emergencies but also reinforce the urgent need to strengthen health systems in anticipation of the next pandemic, even as we battle the current one. Health systems in Africa are among the most vulnerable in the world. Experience suggests that they can easily be overwhelmed in times of public health crisis, and hence, many had feared the worst for the region from COVID-19. Although the impact of the pandemic on the continent so far has been far less severe than predicted, concerns remain about the level of preparedness of African health systems to respond to the virus now and into the future. This paper analyzed the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa to enhance understanding of the vulnerabilities in the health systems in the region and determine the operational challenges of disease control that may undermine effective response. The paper discussed policy options and strategies for strengthening health systems in Africa and other low- and middle-income countries.

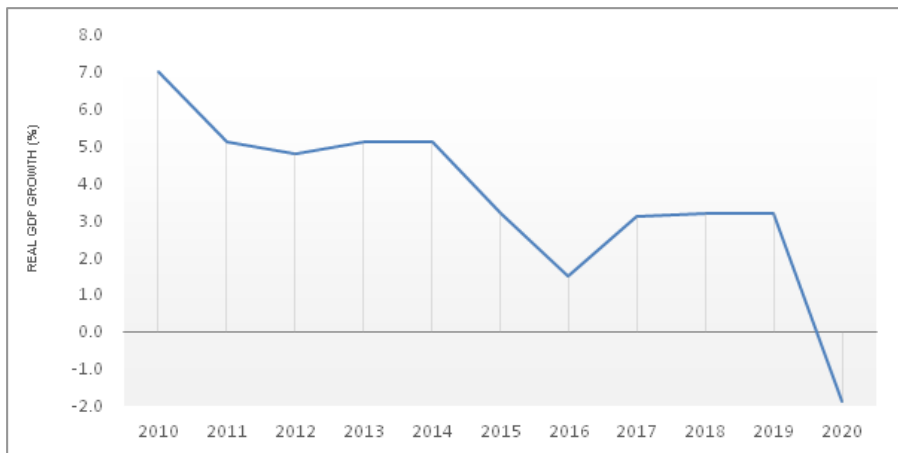
## Introduction

The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has fulfilled the longstanding fear of the global health community about a looming pandemic and the lack of preparedness to respond expeditiously. The disease, which was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, has spread to all corners of the globe and causing significant damage to livelihood, health care systems and the global economy. As of 1 May 2021, more than 150 million cases had been recorded worldwide, with over 3.1 million deaths (Dong et al.). In worst-affected countries like the United States, India, and Brazil, between 200,000 and 570,000 COVID-related deaths have been recorded. The pandemic has placed enormous strain on global health systems and economies, exposing their vulnerabilities. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated a contraction of 3.5% in the global economy in 2020 due to COVID. Projected growth for 2021 and 2022 has since been revised to 5.5% and 4.2%, respectively, following the development and rolling out of vaccines (IMF 2021). Emerging data shows that the COVID-19 disproportionately affects the poor and racial minorities, exacerbating prevailing inequities in health and other socio-economic conditions in many countries (Getachew et al. 2020).



Africa recorded its first COVID-19 case in mid-February 2020. The continent has since confirmed over 4.5 million cases and more than 120,000 deaths (i.e., as of 1 May 2021) (Dong et al.). This is relatively low compared to cases and deaths in other parts of the world, especially in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. However, given Africa's vulnerable economies, weak health care systems, and a large immunocompromised population from the high prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, malaria, HIV/AIDs, and tuberculosis, there are apprehensions about the full impact of the pandemic on the continent if containment efforts fail (Lone and Ahmad 2020). The World Bank estimates a 3.3% decline in economic activity due to COVID-19 in 2020, which could trigger Africa's first-ever recession in a quarter of a century (Zeufack et al. 2020). According to the World Bank, this could push up to 40 million Africans into extreme poverty and set back efforts to build human capital on the continent, especially with COVID-related school closures affecting nearly 253 million students (Zeufack et al. 2020). A more recent data from the IMF Regional Economic Outlook - April 2021 indicate that real GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa declined by -1.9% in 2020, the worst outcome on record (IMF 2021) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Real GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa, 2010-2020**



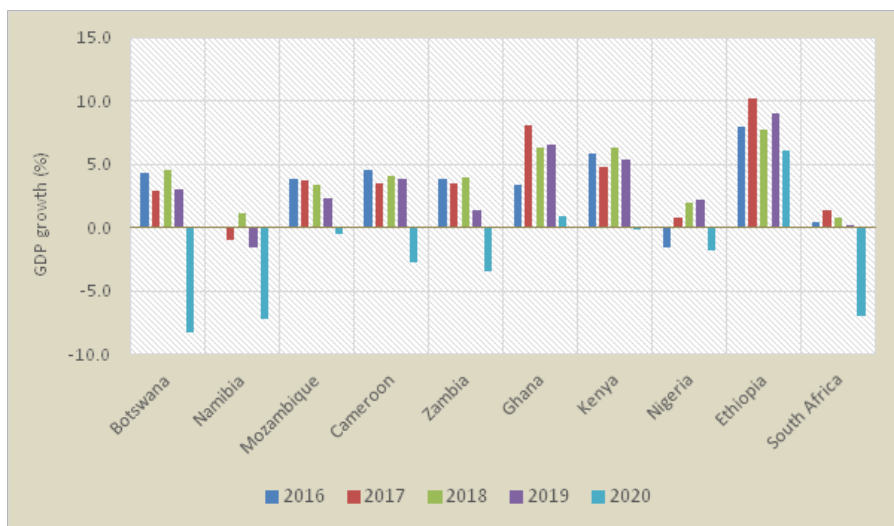
Source: Data extracted from the IMF World Economic and Financial Surveys; sub-Saharan Africa navigating a long pandemic. Background paper- Statistical Appendix

This unprecedented economic downturn was partly the result of the lockdown and social distancing measures instituted at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic by governments across Africa to control the spread of the disease. These measures significantly impacted the informal sector, where more than 80% of workers in sub-Saharan find their livelihoods (Nguimkeu and Okou 2020). Informal sector workers are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19 health and economic shocks (ILO 2020). The vast majority of them, particularly market women, street hawkers, and commercial transport operators, work in crowded conditions with very little room for social distancing and no access to hand-washing facilities, making them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 infection (Resnick et al. 2020). There is anecdotal evidence that many workers in the informal sector lost their primary

source of income as a result of the initial COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing measures (Megersa 2020).

As in other regions, the economic impact of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa has been uneven, with countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa experiencing substantial contraction of their economies, while others like Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia maintained a reduced but positive GDP growth. Figure 4 shows the real GDP growth in ten selected sub-Saharan African countries. These countries are also among the most affected countries in terms of the total number of COVID-19 cases. For example, the decline in growth in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa exceeded 7% of GDP in 2020. Ethiopia's economy, however, maintained an impressive 6% growth despite having the second-highest number of COVID-19 cases in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Figure 4. Real GDP growth in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2016-2020**



Source: Data extracted from the IMF World Economic and Financial Surveys; sub-Saharan Africa navigating a long pandemic. Background paper- Statistical Appendix

As the global economy recovers following the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination in many countries, sub-Saharan African economies are also expected to recover. However, the recovery is projected to be much slower than in other regions, with average real GDP growth of 3.4% and 4.0%, respectively, in 2021 and 2022 (IMF 2021). The two largest economies in sub-Saharan Africa - Nigeria and South Africa - are projected to expand modestly between 2.0% and 3.1% in 2021 and 2022, relatively lower than the projected regional averages. By contrast, the economic expansion in Kenya and Botswana, based on current projections, will exceed 7% in 2021 and 5% in 2022 (IMF 2021). In general, the post-COVID economic recovery in sub-Saharan Africa will depend significantly on

the velocity with which countries in the region can roll out the COVID-19 vaccination in tandem with strengthening their weak health systems.

The health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa so far has been less severe than predicted. This presents an opportunity for countries in the region to get their act together and strengthen their health emergency responses in preparation for potential second and third waves, which have turned to be more devastating than the first wave elsewhere in Europe, Asia and America (Xu and Li 2020). In particular, the second wave in India surpassed the expectations of many public health experts and provided strong impetus for Africa to strengthen its health systems and public health emergency preparedness. Another critical reason for Africa to improve its emergency response with urgency is the growing mutation of the COVID virus; new and more infectious variants of the virus continue to emerge in different settings, including South Africa, raising concerns about vaccine prevention and control of the pandemic (Skegg et al. 2021). Finally, reports of a new Ebola outbreak in Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo (WHO 2021) amid COVID-19 paint a disturbing picture of an impending public health catastrophe driven by two deadly infections; COVID-19 and Ebola.

Africa needs a strategic approach rooted in a clear understanding of the implications of COVID-19 for health systems on the continent to prepare for an effective response, including concrete strategies for vaccine roll out as more doses of the COVID-19 jab become available. To date, no systematic analysis of the vulnerabilities in the health systems in Africa about the COVID-19 pandemic has been undertaken to inform policy decisions. This paper aimed to analyze the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa to enhance understanding of the vulnerabilities in the health systems in the region and determine the operational challenges of disease control that are likely to undermine effective response. The paper discussed policy options and strategies for targeted strengthening of Africa's health systems and drew lessons for low- and middle-income countries elsewhere. It is worth noting that while the health and economic impact of COVID-19 are inextricably linked, the analysis in this paper was focused on the vulnerabilities inherent in the health systems and did not include an analysis of the economic implications of the pandemic.

## **Concluding remarks**

Africa has fared well in this global COVID-19 pandemic so far. The number of cases and deaths have been relatively low compared to other regions. Africa is, however, not out of danger; the low number of cases may be explained by the limited amount of testing carried out on the continent. According to the WHO, several countries in the region, including Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa, are experiencing a resurgent of various waves, with a rising number of cases (WHO Africa 2021). That should be a cause for concern, especially considering the ongoing experience of India. Africa must not become complacent about the current low cases and deaths and work hard to strengthen its pandemic preparedness to avoid catastrophic second and third waves. African governments showed tremendous leadership during the first wave, something that has escaped international attention. But they will be defined by how they handle subsequent waves of the pandemic. Strengthening the health systems should be paramount given the experiences from other countries. Although health systems strengthening is a long-

term endeavour, there are several steps that Africa can take in the interim to reduce its vulnerability to COVID-19. These include:

- Increasing the number of hospital beds and ensuring the supply of oxygen. One major lesson for Africa from the Indian experience is to ensure that medical oxygen is available in all health facilities. As highlighted earlier, most African countries have oxygen manufacturing plants, but there are problems with storage and transportation, which can and must be addressed.
- Maintaining, amid COVID-19, the delivery of essential health services such as routine antenatal care (including skilled birth attendance) and HIV, TB, and malaria services.
- Removing health labour market restrictions, where possible, to allow the recruitment of unemployed health workers to bolster the workforce.
- Ensuring frontline health workers have the resources and tools they need to respond to the pandemic, especially PPEs.
- Strengthening the disease surveillance system to facilitate early detection and isolation of cases to reduce potential community spread. This will include strengthening laboratory capacity and practices.
- Waging an information and education campaign to counter the emerging COVID-related stigma and misinformation in Africa.

The coronavirus is mutating very fast, and nobody knows when a more deadly variant will emerge and cause more fatalities in Africa. Therefore, it is crucial that nothing is left to chance and that African government maintain the same level of seriousness with which they tackled the first wave. Additional financial investment in the health systems would be required, and with the economies of western donor countries also struggling, Africa cannot count on the 'usual benevolence' of the west. It must ensure that available funds are used as efficiently as possible and seek to expand the fiscal space for health to raise additional funding domestically. One way Africa can do this, as indicated earlier, is to effectively bring the private sector on board the COVID-19 prevention and control train.

# The Interrelationship between Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Some Implications for the Fight Against the Covid-19 Pandemic

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<b>Session chair:</b>	<b>Wilson Banda</b> , <i>Governor, Central Bank of Malawi</i>
<b>Presenter:</b>	<b>Erik Thorbecke</b> , <i>Cornell University, USA</i>
<b>Discussant:</b>	<b>Adam Mugume</b> , <i>Executive Director, Research and Policy, Central Bank of Uganda</i>

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## Introduction

As Thorbecke (2021) pointed out there is strong evidence that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the last two decades has not been sufficiently inclusive. A large share of the population has only received a disproportionately small share of the benefits of growth in contrast to other parts of the developing world where shared growth prevailed and led to a substantial reduction in poverty. Also, growth in SSA remained largely driven by commodities, with minimal production diversification of African economies. This raises questions regarding the appropriateness of pro-poor growth strategies in Africa. Further this also calls for new thinking regarding inclusive growth. Can pro-growth poverty reduction strategies deliver broad-based and thus more sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Africa? Indeed, recent research seem to support the notion that high poverty and inequality detract from economic growth, makes growth more fragile, and thus advocates for policies and strategies that reduce the magnitude of poverty and inequality directly. A better understanding of the anatomy of this nexus is crucial to the design of an African growth model that could potentially speed up growth and make it more inclusive.

Against this backdrop, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) embarked, towards the end of 2018, on a new major program of research on *Re-Examining the Growth, Poverty, Inequality and Redistribution Relationships in Africa* (from now on referred to as the GIP project). The main objective of this program was to generate new evidence on the growth-inequality-poverty nexus in sub-Saharan Africa and how this trinity is affected by policies and strategies. About a dozen individual research projects were completed under the umbrella of this program.

Even though the GIP project was started long before the Covid-19 pandemic had started its devastating course and therefore did not address the pandemic directly, some of the research findings generated by the project appears to provide some relevant and useful lessons to policymakers in SSA about how to fight the pandemic.

## Impact of the pandemic on sub-Saharan Africa and preliminary lessons from policy response

Before attempting to derive some possible policy implications from the rich GIP project mentioned above, it is important to start with some preliminary remarks about the state of the pandemic in Africa and how it has affected health and the socio-economic environment. The first observation is that the outbreak has not been as bad as was feared initially. As of the end of 2020, the African Center for Disease Control and Preventions reported only one case of Covid-19 for every 500 people in Africa compared to one in 20 in the U.S. While this is almost certainly an underestimate of the true incidence, there are sound reasons to believe that Africa has been hit more mildly than most of the rest of the world. Among the reasons for this outcome according to Time; are: (i) the prior experience with serious outbreaks of other infectious diseases such as Ebola; (ii) masks were not politicized (85 % of respondents in 18 African countries said they had worn a face mask in the previous week); (iii) early shutdowns; (iv) Africa's mild winters mean that more time is spent outdoors; (v) more hypothetically, constant exposure to other coronaviruses might have provided Africans with greater immunity (Time Magazine, February 25, 2021).

An even more important reason for the relatively low incidence of Covid-19, is that Africa has some major demographic advantages compared to more developed regions in coping with the pandemic. In SSA, only 3% of the population are 65 years or older and 43% are less than 15 years old. In contrast, the corresponding figures are 20% for the former and 17% for the latter in Europe. This is a significant health advantage as the death rate from Covid-19 among the old is at least ten times higher than among the young and the symptoms among the latter much less serious.

Even if one agrees that SSA has not been as severely affected as most other world regions, the evidence suggests that both the health and socio-economic consequences have been serious and even in some cases devastating. Given the heterogeneity in initial conditions and degrees of development among SSA countries - combined with the different national policy responses to the pandemic, one must be careful in drawing generalizations. Yet, valuable lessons can be learned from the comparative experiences of different countries world-wide in their battle against the global pandemic. The crucial issue faced by affected countries at the outset of the crisis was how to design and implement a sustainable initial policy response that maximizes pandemic containment and minimizes the negative socio-economic effects. The dynamics between protecting health through a whole set of measures reducing the transmission of the virus (such as lockdowns, testing, and mandating the wearing of masks) and the socio-economic consequences (e. g. unemployment, loss of income, higher poverty, potential for greater tensions and abuse within families locked down in their homes) are highly complex and not fully understood.

In the short *run* the trade-off between (i) prioritizing protecting health and reducing transmission, and (ii) the consequent loss of socio-economic welfare is real and can be very hard on a poor country. But, in the *medium to long run*, successful containment has positive effects on health and on the economy and the trade-off vanishes. Perhaps, the most important lesson the development community learned from the divergent

experiences of countries in coping with the pandemic is that appropriate measures protecting health and reducing the spread of the virus taken at the outset and followed consistently have been successful in *both* their health benefits (containing and even, in some instances eliminating the disease) and socio-economic impact<sup>4</sup>. In contrast, countries that followed a kind of stop and go approach - lacking any overall strategy - have paid a very high price in terms of high death rates, hospitalizations as well as high unemployment and growth deceleration.<sup>5</sup>

The above discussion is largely based on evidence from developed countries. We have much less comparative information on adopted policies to combat the pandemic and their effects on health and economic welfare among SSA countries. Yet, it appears that the African countries that prioritized health concerns and minimized the spread of the virus fared best. Senegal is "one of the model countries in terms of implementing COVID-19 prevention measures and it has reaped the benefits," according to the World Health Organization. The very low incidence of confirmed cases - even after the government re-opened the economy suggests that a large share of the population might have also enjoyed immunity and benefited from a very young population. While, the restrictions had enormous health benefits, the country paid a price in terms of reduced growth which appears sustainable. Other countries like Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa also shut down early and by so doing might have reduced the negative socio-economic consequences. The preliminary conclusion I would draw from the preceding discussion is that the African countries that prioritized the health of the population and the containment of the virus at the outset of the pandemic and accepted a necessary short term negative economic trade-off fared best in terms of health and medium-term socio-economic sufferings.

Unfortunately, countries that failed to respond effectively (got it wrong) at the beginning of the outbreak suffer from the consequences of path dependency. They are suffering on both the health and the economic fronts and many of these negative trends are difficult to reverse. Facing these unfavorable present initial conditions, the range of policies available to these countries is more limited than countries that, initially, followed an effective strategy.

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4 Examples of successful countries are: Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, and Japan.

5 The U.S. is a prime example of a country that lacked a clear and consistent strategy with devastating results.

# High Level Policy Panel

**Chair & Lead Panellist:** **Louis A. Kasekende**, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Uganda

**Distinguished Panelists:**

- **Rashad Cassim**, *Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of South Africa*
- **Hon. Issa-Toure Salahaddine**, *Deputy Speaker, National Assembly, Togo*
- **Michael Atingi-Ego**, *Deputy Governor Bank of Uganda*
- **Julius Muia**, *Principal Secretary, The National Treasury, Kenya*
- **Ousmane Badiane**, *AKADEMIYA2063, Rwanda*



# Key Policy Issues and Recommendations

At the 23rd Senior Policy Seminar held virtually on 30 March 2021 and hosted by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) focusing on the theme, “**Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and Its Implications for the African Economies,**” senior policy makers from around the continent adopted a declaration as an affirmation of their strong commitment to fight the Covid-19 Pandemic in Sub Saharan Africa.

## **Declaration**

March 30, 2021

We African Senior Policy Makers assembled at the AERC Senior Policy Seminar,

*Affirming* that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most devastating global health and economic crisis in modern history,

*Recognizing* that the calamity has affected virtually every facet of socio-economic functioning and is showing us what it means to face a crisis in a world whose systems are global and interlinked,

*Further recognizing* that the economic and social costs of COVID-19 pandemic have been felt across the globe,

*Commending* governments across Africa for their efforts to address the health and economic impacts of the virus,

*Noting* that the ongoing pandemic is associated with unprecedented and significant health and economic challenges to both developed and developing countries,

*Further noting* that the impact of COVID-19 on Sub-Sahara African (SSA) countries is expected to be considerable, bringing a significant burden on the already struggling economies,

*Mindful* that most of the countries lack the resources to combat the socio-economic disruption caused by the spread of the virus and the measures intended to combat it,

*Appreciating* that with new infections on the rise, it is a race against time for governments to re-look at some policy interventions necessary to provide appropriate coping and recovery mechanisms to respond to the crisis,

*Acknowledging* that the effects of COVID-19 cut across all the economic sectors, however, some sectors are bound to have disproportionately larger impacts. For instance, transport, wholesale and retail trade, tourism, and personal services, including those engaged in the entertainment industry,

1. *Affirm* that a central pillar of governments' response to the pandemic has been an important and necessary turn to investing in social protection programmes and that social protection is an effective way to protect immediate human needs and to cushion economic reversals by safeguarding productive assets;
2. *Commend* the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and partner development agencies and institutions to strengthen the evidence base for policy and programme design and implementation for tackling COVID-19, urging them to continue to work to develop a practical, but cutting-edge Research and Development agenda to address policy and programming challenges on accelerating post COVID-19 recovery strategies;
3. *Take note* of different fiscal measures that have been instituted including the universal cash transfers, targeted transfers to youth and elderly, tax reliefs and rebates to mitigate the challenges of COVID-19;
4. *Commit* to design and implement measures benefitting the poor directly and removing the belief in an inevitable trade-off between efficiency (growth) and equity (poverty reduction); and
5. *Further commit* to undertake fiscal measures that might be appropriate in reducing present poverty and generating a more inclusive growth pattern such as better health facilities benefitting the poorer segments of society post COVID-19.

# ANNEX A

## Seminar Papers

- Session 1:** **Consequences for Poverty and Fiscal Implications with Covid-19: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and Uganda** by **Dr. Rose Ngugi**, *Kenya Institute for Public Policy research and Analysis, (KIPPRA)*
- Session 2:** **Trade-offs between Lockdown Measures to Control the Spread of the Covid-19 and the Economic and Social Consequences** by **Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u** and **Dr. Abebe Shimeles**, **African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)**
- Session 3:** **COVID-19 and the Health Sector in Africa** by **Dr. Augustine Asante**, *University of New South Wales, Australia*
- Session 4:** **The Interrelationship between Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Some Implications for the Fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic** by **Prof. Erik Thorbecke**, *Cornell University, USA*

# ANNEX B

## Seminar Programme



AERC SENIOR POLICY SEMINAR (SPSXXIII) PLENARY SESSION ON

### **“The Global COVID-19 Health Pandemic and its Implications for the African Economies”**

Honoring

***Professor Benno Ndulu***

**Tuesday, March 30, 2021 - 1400Hrs (GMT+3)**

# Seminar Programme

14:00–14:30

Official Opening Session

*Welcome remarks:*

**Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u**, Executive Director, AERC

*Official Opening:*

**Hon. Mutahi Kagwe**, EGH, Cabinet Secretary,  
Ministry of Health, Kenya

*Keynote Speech:*

**Dr. Argebe Oqubay**, Senior Minister and Advisor to  
the Prime Minister of Ethiopia

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1430–1600

Honoring Prof. Ndulu

*Session chair:*

**Amb. Erastus J.O. Mwencha**, Chairman,  
Equity Bank & Former Vice Chair of the  
African Union & Secretary General COMESA

1. **Prof. Sir. Paul Collier**, Oxford University, UK
  2. **Prof. Ernest Aryeetey**, ISSER, Ghana
  3. **Dr. Frannie Léautier**, Former Vice President, AfDB
  4. **Prof. Njuguna Ndung’u**, Executive Director, AERC
- 

1600–1630

Potential Impact of Covid-19 on African Economies  
from a Global Lens

*Panellist:*

**Moazzam Malik**, Director General for Africa,  
FCDOs

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*Health break (five minutes)*

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1635–1735

**Session 1:**

**The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Poverty  
and Inequality in Five African Countries**

*Session chair:*

**Adelaide Matlanyane**, Governor,  
Central Bank of Lesotho

*Presenter:*

**Rose Ngugi**, Kenya Institute for Public Policy  
research and Analysis, (KIPPR)

*Discussant:*

**Makoche Kanwa Albert**, University of Zimbabwe

**Floor Discussions**

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1735–1835

**Session 2:** **Trade-offs between Lockdown Measures to Control the Spread of the Covid-19 and the Economic and Social Consequences**

*Session chair:* **Kealeboga Masalila**, Deputy Governor,  
Bank of Botswana

*Presenters:* **Njuguna Ndung’u** and **Abebe Shimeles**,  
African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

*Discussant:* **Prosper Honagbodé**, Ministère de l’Economie et  
des Finances, Benin

***Floor Discussions***

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1835–1935

**Session 3:** **COVID-19 and the Health Sector in Africa**

*Session chair:* **Yamungu Kayandabila**, Deputy Governor,  
Bank of Tanzania

*Presenter:* **Augustine Asante**, University of New South Wales,  
Australia

*Discussant:* **Aly Mbaye**, CREA/UCAD, Senegal

***Floor Discussions***

---

1935–2035

**Session 4:** **The Interrelationship between Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Some Implications for the Fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic**

*Session chair:* **Wilson Banda**, Governor, Central Bank of Malawi

*Presenters:* **Erik Thorbecke**, Cornell University, USA

*Discussant:* **Adam Mugume**, Executive Director,  
Research and Policy, Central Bank of Uganda

***Floor Discussions***

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*Health break (five minutes)*

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2040–2140

**Session 5: High Level Policy Panel**

*Chair & Lead Panellist:* **Louis A. Kasekende**,  
former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Uganda

*Distinguished Panelists:*

- **Rashad Cassim**, Deputy Governor,  
Reserve Bank of South Africa
- **Hon. Issa-Toure Salahaddine**, Deputy Speaker,  
National Assembly, Togo
- **Michael Atingi-Ego**,  
Deputy Governor Bank of Uganda
- **Julius Muia**, Principal Secretary,  
The National Treasury, Kenya
- **Ousmane Badiane**, AKADEMIYA2063, Rwanda

***Floor Discussion***

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# ANNEX C

## List of Participants

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Country</b>
Gihad	Haggar	Animal Resources Research Corporation	Assistant Professor	Sudan
Simeon Kiptarus	Nganai	Moi University, Eldoret	Lecturer/Research Fellow in Economics	Kenya
Elamien	Mohamed	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Advisor to the Minister	Sudan
Toshiba		University of Kassala -Sudan -Faculty of Economics	Assistance Professor	Sudan
Comlan Herve	Sossou			
Christopher	Mvunga	Bank of Zambia	Central Bank of Zambia - Governor	Zambia
Mallaye	Douzounet			
Jacob	Lungu	Bank of Zambia	Assistant Director - Governor's Office	Zambia
Albert	Makochekanwa	University of Zimbabwe	Professor of Economics and Senior Lecturer	Zimbabwe
Francis	Chipimo	Bank of Zambia	Deputy Governor - Operations	Zambia
chungu	Kapembwa	Bank of Zambia	Executive Assistant to Deputy Governor Operations	Zambia

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**List of participants** *Continued*

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Sorel	Vissoh	MAEP	Co-ordonnateur MAFAP	Benin
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Jonathan	Chipili	Bank of Zambia	Director - Economics	Zambia
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Onoyom	Ita	University of Calabar	Graduate Student	Nigeria
Jacques	Bigala	PMA-CV-MANIOC-Congo /Secteur privé agricole		France
Ciáudio	Pimentel			
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Dr Sehliselo	Mpofu	MEFMI	Director - Macroeconomic Management Programme	Zimbabwe
Kupukile	Mlambo	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe	Deputy Governor	Zimbabwe
Oluwatobi	Adesanya			
Tijan	Bah			
Matthew Amalitinga	Abagna	School of Economics, University College Dublin	PhD Student in Economics	Ghana
Denis	Acclassato Houensou	FASEG/Universite D'Abomey-CALAVI	Dean of faculty	France

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**List of participants** *Continued*

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Country</b>
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**List of participants** *Continued*

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Country</b>
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**List of participants** *Continued*

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Country</b>
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Mogana	Flomo			
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Joseph	Manzvera			
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Lucia	Phakisi	Agric	Director Acting	Lesotho
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Armand Fréjouis	Akpa			

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<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Country</b>
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Nadjounoum	Djimtoingar	Commission de la CEMAC	Directeur des Etudes Economiques	Chad
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Franck	Irakoze	University of Burundi	Assistant lecturer	Burundi
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Bethuel	Makosso	Universite Marien Ngouabi	Directeur de l'institut Supérieur DE Gestion	France
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Johnny	Muteba	Pan African Chamber of Commerce	Chairman	South Africa
Magda	Wilson			
Andy	Hinsley	FCDO	Head of Growth Research	United Kingdom
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**List of participants** *Continued*

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Boikhutso	Pheto			
William	Musili			
Foluso	Okunmadewa	World Bank	Lead Social Protection Specialist	Nigeria
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Muriel	Ametoglo			
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Adeline	Mbounka Nembot			

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**List of participants** *Continued*

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Wassiuw	Abdul Rahaman			
Wilson T	Banda	Reserve Bank of Malawi	Governor	Malawi
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Themoi	Demsou			
Isaiah	Byegon	State Department for Planning	chief economist	United States
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Thato	Koogotsitse	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	Botswana	Botswana
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**List of participants** *Continued*

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Patricia	Tchawa Yomi			
Yazid	Dissou			
Mulengezi	Don			
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Johnstone	Daniel Jr	Stone Plembit	Managing Director	Kenya
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Rosemary	Okoh	Delta State University	Professor	Nigeria
Kasirim	Nwuke			





## Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission rests on two basic premises: that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy, and that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed group of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research.

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