



THE COMMUNITY

ONE PEOPLE, ONE DESTINY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE EAC

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IN FOCUS

An Introduction to Investment Opportunities within the EAC

COMMENTARY

Common Currency? Well, Region Must First Build Trust and grow Investment

COVID-19

EAC Secretariat unveils regional COVID-19 Response Plan

TECHNOLOGY

“Digitization Unusual”: How African Businesses can Thrive in a World Beyond COVID-19



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Get to know COVID-19

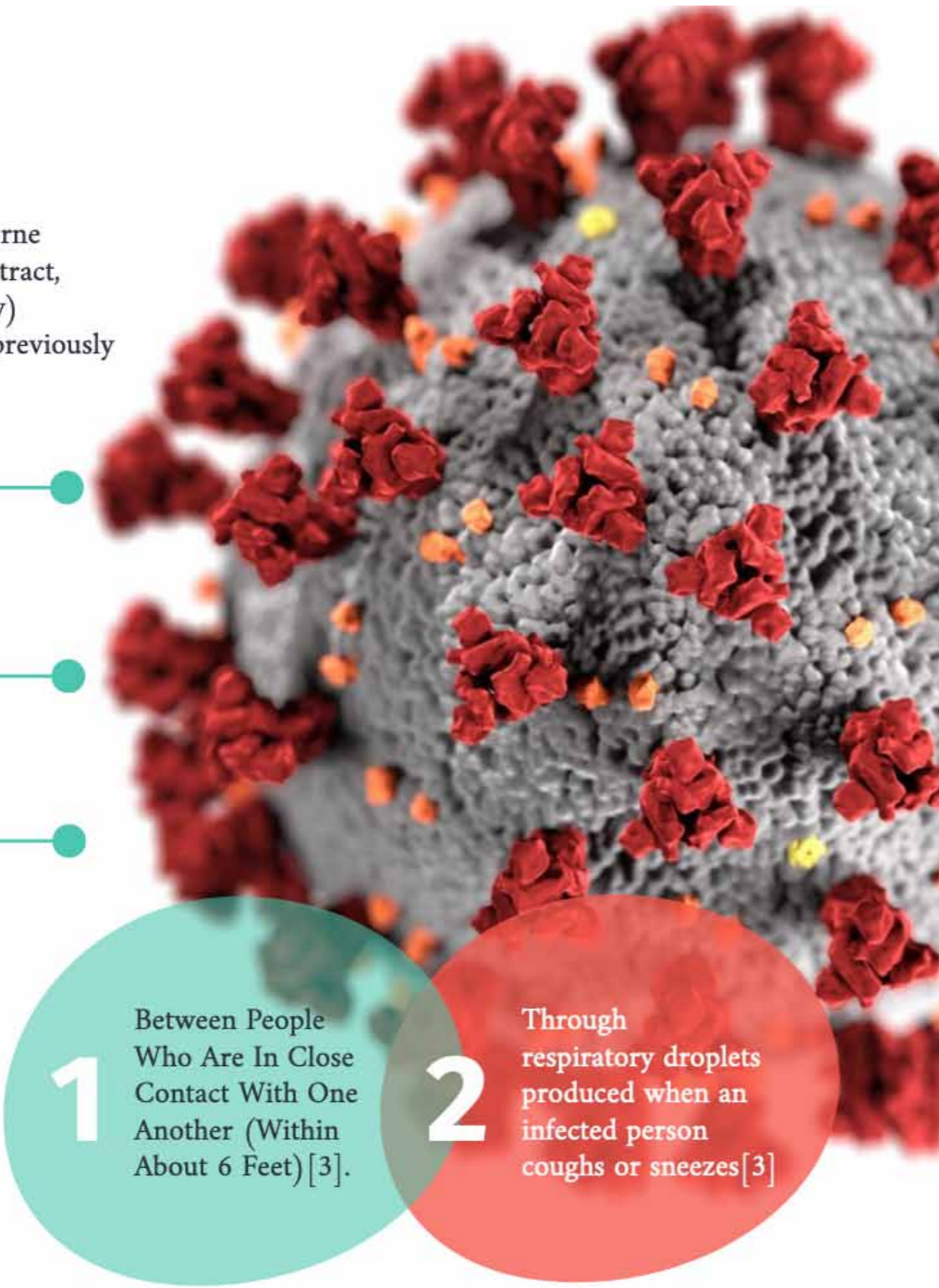
What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new airborne disease of the respiratory tract, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans[1].

LEVEL
Pandemic

STATUS
Community Spread

TRANSMISSION
COMMON MODE:
Person To Person Spread



- 1** Between People Who Are In Close Contact With One Another (Within About 6 Feet)[3].
- 2** Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes[3]

A Congratulatory Message to H.E President Ndayishimiye



EAC Secretary General, Amb Libérat Mfumukeko

The East African Community wishes to congratulate **H.E. President Evariste Ndayishimiye**, on his taking office as the new President of the Republic of Burundi through a generally peaceful, transparent and democratic process.

The Community further salutes the people and Government of Burundi for efficient management of the process at a difficult point in time. The Community appreciates the statesmanship displayed by all Presidential candidates and their desire for an all-inclusive people-driven political process.

The May 2020 Burundi electoral process, being the first under the new Constitution, has set a high bar with respect to supremacy of the peoples' will on how they would wish to be governed. Political parties having exhausted the constitutionally mandated redress channels, the EAC wishes to appeal to all parties to respect the will of the people and accept the outcome. This is the essence of the democracy and good governance that the people of Burundi have been yearning for.

The outcome of the elections is a win for all Burundians and provides an opportunity for consolidation of peace, security and stability, which are key ingredients for economic and social development.

The Community also wishes to congratulate and pay tribute to the Late President Pierre Nkurunziza, for guiding the country through difficult and turbulent times to the promulgation of a new home grown constitution and democratic elections culminating into a peaceful transfer of power.

The EAC puts a high premium on peaceful and democratic electoral processes in addition to the smooth handing over of political power amongst political actors. Under Article 123, Section 3(c) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC on Political Affairs, one of the objectives of the Community in pursuing and implementing common foreign and security

policies shall be to "develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The EAC had put in place but unfortunately could not send an election observer mission, as is the tradition, to monitor the Burundi general election due to the ongoing lockdowns and border shutdowns occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic. However, it is encouraging that the Constitutional Court in Burundi conclusively arbitrated in the dispute and made a ruling that the electoral process was above board. Such peaceful resolution of electoral and other disputes is what the founders of the Community envisaged.

Burundians can now look into the future with confidence and build on their demonstrated capacity to manage their internal affairs and with this, partner with the international community in the spirit of mutual respect to re-energize the economy and create conditions conducive for the arduous task of nation building.

The Community urges the incoming administration to consolidate the ongoing reconciliation efforts and mobilize Burundians of various political persuasions to join in the nation building efforts. It is only through such efforts that Burundi will effectively contribute to the EAC's vision of a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa. 🇪🇦

Amb Libérat Mfumukeko
Secretary General
East African Community



Get to know COVID-19

CAUSATIVE AGENT



TYPE

Human
Coronavirus

FAMILY

Coronaviridae

NAME

Severe acute
respiratory syndrome
coronavirus 2 (SARS-
CoV-2) previously
known as “2019 novel
coronavirus” or
“2019-nCoV”

DIVERSITY

Many that can cause
mild upper-respiratory
tract illnesses to
serious respiratory
tract infections.

OTHER IDENTIFIED HUMAN CORONAVIRUSES (HCoV)

HCoV-229E
HCoV-NL63
HCoV-OC43
HCoV-HKU1
Severe acute respiratory
syndrome coronavirus.
(SARS-CoV)
Middle East respiratory
syndrome coronavirus
(MERS-CoV)



AROUND THE COMMUNITY

EAC deploys Mobile Laboratories and testing kits to all Partner States

BY THE COMMUNITY TEAM

The East African Community under the Mobile Laboratory Project deployed nine (9) mobile laboratories and Coronavirus test kits to all EAC Partner States on 15 April, 2020 in a bid to detect and respond to highly infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and Ebola.

Speaking to the media while flagging off the mobile laboratories and equipment, EAC Secretary General, Amb Liberat Mfumukeko said that each Partner State would receive a four wheel drive vehicle fitted with laboratory and ICT equipment, as well as all the necessary consumables for a fully functional laboratory with the capacity to conduct tests for Ebola and the Coronavirus in addition to other pathogens.

“A total of 9 Mobile Laboratories are being deployed to the Partner States as follows: Republic of Burundi -1, Republic of Rwanda -1, Republic of South Sudan -1, Republic of Kenya - 2, Republic of Uganda - 2 and United Republic of Tanzania - 2,” said the Secretary General.

Amb. Mfumukeko said that in addition to the Mobile Laboratories, the EAC Secretariat has also provided COVID-19

tests kits, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gloves, gown, mask goggles, and shoe protectors, and other consumables to the Partner States.

Amb Mfumukeko disclosed that the Mobile Laboratories had been equipped with modern equipment and could diagnose most pathogens in addition to providing safe, accurate and timely patient results for COVID-19, Ebola and other disease-causing pathogens..

He added that the EAC Secretariat has trained a total of 18 Laboratory Experts from the Partner States who are skilled trainers and certified proficient operators/ users on the operation of the Mobile Laboratories

The Secretary General thanked the Government of Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW) for funding the EAC Mobile Laboratory Project especially at this critical moment when the Community is battling with COVID-19. 🇩🇪



Get to know COVID-19

Morphology

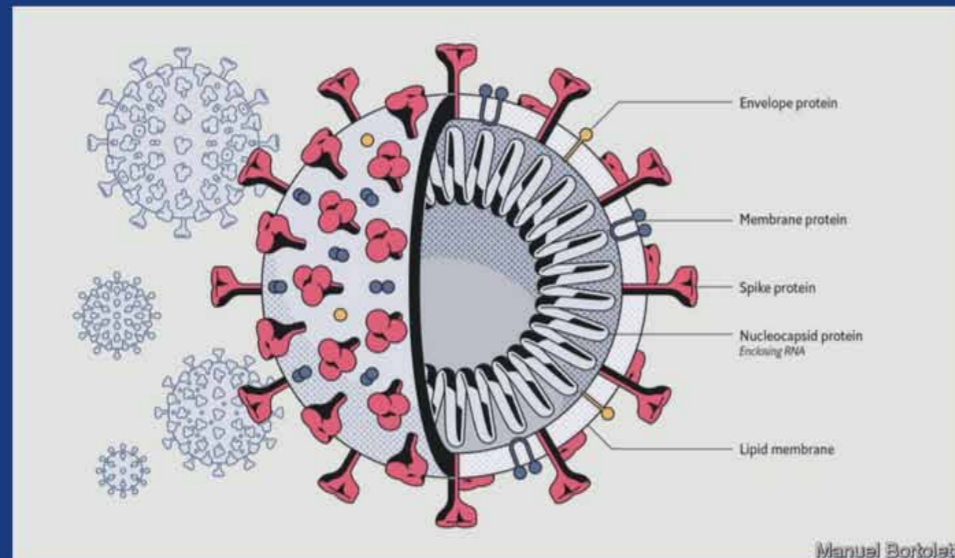
KEY FEATURES

Size

50–200
Nanometres In Diameter

Structural Proteins:

4



Manuel Bortoletti

Spike (S)

Creates The Outer Envelope And Plays A Role In Helping The Virus Adhere To Host Cells

Envelope (E)

Creates The Outer Layer/Envelope Of The Virus

Membrane (M)

Creates The Outer Layer/Envelope Of The Virus

Nucleocapsid (N)

Anchors The Genome (Genetic Material, In This Case RNA)



EAC mulls adopting French as an official language of the Community

BY THE COMMUNITY TEAM

French could in the near future become an official language of the East African Community in addition to English.

This became apparent after the French government agreed to assist the EAC in conducting a study on the modalities to include French as an official language of the Community.

The support from the French Government comes after the EAC requested the French Government to support a study on the modalities to include French as a language of the Community in addition to English. The request from the EAC Secretariat came as part of implementing the directive of the Resolution no. 25 of the 15th Summit of Heads of State of the EAC held on November 30th, 2013.

Speaking at the signing ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with EAC, the French Ambassador to Tanzania, H.E Frederic Clavier, said his country was more than willing to assist the EAC in conducting a study on the modalities to include French as one of the official languages of the EAC.

"We are dedicated to support the execution of the study in order to contribute to social and economic development of the integration agenda," said Amb. Clavier.

The French envoy said the operational implementation of the study and related funding costs estimated to be Euros 42,511, would be covered by the Embassy of France in Burundi, adding that the embassy would regularly update the EAC on the progress of the study.

On his part, EAC Secretary General, Amb. Libérat Mfumukeko expressed his appreciation to the French government for the support given to the EAC for the study.

The Secretary-General thanked France for her continued support to EAC programmes and projects.

"This support comes at the right time when the Community is continued to deepen its ties with the other French speaking blocs," said Amb. Mfumukeko.

Article 137 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC provides that English shall be the official language of the Community while Kiswahili will be developed as a lingua franca of the Community.

The East African Legislative Assembly passed a resolution to adopt Kiswahili as an official language of the Community. 🇰🇪



Get to know COVID-19

Symptoms

	COVID-19	vs	Common Cold	vs	Flu	vs	Norovirus	vs	Allergies
Fever	Common		Rare		Common		Sometimes		Sometimes
Cough	Common		Sometimes		Common		Rare		Sometimes
Shortness of Breath	Common		Rare		Rare		Rare		Common
Chest Discomfort	Common		Sometimes		Common		Rare		Sometimes
Stuffy, Runny Nose	Undetermined		Common		Sometimes		Rare		Common
Sneezing	Undetermined		Common		Sometimes		Rare		Common
Headache	Undetermined		Rare		Common		Sometimes		Sometimes
Diarrhea	Undetermined		Rare		Rare (in children)		Common		Rare
Fatigue	Undetermined		Sometimes		Common		Sometimes		Sometimes
Aches and Pains	Undetermined		Rare		Common		Sometimes		Rare



E€OFISH Programme to contribute to sustainable fisheries for the blue economy

BY SAMSON ABURA

Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) is implementing the E€OFISH programme in Lake Victoria, whose overall objective is to enhance equitable economic growth by promoting sustainable fisheries in the East African-South African-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region.

The specific objective of the project is to support sustainable management and development of fisheries in order to contribute to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security while addressing climate change resilience and enhancing marine biodiversity.

The E€OFISH programme is also being implemented in four other Regional Economic Communities (RECs), namely SADC, COMESA, IOC and IGAD, with the support of the European Union.

The First E€OFISH Regional Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for the LVFO, which is a high-level policy guidance for efficient implementation of the project, was held on the 24th January 2020 at Imperial Express Hotel in Kisumu, Kenya.

Running from February, 2020 to September, 2024, the cost of the programme is Euro 2,000,000 funded by the European Union under European Development Fund 11.

During its implementation period, the programme is expected to:

- a. Enhance the institutional, structural and legal frameworks of LVFO against the backdrop of expanded scope and mandate;

- b. Review the performance of Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Plan-III (2016-2020) and draft the Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Plan-IV (2021-2025);
- c. Harmonize regional annual licensing of fisheries, fishing boats, and fishers;
- d. Expand and update existing fisheries database;
- e. Mark and protect biodiversity hotspots and breeding/nursery areas in selected areas;
- f. Conduct lake-wide Frame Survey on Lake Victoria;
- g. Establish and implement a regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) system that encompasses among others: development of regional guidelines or framework on fisheries licensing, the establishment of user rights-based management systems (control of open access); and harmonize, plan implementation and conduct of MCS operations on Lake Victoria;
- h. Train in enforcement, compliance and prosecution procedures
- i. Facilitate national high-level policy dialogue on IUU fishing and sensitize fisher communities and lower-level leadership on the importance of their roles in combating IUU, and
- j. Enhance communication and visibility actions in line with the E€OFISH Communication and Visibility Strategy. 🇪🇺



A Fresh Beginning for Burundi as President Ndayishimiye Takes Charge

BY THE COMMUNITY TEAM

Burundi's newly elected president, H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, was sworn in on 18th June, 2020, two months ahead of schedule following the sudden death due to a heart attack of his predecessor, H.E. Pierre Nkurunziza.

East African Community Partner States, in a gesture of goodwill, congratulated President Ndayishimiye when the Constitutional Court declared him President-Elect.

In his inauguration speech, President Ndayishimiye outlined reconciliation and dialogue as his key priorities. He vowed to unite the country and urged Burundians to negative ethnicity imposed on them by the former colonial power.

"We need to stop calling each other Hutu or Tutsi and call ourselves Burundians. This ethnicity was brought by colonialists," said the new Head of State in Gitega, the country's administrative capital.

"In Burundi, every family has lost a loved one and we have to remember this so that what happened shouldn't happen again because 15 years of CNDD-FDD rule has shown us the truth. It exposed how we were still manipulated by colonisers and this was even the case in 2015," said the new president.

"President Nkurunziza led Burundi when there was hate and division and Burundians were not patriotic," he said in a tribute to his predecessor. President Ndayishimiye gave a glimmer of hope to Burundians living in the Diaspora indicating that his government was open to national dialogue but insisted that the problems of Burundi could only be solved by Burundians.

"There should be no foreigner calling for dialogue between Burundians because they are the ones who keep us away from it. But dialogue is our culture, so whoever wants dialogue, even tomorrow they should come," he said, adding that he would fight the ideology of genocide

"I will not fail the unity charter, the constitution and other laws, will uphold unity among Burundians, peace and justice for all, and fight the ideology of genocide and discrimination," said Mr. Ndayishimiye as he took the oath of office.

Burundi had sent out invitations to foreign capitals for the inauguration ceremony but no foreign heads of state were present when Ndayishimiye took the oath of office, most probably due to the prevailing lockdowns occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic. Two EAC Partner States, namely Kenya and Tanzania sent envoys to represent their Heads of State at the ceremony. Retired President Jakaya Kikwete who was accompanied by Vice President Samia Suluhu led the Tanzanian delegation.

Like the late President Nkurunziza, Ndayishimiye is a former rebel leader.

He received the backing of Nkurunziza and the ruling CNDD-FDD party of which he was the Secretary. He was declared by CENI, the electoral body in Burundi as the winner of May's presidential election, which the opposition contested as having been rigged. However, Burundi's constitutional court on 4th June, 2020 upheld the results of the May 2020 presidential election dismissing the complaints filed by opposition leader Agathon Rwasa, who had alleged widespread irregularities.

The court upheld Ndayishimiye win with 68% of the vote, with Rwasa receiving 24%. The court found Rwasa's complaint unfounded and said any irregularities could not taint the entire electoral process.

However, Rwasa had earlier hinted to the local and international press that he would take the matter to the Arusha-based East African Court of Justice if he was not satisfied with the decision of the Constitutional Court.

Rwasa had alleged ballot stuffing adding that the electoral roll was never published. "Not a single district, no single province was spared," he said after going to court.

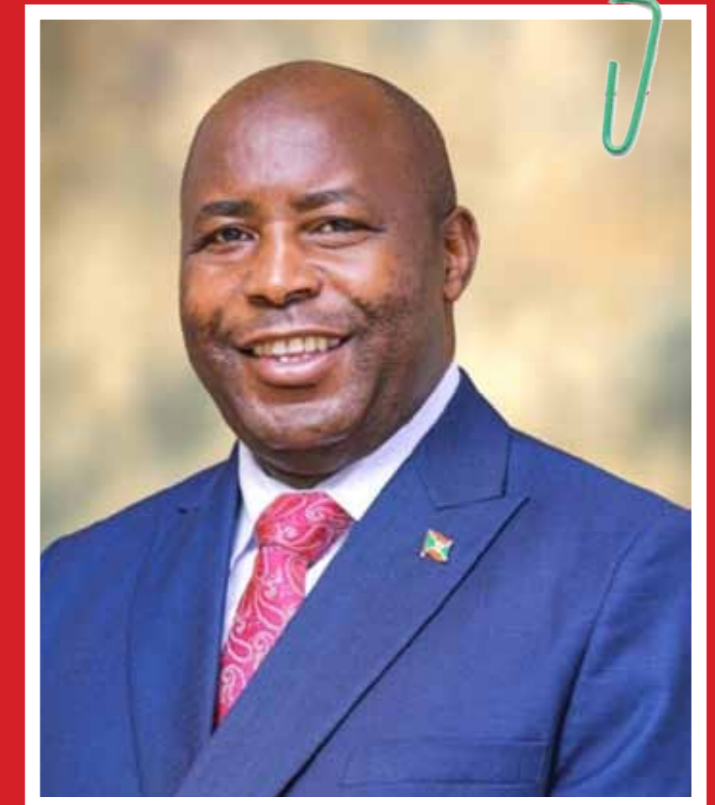
Mr. Nkurunziza, 55, passed away on 8th June after suffering a cardiac arrest, according to government sources. The late president was due to step down in August after 15 years at the helm.

Under the Constitution of Burundi, if the head of state dies in office then the president of the National Assembly, currently Pascal Nyabenda, should succeed him in a temporary capacity until a new President is sworn in.

But after a ruling by Burundi's Constitutional Court on 4th June, 2020, Mr. Ndayishimiye's inauguration was brought forward.

Due to the travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, no foreign observer missions were allowed into the country. However, the EAC of which Burundi is a member gave the election a clean bill of health and expressed its appreciation to Burundi for holding a peaceful election.

"The 2020 Burundi elections hold an iconic place in the history of the nation, marking this the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power. More significantly, the process was domestically driven through own funding. The peaceful conclusion of the electoral process will not only be a big win for the people of Burundi, but for the East African Community as a region," said the EAC.



EVARISTE NDAYISHIMIYE = A PROFILE

Mr. Ndayishimiye, 52, Burundi's new President and former army general is regarded as a humble and pious man.

He has been among the most influential generals since 2005, when his close friend and colleague in rebellion, Pierre Nkurunziza took power.

Mr. Ndayishimiye, popularly known as "Neva", was a law student at the State University of Burundi when the civil war erupted in 1993 in the wake of the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, the country's first democratically elected leader of Hutu ethnicity.

In 1995, Ndayishimiye like his predecessor Nkurunziza, survived an attack on ethnic Hutu students at his campus in the then-capital Bujumbura.

He subsequently fled the country and joined the rebel National Council for the Defence of Democracy—Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) that had been formed to fight the then Tutsi-dominated government.

He worked closely with Mr. Nkurunziza during the negotiations for the Arusha peace accords between the government and the CNDD-FDD rebels.

Following the 2003 peace accord that saw CNDD-FDD share the power with the government, Mr. Ndayishimiye deputised for Burundi's then army chief.

In 2006, he was appointed Minister of the Interior, subsequently becoming the president's military adviser and later CNDD-FDD Secretary-General.

A father of six and a practicing Roman Catholic, Mr Ndayishimiye, like his predecessor, emphasizes the role of God in politics.

Among the items on the new president's incoming tray is to improve the country's relations with the international community and development partners.

An Introduction to INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES within the EAC



BY CHARLES OMUSANA

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional economic bloc made up of six countries namely the Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The six Partner States agreed to coordinate their economic, social and political integration agenda, with a vision of creating a prosperous, competitive, secure and politically united East Africa. The main objective of bloc is 'to develop policies and programmes aimed at widening and deepening cooperation among the Partner States in political, economic, social and cultural fields, research and technology, defence, security and legal and judicial affairs, for their mutual benefits.'

The EAC has a combined land area of 2.47 million km² with a combined population of over 177 million people, whereas the total GDP is over US\$193 billion and has been growing at an average of 5.8% over the last decade.

The EAC integration agenda is anchored on 4 pillars i.e. a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union and ultimately a Political Federation. The EAC is currently a Common Market but envisages to become a Monetary Union by 2024. The EAC is a 'people centred and market driven co-operation' making the private sector key players

in the integration process and fundamental in the attainment of the region's vision.

All EAC Partner States' economies are fully liberalized with free trade among themselves and with a Common External Tariff (CET) for rest of the world. The region is a fully-fledged Single Customs Territory (SCT), with simplified, standardised and harmonised customs procedures, and import transactions being cleared at point of entry. This is to promote production efficiency within the region, which is a fertile ground for enhancing domestic, cross border and foreign investment. There is also the free movement of factors of production including persons, labour, services and capital.

The EAC region prides itself on enormous investment opportunities in all sectors. However, each of the Partner States has priority sectors with huge potential in terms of creating economic growth. These sectors include but not limited to: agriculture and agribusiness; infrastructure; manufacturing; energy; mining and metals; oil and gas; tourism; education, research and innovation; and health.



Agriculture and agribusiness:

Agriculture is still the backbone of the EAC economy and is the number one employment sector. The sector also contributes greatly to the GDP growth. Agriculture remains central to the industrialization of the EAC as it provides markets for industrial products and raw materials especially for the agro-processing sector. The region has millions of hectares of arable land suitable for agricultural mechanization and irrigation. The investment opportunities include commercial farming, deep-sea fishing, agro-processing, and value addition in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry products.



Infrastructure:

Infrastructure is one of the most critical enablers of a successful regional integration process, taking into account its importance in facilitating activities such as trade, agriculture, tourism and the movement of labour and other resources. Thus, the EAC recognises that regional infrastructure interventions are key to attracting investment into the region, improving competitiveness, and promoting trade. The sector has the following sub-sectors: roads; railway; aviation; communications and inland waterways. The infrastructure and support services sub-sector cover roads, railways, civil aviation, maritime transport and ports, multi-modal transport, freight administration and management. The EAC operates five modes of transport systems consisting of road, rail, maritime, air transport and oil pipelines. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) opportunities exist in intra-EAC road and railway networks as well in airports and port projects.



Manufacturing:

Manufacturing is a key sector in EAC's economic development, both in its contribution to the regional output and exports, and for job creation. Emphasis in the EAC Partner States is on setting key targets and specific goals to steer industrial growth including the development of Special Economic Zones, Export Processing Zones, industrial parks and clusters, and niche products. There are a wide range of direct and joint-investment opportunities in this sector, including agro-processing, garments, the assembly of automotive components and electronics, plastics, paper, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, metals and engineering products for domestic and export markets. Also, the region offers abundant natural resources which provide plenty of raw materials for the manufacturing industries such as cotton for garment and textile industries, sisal for canvassing, iron for steel, as well as various minerals and gem stones.



Energy:

EAC is endowed with diverse energy sources including hydro, biomass, natural gas, coal, geothermal, solar and wind power, and uranium, much of which is untapped. Investment opportunities exist in generation of energy from biogas, hydro-carbons (natural gas, oil, and coal), uranium and renewable resources; generation of energy from solar, wind; extraction of biofuels, and; geothermal exploration and development.



Oil and Gas:

South Sudan has huge oil deposits with huge quantities of petroleum being discovered in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Oil exploration is ongoing in nearly all EAC Partner States. In Tanzania, there have been significant natural gas discoveries on the coastal shore of the Indian Ocean at Songo Songo, Mnazi Bay and Mkuranga. These discoveries are the catalysts of natural gas developments in Tanzania. The EAC region is an emerging oil and gas hub that is presenting a lot of investment opportunities and attracting a lot of FDIs. Most opportunities are in exploration and extraction.



Tourism:

Tourism is one of EAC's most important industries, and has strong linkages with transport, food production, retail and entertainment. EAC is still one of the most popular global tourism destinations and has many investment opportunities in the tourism sector. The investment opportunities include the: establishment of resort cities; branding of premium parks; construction of internationally branded hotels; Development of high-quality Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) tourist facilities and conference tourism facilities, as well as health and sports tourism.



Mining and metals: :

Mining has placed EAC in the higher ranks of African economies in terms of attracting FDIs. EAC is endowed with a variety of industrial minerals and precious metals as well as gemstones.



Health:

Health: The EAC Heads of State in one of their retreats focusing on health considered and approved the following health investment priorities in the health sector:

- i. expansion of access to specialized health care and cross border health services;
- ii. strengthening the network of medical reference laboratories and the regional rapid response mechanism to protect the region from health security threats including pandemics, bio-terrorism and common agents;
- iii. expansion of capacity to produce skilled and professional work force for health in the region based on harmonized regional training and practice standards and guidelines;
- iv. increase access to safe, efficacious and affordable medicines, vaccines, and other health technologies focusing on prevalent diseases such as malaria, TB, HIV/Aids, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other high burden conditions;
- v. upgrading of health infrastructure and equipment in priority national and sub national health facilities / hospitals;
- vi. establishment of strong primary and community health services as a basis for health promotion and diseases prevention and control;
- vii. expansion of health insurance coverage and social health protection;
- viii. improvement of quality of healthcare, health sector efficiency and health statistics; and
- ix. strengthening of health research and development.



Education, research and innovation: :

EAC achieving its social and economic development objectives is largely dependent upon its most valuable resource – its people. Thus, opportunities exist in education, research and innovation given the level of output in the region that is still low compared to global standards and needs to be improved if the region is to graduate to lower middle-income status. The investment opportunities in this sector are in establishment of specialized education, research and innovation institutions to address specific regional human capital requirements and the research and innovation needs of the region. Regional innovation ecosystems are grossly lacking and need to be established in partnership with the private sector.

Why Invest in East Africa?

The region's economy is fully liberalized without exchange or price controls as well as a liberalized banking and finance sector. The EAC offers attractive and comprehensive package of incentives offered to investors. It is one of the fastest growing regions in the world with a combined GDP of US\$ 173 billion. The region's GDP has been growing at an average of 5.8% in the last decade.

The region's growth can be attributed to the reforms the EAC countries have undertaken in terms of legal and regulatory frameworks to improve the business environment, improvement of infrastructure and industrialization initiatives that Partner States have undertaken. This is a testament to the region being the world's fastest reforming region in terms of business regulation and ease of doing business.

There has been sustained macro-economic stability in the EAC mainly due to effective macro-economic policies. In the East Africa region, inflation, an important indicator of macroeconomic stability, remained in the double digits in 2018, increasing by 0.5 percentage point from 14.0% in 2017.

In Africa, East Africa continues to lead with GDP growth. In 2018, East Africa's GDP growth was estimated at 5.7%, followed by North Africa at 4.9%, West Africa at 3.3%, Central Africa at 2.2%, and Southern Africa at 1.2% (East Africa Economic Outlook, African Development Bank Group, 2019).

The region is politically stable with high level of governance and democracy together with institutionalized frameworks for the Public and Private Sector Dialogue. All Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) have simplified investment procedures and One Stop Centre facilities to support investors easily set up their businesses.

Bordering the Indian Ocean and Somalia on the east, and Ethiopia and Sudan on the north, the Central African Republic on the west and Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia on the South, the EAC is strategically located as a regional financial, communication and transport hub. No wonder, it hosts continental offices for several international organisations and multinational companies.

EAC is one of the most integrated regional markets in Africa (Customs Union, Common Market and a Monetary Union - soon) with an internal population size of 177 million. Other markets include COMESA - 560 million, EU-EBA Initiative, US-AGOA



- The European Union (EU) is the largest trading partner of the EAC countries. Exports from EAC countries have had preferential access to the EU market under the Cotonou agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP).
- Together with other sub-Saharan African countries, the EAC Partner States also qualify for duty-free access to the US market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which has been extended until 2025.
- Products from EAC countries can also access various markets in the developed world through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which offers preferential treatment to a wide range of products originating in developing countries.
- China is one of the major investors in EAC countries with investments ranging across various sectors from services to manufacturing.

EAC has among the world's youngest population that is educated, trainable, mobile, skilled and enterprising which provides a solid source for labour force. The region also boasts of cordial, warmth and hospitable of the people and is one of the world's leading and most successful tourism, wildlife and safari destination.

Instruments for the Protection of Investment include:

- Insurance against non-commercial risk by Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA);
- Africa Trade Insurance Agency (ATIA), and;
- Sanctity of private property guaranteed on National Constitutions

Mr. Omusana is Principal Investment and Private Sector Development Officer at the EAC Secretariat.



Industrialists push for **UNIFORM TAX CUTS IN EAST AFRICA** amid COVID-19 war

Industrialists have called for uniform tax cuts on medical supplies and essential goods across East African countries to cushion businesses as they fight against the coronavirus outbreak in the region.

The East African Business Council and manufacturers claim that reduced taxes will boost production and supply of food as well as medical products as demand surge.

Countries shut down their economies to slow the spread of the coronavirus, but a protracted pandemic could quickly put a strain on the food supply chains, a complete web of interactions involving farmers, agricultural inputs, processing plants, shipping, retailers among others

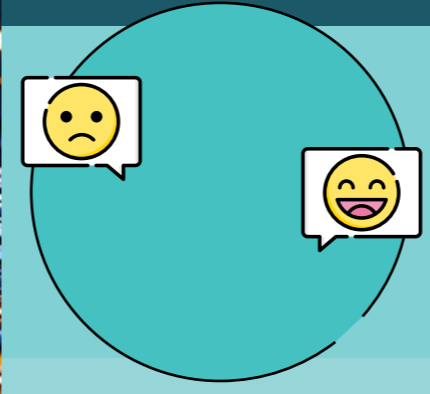
According to Peter Mathuki, EABC Executive Director, the tax breaks are part of a uniform recovery plan that the lobby proposed to the East Africa Community states following restrictions that have pushed manufacturers to either shut down or operate below capacities.

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted production among manufacturers in the region and major raw materials import countries such as China, fuelling fears of stock-outs in essential commodities. "EAC partner states to adopt common fiscal incentives and response measures for the business sectors negatively impacted by the

COVID-19... waive customs duties, Value Added Tax and agree on the equivalence of standards for medical devices and protective equipment from the region and other highly demanded goods," Mathuki proposed. The industrialists decided to make move for the tax breaks as a result of the lack of preventive kits for health workers, on the back of a global shortage.

Manufacturers, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are currently feeling the impact of the social distancing and lockdown policies imposed by various countries to further curb the spread of the pandemic that has, in turn, forced them to temporarily close or operate below capacities. Some of the restrictions include a partial and complete freeze on movements and a ban on all public gatherings. The director added that EAC states should allow free movement of East Africans across the member states, a push likely to spark resistance from countries that have so far closed their borders. As countries combat the coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative they must make an effort to keep food supply chains moving.

BY AHMED IYANDA
*This article was published by Ventures Africa
venturesafrica.com*



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

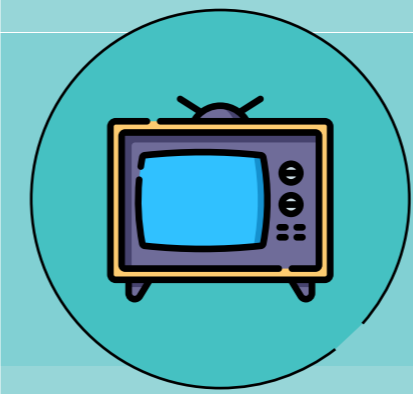
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

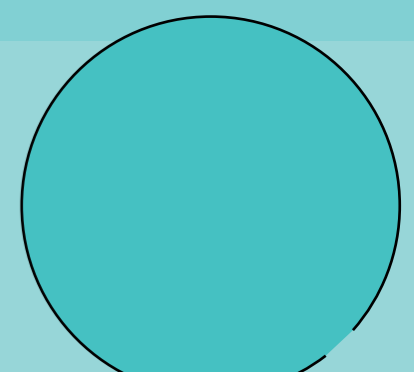
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



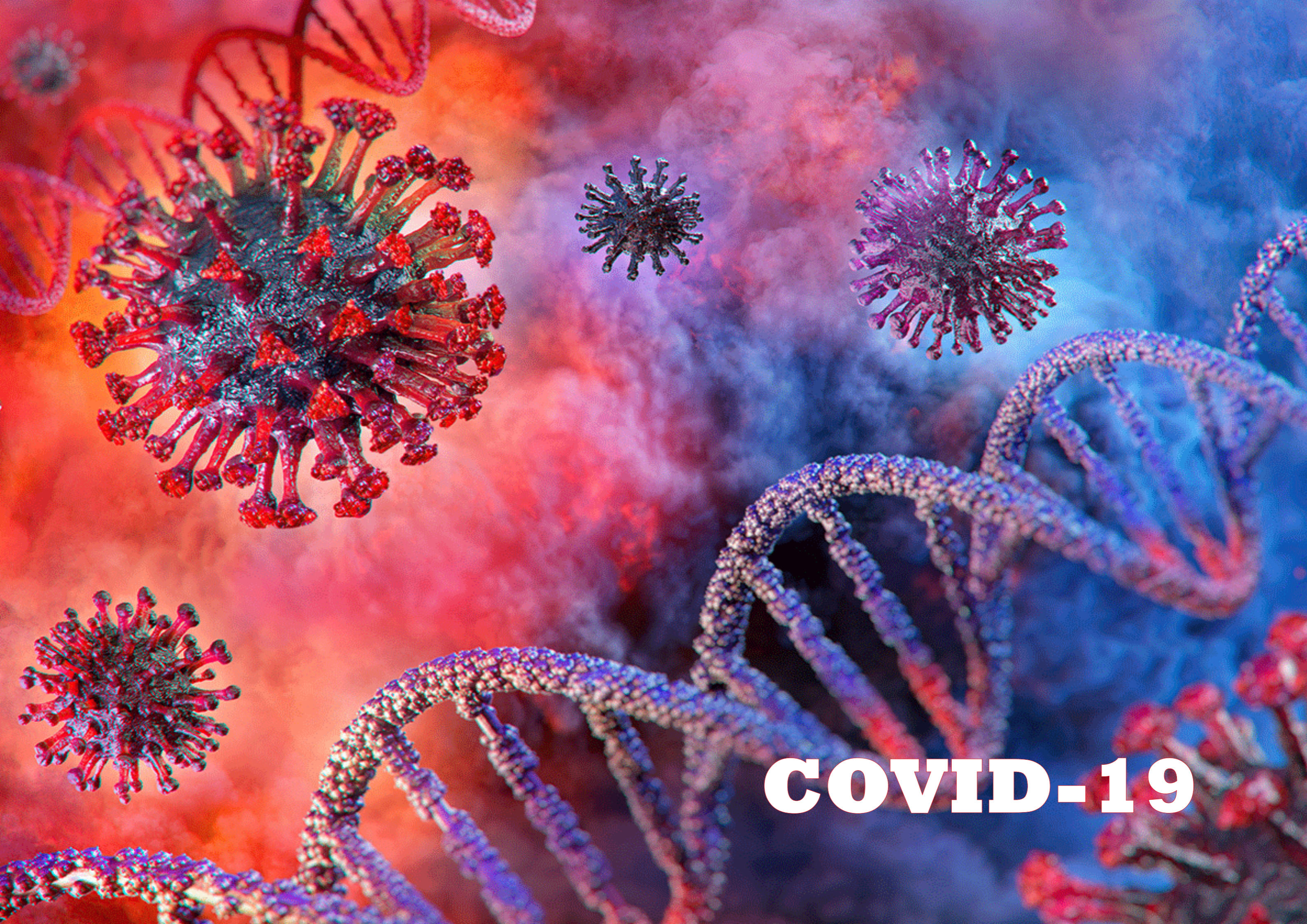
Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.

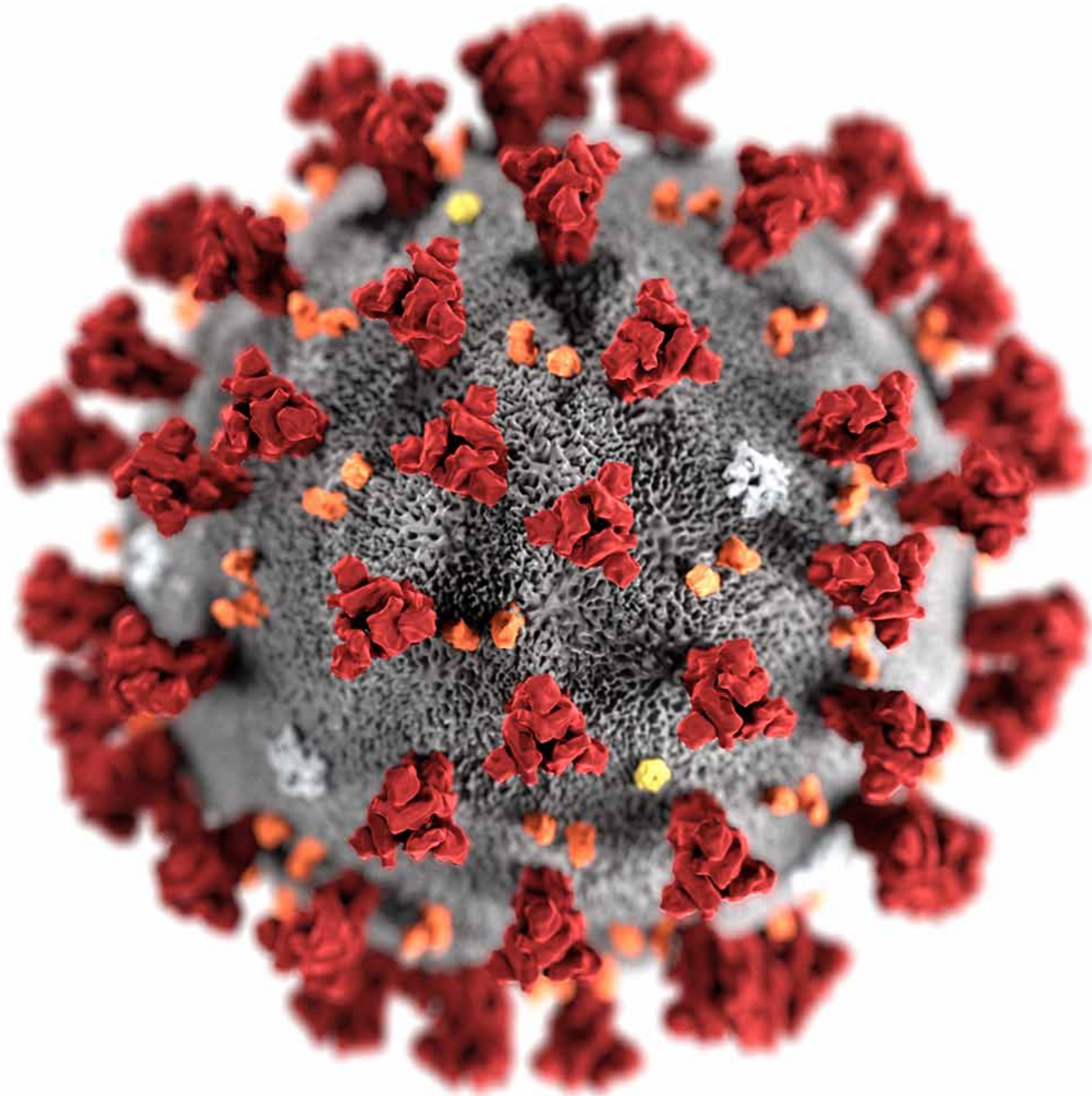


The Rift Valley of eastern Africa and Asia (sometimes called the Great Rift Valley [GRV] or East African Rift system [EAR or EARS]) is an enormous geological split in the crust of the earth, thousands of kilometers long, up to 125 miles (200 kilometers) wide, and between a few hundred to thousands of meters deep. First designated as the Great Rift Valley in the late 19th century and visible from space, the valley has also been a great source of hominid fossils, most famously in Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge.





COVID-19



EAC Secretariat unveils Regional COVID-19 Response Plan

BY THE COMMUNITY TEAM

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia unknown etiology (unknown cause) detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. On 11 and 12 January 2020, WHO received further detailed information from the National Health Commission China that the outbreak is associated with exposures in one seafood market in Wuhan City.

The Chinese authorities identified a new type of coronavirus, which was isolated on 7 January 2020. On 30 January, 2020 WHO declared the ongoing Corona Viruses Infections Outbreak as Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and warned all countries to expect further international exportation of cases to any country. As the epidemic evolved, an increasing number of countries, other than China, reported cases, including through local transmission of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Like any other part of the world, the East African Community responded strongly to the COVID-19 pandemic. All East Africans have a major stake in managing the pandemic and contribute significantly to reducing the impact of disease in the region.

Pursuant to Article 118 of the Treaty for the establishment of the East African Community, Partner States, undertook to take joint action towards the prevention and control of communicable diseases and to control pandemics and epidemics of communicable and vector-borne diseases that might endanger the health and welfare of the residents of the Partner States. The Partner States also agreed to promote the management of health delivery systems and better planning mechanisms to enhance efficiency of health care services within the Partner States.

In responding to the pandemic in the region, the EAC Secretariat developed a Regional Response Plan on COVID-19 to support and help better coordinatuon of regional response. The Plan outlines the key interventions and activities to be implemented, guided by the directives and decisions of the Joint Meeting of Ministers of Health and Ministers responsible for EAC Affairs on the COVID-19 Pandemic response held on the 25 March 2020.

The Plan aims to ensure a joint and well-coordinated mechanism to fight COVID- 19 in the Region; facilitate the movement of goods and services; minimize the infection rates, and morbidity and mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

Through the Regional Response Plan, the EAC Secretariat has been able to coordinate different activities including mobilization of financial resources from Germany, TradeMark East Africa and the African Development Bank to fight the pandemic at regional level.


The Federal Republic of Germany contributed €1.7million for capacity strengthening and preparedness against pandemic and €500,000 to support laboratory strengthening (training, test kits and equipment) from German Development Bank (KfW) through GIZ.

About US\$10million for a regional project covering the East and Horn of Africa (EAC and IGAD) from the African Development Bank has been committed. The EAC Secretariat and the Bank are in the final stages of signing the financing agreement .

An additional US\$20million from Trade Mark East Africa under the "Safe Trade emergency Facility" has been secured to provide safer movement of goods within the region, and an effort to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Secretariat, through the EAC Mobile Laboratory project, has also provided support for pandemic preparedness and response to the Partner States. This initiative has included building laboratory capacity through training of experts from the Partner States; as well as supply of equipment; personal protective gear; and COVID-19 test kits to the Partner States. The EAC Secretariat under the Mobile Laboratory Project also mobilised

resources secured mobile laboratories for each of the Partner States to facilitate rapid detection of highly pathogenic organisms such as Ebola, Marburg, and Corona Virus among others.

The EAC Secretariat continues working with the Partner States and development partners to mobilize several stakeholders, such as Airport authorities in the Partner States' points of entry and government regulatory bodies, to achieve a broad coalition in stepping up the fight against COVID-19 and other pandemics in the region. 

EAC Mobile Laboratories deployed to Partner States

Personal protective gear and test kits supplied to the Partner States

Over €2million mobilised to fight pandemic in the region

Covid-19: The history of pandemics

BY BRYAN WALSH

Throughout history, nothing has killed more human beings than infectious disease. Covid-19 shows how vulnerable we remain – and how we can avoid similar pandemics in the future.

The novel coronavirus pandemic, known as Covid-19, could not have been more predictable. From my own reporting, I knew this first-hand. In October 2019, I attended a simulation involving a fictional pandemic, caused by a novel coronavirus, that killed 65 million people, and in the spring of 2017 I wrote a feature story for TIME magazine on the subject. The magazine cover read: "Warning: the world is not ready for another pandemic".

There was little special about my insight. Over the past 15 years, there has been no shortage of articles and white papers issuing dire warnings that a global pandemic, involving a new respiratory disease, was only a matter of time. On BBC Future in 2018, we reported that experts

believed a flu pandemic was only a matter of time and that there could be millions of undiscovered viruses in the world, with one expert telling us, "I think the chances that the next pandemic will be caused by a novel virus are quite good." In 2019, US President Donald Trump's Department of Health and Human Services carried out a pandemic exercise named "Crimson Contagion", which imagined a flu pandemic starting in China and spreading around the world. The simulation predicted that 586,000 people would die in the US alone. If the most pessimistic estimates about Covid-19 come true, the far better named "Crimson Contagion" will seem like a day in the park.

As of 5 May, there were more than 3.4 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 around the world and more than 240,000 deaths, touching every continent save Antarctica. This was a pandemic, in reality, well before the World Health Organization finally declared it one on 11 March. And we should have seen it coming.



Covid-19 marks the return of a very old – and familiar – enemy. Throughout history, nothing has killed more human beings than the viruses, bacteria and parasites that cause disease. Not natural disasters like earthquakes or volcanoes. Not war – not even close.

Mass killers

Take the mosquito-borne disease malaria. It has stalked humanity for thousands of years, and while death tolls have dropped significantly over the past 20 years, it still snuffs out nearly half a million people every year.

Over the millennia, epidemics, in particular, have been mass killers on a scale we can't begin to imagine today – even in the time of the coronavirus.

The plague of Justinian struck in the 6th Century and killed as many as 50 million people, perhaps half the global population at the time. The Black Death of the 14th Century – likely caused by the same pathogen – may have killed up to 200 million people. Smallpox may have killed as many as 300 million people in the 20th Century alone, even though an effective vaccine – the world's first – had been available since 1796.

Some 50 to 100 million people died in the 1918 influenza pandemic – numbers that surpass the death toll of World War One, which was being fought at the same time. The 1918 flu virus infected one in every three people on the planet. HIV, a pandemic that is still with us and still lacks a vaccine, has killed an estimated 32 million people and infected 75 million, with more added every day.

If these numbers shock, it's because today epidemics are rarely discussed in history classes, while in the not so distant past, they were simply a terrible fact of life. There are few memorials to the victims of disease. The historian Alfred Crosby was the author of America's Forgotten Pandemic, one of the great books on the 1918 flu. But Crosby was only prompted to begin researching the pandemic when he stumbled on the forgotten fact that American life expectancy had suddenly dropped from 51 years in 1917 to 39 years in 1918, before

rebounding the following year. That plummet in 1918 was because of a virus just 120 nanometers wide.

Viral advantage

Pathogens make such effective mass killers because they are self-replicating. This sets them apart from other major threats to humanity. Each bullet that kills in a war must be fired and must find its target. Most natural disasters are constrained by area: an earthquake that strikes in China can't directly hurt you in the UK.

But when a virus – like the novel coronavirus – infects a host, that host becomes a cellular factory to manufacture more viruses. Bacteria, meanwhile, are capable of replicating on their own in the right environment.

The symptoms created by an infectious pathogen – such as sneezing, coughing or bleeding – put it in a position to spread to the next host, and the next, a contagiousness captured in the replication number, or "R0" of a pathogen, or how many susceptible people one sick person can infect. (Imperial College London has estimated the novel coronavirus's R0 at 1.5 to 3.5.) And because human beings move around – interacting with other human beings as they do so in every manner from a handshake to sexual intercourse – they move the microbes with them.

No wonder militaries have long tried to harness disease as a tool of war. No wonder that, until recently, far more soldiers died of disease than died in combat. A pathogen is a perfectly economical weapon, turning its victims into its delivery system.

The constant threat of disease, as much as any other factor, kept the reins on human development and expansion. At the dawn of the 19th Century, global life expectancy was just 29 years – not because human beings couldn't live to much older ages even then, but because so many of us died in infancy from disease, or from infection during childbirth or after a wound.

The cities of the pre-modern era were only able to keep up their

populations through a continual infusion of migrants to make up for citizens who died off from disease. The development first of sanitation, and then of countermeasures like vaccines and antibiotics, changed all that.

"The defeat of infection overcame these barriers and allowed us to have these great global cities," says Charles Kenny, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, a think tank in Washington DC, and the author of the forthcoming book *Winning the War on Death: Humanity, Infection and the Fight for the Modern World*. It was a victory that won us the modern world as we know it.

A better era

It can be difficult to comprehend how quickly that war was seemingly won. My great-grandparents could have fallen victim to the 1918 flu. My grandparents lived their infancy and youth before penicillin was developed. My parents were born before the polio vaccine was invented in 1954. Yet by 1962, the Nobel Prize-winning virologist Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet could note that "to write about infectious disease is almost to write of something that has passed into history".

In the developed world, and increasingly in the developing world, we are now far more likely to die from non-communicable diseases like cancer, heart disease or Alzheimer's than from a contagion. The decline of infectious disease is the best evidence that life on this planet truly is getting better.

While reporting my book *End Times*, I visited the epidemiologist Marc Lipsitch at his office at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston one rainy morning in the spring of 2018. Lipsitch is one of the most influential epidemiologists in the United States, and one who takes seriously the possibility that disease pandemics might constitute a true global catastrophic risk – which is why I was there to see him. But that morning Lipsitch showed me something I wasn't expecting: a chart that graphed infectious disease mortality in the United States over the course of the 20th Century.

What it shows is a drastic decline, from around 800 deaths from infectious disease per 100,000 people in 1900 to about 60 deaths per 100,000 by the last years of the century. There was a brief spike in 1918 – that would be the flu – and a slight and temporary upturn

during the worst of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. But, Lipsitch told me, "death rates from infectious disease dropped by nearly 1% a year, about 0.8 % per year, all the way through the century."

Not over yet

That's the good news. The bad news, as Covid-19 reminds us, is that infectious diseases haven't vanished. In fact, there are more new ones now than ever: the number of new infectious diseases like Sars, HIV and Covid-19 has increased by nearly fourfold over the past century. Since 1980 alone, the number of outbreaks per year has more than tripled.

There are several reasons for this uptick. For one, over the past 50 years, we've more than doubled the number of people on the planet.

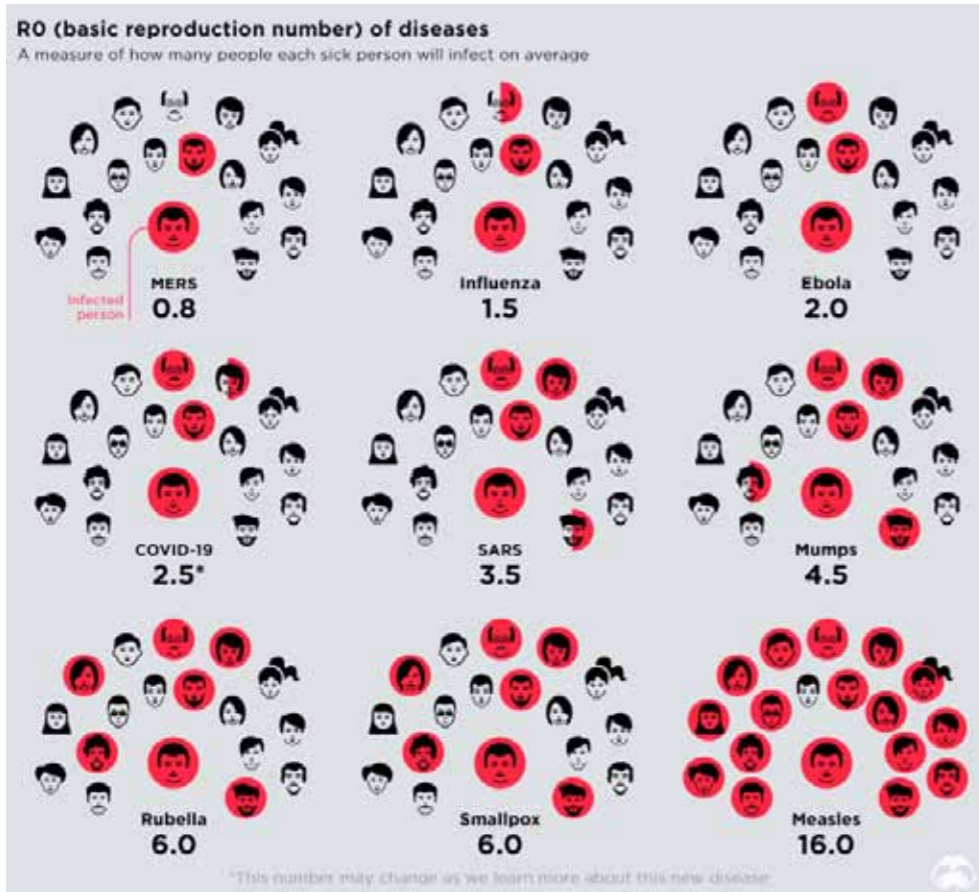
This means more human beings to get infected and in turn to infect others, especially in densely populated cities. We also have more livestock now than we did over the last 10,000 years of domestication up to 1960 combined, and viruses can leap from those animals to us.

As Covid-19 is painfully demonstrating, our interconnected global economy both helps spread new infectious diseases – and, with its long supply chains, is uniquely vulnerable to the disruption that they can cause. The ability to get to nearly any spot in the world

in 20 hours or fewer, and pack a virus along with our carry-on luggage, allows new diseases to emerge and to grow when they might have died out in the past.

For all the advances we've made against infectious disease, our very growth has made us more vulnerable, not less, to microbes that evolve 40 million times faster than humans do.

Antibiotics have saved hundreds of millions of lives since the serendipitous discovery of penicillin in 1928, but bacterial resistance to these drugs is growing by the year, a development doctors believe is one of the greatest threats to global public health. In fact, 33,000 people die each year from antibiotic resistant infections in Europe alone, according to a 2018 study. The "antibiotic apocalypse", as England's former chief medical officer, Sally Davies, called it, puts us in danger of returning to a time when even run-of-the-mill infections could kill.



Back in 2013, a World Bank estimate of how much the 1918 flu could cost our now much richer and more connected global economy put the figure at more than \$4 trillion, nearly the entire GDP of Japan. Early estimates of the economic damage from Covid-19 have already crossed the trillion-dollar mark.

Climate change is expanding the range of disease-carrying animals and insects like the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes that transmit the Zika virus.

Even human psychology is at fault. The spread of vaccine scepticism has been accompanied by the resurgence of long-conquered diseases like measles, leading the WHO in 2019 to name the antivaccination movement one of the world's top 10 public-health threats.

Covid-19 is very much a disease of the moment, emerging in a crowded city in a newly prosperous and connected China before spreading to the rest of the world in a matter of months. But our response to it has been both hyper-modern – and practically medieval. Scientists around the world are using cutting-edge tools to rapidly sequence the genome of the coronavirus, pass along information about its virulence, and collaborate on possible countermeasures and vaccines, all far quicker than could have been done before.

But when the virus arrived among us, our only effective response was to shut down society and turn off the assembly line of global capitalism. Minus the text alerts, the videoconferencing and the Netflix, what we were doing wasn't that different from what our ancestors might have tried to halt an outbreak of the plague. The result has been chemotherapy for the global economy. Just as the eventual emergence of something like Covid-19 was easily predictable, so too are the actions we should have taken to shore ourselves against its coming. We need to strengthen the antennae of global health, to ensure that when the next virus emerges — which it will — we'll catch it faster, perhaps even snuff it out. The budget of the WHO, the agency ostensibly charged with safeguarding the health of the world's 7.8 billion citizens, is somehow no more than that of a large urban hospital in the U.S.

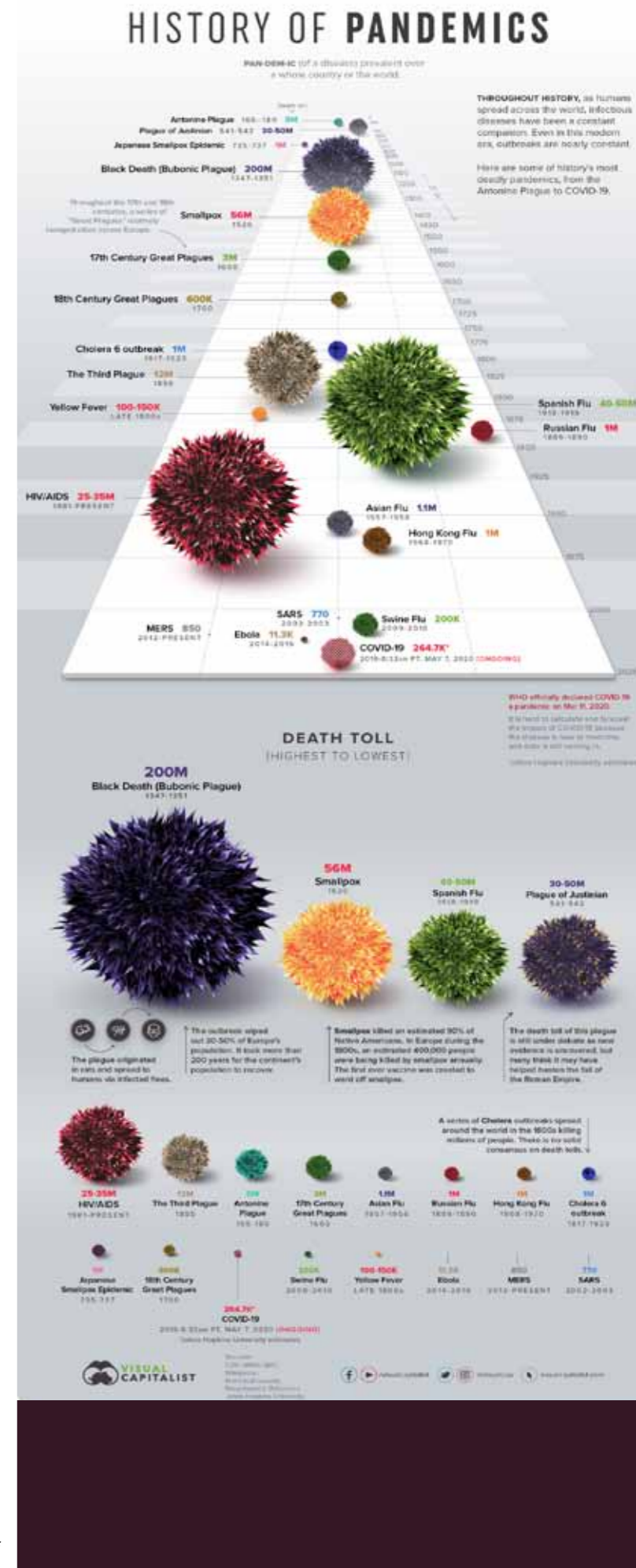
We need to double down on the development of vaccines, which will include assuring large pharma companies that their investments won't be wasted should an outbreak end before one is ready.

We need to build more slack into our public health systems. Just as the US military is designed — and funded — to fight a war on two fronts, so our health care systems should have the surge capacity to meet the next pandemic.

One ongoing challenge in pandemic preparation is what experts call shock and forgetting. Too often politicians make funding promises in the immediate aftermath of a crisis like Sars or Ebola, only to let those pledges lapse as the memory of the outbreak fades.

Somehow, I expect that won't be the case with Covid-19. We need to do all we can to not just survive this pandemic, but to ensure it remains a throwback from the past, not a sign of things to come.

Bryan Walsh is the Future Correspondent for Axios and the author of End Times: A Brief Guide to the End of the World, from which this story was adapted and updated. End Times is published by Hachette Books.





EAC Secretariat urges Partner States to prepare economic recovery plans for the time after COVID-19

BY KENNETH BYOONA & THE COMMUNITY TEAM

The COVID-19 global pandemic is not only a major health crisis that challenges health systems across the globe. It has far reaching ramifications on economies worldwide. The medium- and long-term effects resulting from the measures taken to slow down and contain the spread of the disease remain unforeseeable.

The East African Community region is no exception. On a positive note, the free movement of goods and services in the EAC has been maintained and the supply situation for staple food and basic necessities is currently secured. However, on the negative side, enterprises across sectors including the agro-industry and particularly the informal sector are suffering. Value chains have been disrupted and tourism, a major source of income in the region, has come to a complete stand-still.

Against this backdrop, the East African Community Secretariat calls upon Partner States to immediately commence developing National Economic Recovery Plans. The East African Community Secretariat has finalised an EAC COVID-19 Response Plan and is developing the EAC Recovery Strategy based on a regional approach. "While many people have already lost their jobs and are struggling to feed their families, there is a window of opportunity to prepare for the time after COVID-19 and to prevent another catastrophe", says Honourable Christophe Bazivamo, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and

Social Sectors, EAC Secretariat. He especially urged Partner States to strengthen their food production systems by allowing farming activities to continue. He further emphasized that Partner States should more than ever before promote the use of technology and digital solutions to improve agriculture production and trade in agriculture products.

The EAC has received good rains since September 2019 in most of its parts and the meteorological forecast up to May 2020 shows near normal to above normal rainfall. As a result, livestock and wildlife are thriving and farmers are expecting good harvests. "All this presents good prospects for the agriculture sector," says Fahari Marwa, Principal Agricultural Economist at the EAC Secretariat. He recommends that pastoralists and farmers should take advantage of these conditions to improve animal, food and cash crop production so as to fill the region's food basket. This is especially important, as some of the EAC Partner States are bracing for a second locust invasion. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has warned that the new generation is expected to hatch in May.

To mitigate the COVID-19 burden and to brace for the expected economic challenges following the pandemic, the EAC Secretariat recommends Partner States to meet the immediate food needs of their vulnerable populations by ensuring that emergency food needs are

met, and to adjust and expand social protection programmes. The EAC Secretariat further urges Partner States to gain efficiencies and try to reduce trade-related costs, to reduce food wastage and losses, improve food storage systems and to resolve logistical bottlenecks. According to Kenneth Bagamuhunda, Director of Customs and Trade, EAC Secretariat, other possible measures could include:

- reviewing trade and policy options to address COVID-19 impacts;
- reducing import tariffs on essential goods and inputs;
- reviewing domestic taxation policies on essential goods produced locally;
- assessing the potential impact of exchange devaluation;
- instituting stimulus packages to boost local production and promote imports substitution;
- applying monetary and fiscal measures to counter inflationary pressures;
- upscaling trade facilitation to enhance food trade.

The EAC Secretariat also calls upon regional and international Partners to establish and support short- to long-term measures which compliment Partner States' efforts to contain the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the food and nutrition security in the EAC region.

While starting to prepare for recovery after the COVID-19 outbreak, the EAC Partner States should vehemently continue to implement the measures that prevent and contain the spread of the disease until the pandemic is completely over. This includes bans on non-essential travel and international commercial flights, enhanced active surveillance and quarantining of COVID-19 suspect cases as well as raising awareness on how to prevent and respond to infections. Further, the EAC Secretariat strongly encourages the strategy of "test and isolate" to limit the spread and speed up the containment of the virus.

The EAC Secretariat encourages the EAC citizens to remain vigilant, follow the recommended physical distancing, maintain strict hygiene including washing hands with soap and water and sanitising them, among other preventive measures. 🇰🇪

Economic Policies to Combat COVID-19 in Africa

BY CÉLESTIN MONGA

The coronavirus pandemic could not have come at a worse time for Africa. Despite improved macroeconomic management over the last decade, the continent still lacks the resources to tackle high levels of poverty and inequality, create formal-sector jobs and foster the structural transformations needed to absorb 12 million young people into the labour market every year.

And now COVID-19 threatens to break Africa's back economically.

Africa's low average annual growth of 3.3% in 2014-19 was mainly the result of erroneous development strategies that focused on unviable capital-intensive industries (often in commodity sectors), instead of promoting competitive labour-intensive sectors.

Insufficient growth has in turn constrained public finances, leading to underfunded health systems, weak governance, rapid increases in public debt, and large infrastructure deficits. Given Africa's precarious health institutions, and its shortage of doctors, health workers, medicine, and medical supplies, COVID-19 infections are likely to soar, sparking a humanitarian crisis that most likely will go unreported.

The virus could spread widely in poorer areas with no water or sewage hook-ups, and in communities where low education levels, prevailing social habits and scepticism toward government complicate containment efforts. If a cure for COVID-19 is not made widely available soon, the pandemic could devastate Africa.

Moreover, the prolonged halt to economic activity in the G20 countries (some of which are facing deep recessions) will cause global growth to decelerate sharply.

That will hit African exports, the main engine of the continent's growth, and worsen countries' trade and current-account balances. Worker remittances and foreign direct investment will decline, too, as the pandemic throttles advanced economies.

In addition, lower prices for oil, natural gas, metals, and minerals will significantly undermine the fiscal position of many large African economies, especially Nigeria,

South Africa, Algeria, Cameroon, Angola, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, the Congo, and Tanzania.

That will force governments to make painful macroeconomic adjustments at the most challenging time.

Worse, Africa's ability to use monetary and fiscal policies to mitigate the pandemic's economic impact is limited.

Whereas governments and central banks around the world have adopted robust and often unprecedented short-run stimulus measures, most African countries lack the policy space and capacity to do so or are constrained by monetary arrangements that prevent them from implementing national strategies.

True, a few countries such as Morocco, Ghana, Mauritius, and Kenya have initiated national stimulus programs while also launching structural reforms to improve their medium-term fiscal outlook.

But such policies would be more effective if they were designed and implemented at the continental level.

In the short term, Africa needs greater fiscal space to boost health expenditures, contain the spread of COVID-19, help the hardest-hit sectors, and stimulate domestic consumption, while the continent's central banks should cut interest rates and channel liquidity to firms and households.

But all spending measures should be implemented transparently, monitored by independent fiscal councils, and complemented by credible reform agendas that strengthen medium-term expenditure frameworks.

To achieve these goals, African Union heads of state and the government should hold an emergency virtual meeting to mobilize about 10% of the continent's gross domestic product (\$250 billion), including from central banks and development banks, and coordinate spending across borders.

Continent-wide measures should also be adopted to improve coordination of national

tax policies, increase collection and boost economic growth so that all countries can strengthen their national health systems. In particular, speeding up the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area would provide additional fiscal space.

A recent study has shown that a few easily implementable trade-policy actions – such as eliminating current bilateral tariffs and all non-tariff barriers on goods and services within the continent, and reducing the time it takes to cross borders – would generate \$134 billion per year, or 4.5% of Africa's GDP.

Second, Africa needs a special international financing facility aimed at enhancing its future productivity growth. Such an initiative would support emergency spending on health systems in budget-constrained countries while also boosting domestic demand.

In addition, it would help to finance the construction of profitable infrastructure in competitive sectors, thus laying the foundations for future industrialization and growth.

This facility could initially be funded with an endowment of \$1 trillion from institutional investors, regional development banks, the private sector, and G20 governments. It would allocate global savings to high-return projects that have a significant impact on economic development and employment.

Such a facility would eventually generate self-sustaining public financing for Africa's health and social sectors, reduce the widening gap between rich and poor, and make the continent an important contributor to global demand.

Third, existing monetary arrangements and financial-sector regulations that hamper external competitiveness – especially that of the 14 CFA franc zone countries whose currency is pegged to a strong euro – should be reformed to enable exchange-rate flexibility. Likewise, initiatives such as the US African Growth and Opportunity Act and the European Union's Everything but Arms, under which imports from Africa are duty- and quota-free should be open to all African countries without political conditionality.


Finally, a comprehensive new debt-relief scheme should be considered for African countries with good governance. The continent currently has a total external and domestic debt stock of \$500 billion, and the median debt-to-GDP ratio has risen from 38% in 2008 to 54% in 2018.

By causing a collapse in exports and terms of trade, the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing African countries into negative per capita growth.

Given the continent's financing needs and demographic growth, debt levels will quickly become unsustainable without debt forgiveness and policies to make Africa's debt more transparent and better managed.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to impose heavy human, financial, economic, and social costs on Africa.

But the crisis also creates an opportunity to re-examine the continent's fiscal and economic-policy priorities, build stronger health and social sectors, and establish a global fund to support productive investment.

This commentary reflects the author's personal opinions and does not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank and its affiliated organizations. 

Célestin Monga, former Vice President and Chief Economist of the African Development Bank Group and former Managing Director at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization is Senior Economic Adviser at the World Bank.
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EAC Partner States directed to support local production of essential medical products and supplies to combat COVID-19 in the region

By THE COMMUNITY TEAM

East African Community Partner States have been directed to support local production of essential medical products and supplies including masks, sanitizers, soaps, processed food, ventilators as part of efforts to combat COVID-19 in the region.

A Joint consultative meeting of Partner States' Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries responsible for Health, Trade, Transport and EAC Affairs via video conference held on 8th May, 2020 to discuss a regional approach to COVID-19 further directed Partner States to facilitate farmers to continue farming activities during this pandemic and post COVID-19 period.

The consultative meeting also directed Partner States to support agro-processing and value chains as an import substitution measure.

The Ministers requested the Ministries of Finance in the Partner States to establish special purpose financing schemes for small and medium enterprises, to cushion them from the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministers gave these directives in response to information availed to them that the region's key productive sectors are already experiencing a slowdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with sectors such as agriculture, trade, manufacturing and industry, tourism, offline retail and catering being the worst affected.

Among the negative impacts on the regional economy are a food crisis in East Africa and severe disruptions in manufacturing and industry value chains. On the flipside are beneficial developments such as: increased production of face masks in the region; growing popularity of online retail using e-commerce platforms; growing popularity of online entertainment, and; increased Telecommuting and distance education.

The consultative meeting which was called by Hon. Dr. Vincent Biruta, the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers, and Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr. Vincent Biruta, discussed progress made on the facilitation of the free movement of goods and services in the region; assessment of state of play on cross border clearance of cargo and truck drivers at Malaba and Busia during the COVID 19 pandemic; Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's productive capacities and Impact on Macroeconomic stability.

The Ministers commended the EAC Partner States, WHO and Africa CDC for the efforts being made towards addressing the COVID-19, and the steps taken to contain the disease and prevent further spread in the EAC region.

On a harmonized approach to testing services across Partner States, the Ministers urged Partner States to undertake standardised COVID -19 testing based on approved WHO methodologies.

The Ministers / Cabinet Secretaries requested the Ministers of Finance to analyse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fiscal and monetary sectors of the EAC region and recommend an appropriate plan of action.

The EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sector, Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, informed the Ministers that the EAC Regional Task Force has finalised the EAC Regional COVID-19 Response Plan which aims to among other things, ensure a joint and well-coordinated mechanism to fight COVID-19 in the region; timely access to medical therapeutics and health technologies to effectively manage the COVID-19 pandemic in the region; as well as to minimize the number of people who become infected or sick with COVID-19.

The Ministers directed the Secretariat to submit the EAC Regional COVID-19 Response plan to the Partner States and urged the Partner States to submit their inputs on EAC Regional COVID-19 Response plan within one week from the date of submission of the document.

On the supply of covid-19 test kits, equipment and other supplies to the Partner States, Hon Bazivamo informed the Ministers that EAC Secretariat through the EAC Network of Public Health Reference Laboratories for Communicable Diseases (Mobile Lab Project) had received a grant of €500,000 to support the strengthening of laboratory capacity for COVID-19 response in the Partner States.

Hon. Bazivamo told the meeting that the funds were intended to, among other things, purchase and supply adequate tests to facilitate scale-up of testing in East Africa (1,000 COVID-19 test kits per Partner State) and the supply of essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) in addition to those already procured under the Support to the Ebola response.

On the facilitation of the free movement of goods and services in the region, the meeting noted that the Partner States were experiencing challenges in facilitating movement of goods and services.

Consequently, the Ministers directed the EAC Secretariat in collaboration with Partner States to implement a sensitization programme to destigmatize truck drivers and COVID-19 recoverees in the region.

They further directed the EAC Secretariat to coordinate the activities under the sensitization programmes in the Partner States. 🇰🇪



As desert locusts wreak havoc throughout East Africa, agricultural jobs and livelihoods hang in the balance

By DOMINIC KIRUI

One February evening, Samuel Mwangi watched as a swarm of desert locusts arrived and sat on the trees near his farm at Kariara village, in Kenya's eastern Tharaka Nithi County. The next morning, they began destroying crops on his seven acres of land as he looked on helplessly from a distance, full of despair after several failed attempts to drive the locusts away.

"Here on my farm, they worked on my maize, coffee and beans as I have never seen before," the 61-year-old father of eight says.

As a result of unusually hot weather and heavy rains caused by climate change, the largest swarm of giant locusts seen in almost three-quarters of a century are destroying crops across east Africa, central Asia and the Middle East, putting as many as 20 million people at

risk of "an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods at the beginning of the upcoming cropping season," to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' (FAO) Locust Watch online information hub.

In Kenya, which has been particularly badly hit, Mwangi is a full-time farmer. His life, and that of his whole family, is completely dependent on his crops as a source of food and income for his household needs and children's school fees. In addition, he employs a number of labourers to work on his farm.

"Depending on the yields, sometimes I employ five or six people to help me pick coffee berries, and every other season I employ others to plant, weed and harvest the maize and beans," Mwangi says.

The FAO estimates that agriculture is Africa's biggest employer, with 54% of the continent's jobs, livelihoods and income coming from the sector. In Kenya, agriculture is thought to contribute to 26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) directly and another 27% indirectly, while employing more than 40% of the total population – some 19 million people.

But as the desert locusts continue to destroy crops, more lives and jobs in the agricultural sector hang in the balance.

Ever since swarms of locusts from Yemen invaded Ethiopia and Somalia in June 2019, "the most destructive migratory pest in the world" has swept through Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda in Africa, even going as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the FAO, a single, 40-million-strong swarm covering one square kilometre can eat the same amount of food in one day as 35,000 people.

But with the world's attention diverted towards combatting the coronavirus pandemic, the FAO is warning that the worst of the locust invasion may still be yet to come. As the mature desert locusts migrate throughout different countries, they lay eggs, some of which are now beginning to hatch. Although these wingless nymphs cannot fly, they are still able to destroy pastures and as they mature into winged adults and generate new swarms.

"Our current concern is the second generation of locusts," says Hamisi Williams, assistant FAO representative to Kenya. "Because by the time they hatch, they will be twenty-fold the initial number of locusts, and it is anticipated that it will coincide with the initial phases of the planting season. The hoppers are voracious feeders, and we are concerned that they might wipe out the germinated crops."

"There is going to be a crisis"

The Kenya Plantations and Agricultural Workers Union Assistant Secretary General, Meshack Khisa, says the Kenyan government is mishandling the desert locust crisis as it has not moved quick enough to contain the spread of locusts by spraying the hoppers while they are unable to fly (and therefore easier to eradicate). He fears that the millions of Kenyans that depend on crops for food will face ruin if the locusts destroy their farms.

"Kenya's economy is largely dependent on agriculture as the leading income earner followed by the manufacturing industry. You can imagine what will happen if the desert locusts invade a huge plantation – say, for example, tea, coffee or any other crops. It is going to cause a catastrophe because this sector employs a great number of people. These people will be jobless, and when they are jobless in large numbers, the likelihood for an economy to collapse is very high, as well as the likelihood of people lacking food," Khisa warns.

"There is a ripple effect of people employed in the agricultural sector; they end up using their resources in the economy. So you find that the economy in these regions will be highly affected, and what will follow is that we are going to have a crisis," he adds.

However, containing and controlling the desert locusts is a huge challenge for many countries in the region as funds and resources are not readily available. A US\$10 million loan was approved in mid-March by the United Nations' Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to help the FAO prevent the locust invasion from causing a humanitarian

disaster, bringing the funding pledged to the FAO to tackle the crisis to US\$110.5 million, although this falls short of the US\$153.2 million funding target.

Hassan Charfi is the Deputy Director for Agriculture in Marsabit County, which has recorded the largest number of swarms in Kenya. As the head of the Marsabit Desert Locust Control Base, he says that his county is already overwhelmed by the swarms, and with new swarms maturing and ready to lay eggs from the first week of April onwards, things are likely to get much worse.

"We have not controlled the mature locusts and we are not in any way likely even to control the nymphs. These will soon be aggregated, forming a band after which they will be airborne. Then they will move, feast and roost. The destruction will be unthinkable," Charfi warns.

Good news from Uganda

In Uganda, the Agriculture Ministry says that the country is likely to avoid the worst of the invasion because the harvest season for most major crops took place in December, leaving little for the locusts to feast on.

Charlotte Kemigyisha, a member of the Desert Locust Control Activities Team at the Ministry of Agriculture says: "Luckily for us, the invasion comes at a time when farmers have harvested crops, and as such there is hardly anything in the gardens. Our concern and efforts at the moment are geared towards preparation for the planting season that is around the corner and the conservation of crops." Asked if there are likely to be job losses caused by the locusts in Uganda, Kemigyisha says no. "It is anticipated that the extension officers will work even harder with the farmers on smart post-harvest handling practices."

She continues: "The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries together with the Office of the Prime Minister will support the communities with planting materials, food and other necessary materials to cushion them from hunger and other adverse effects. Since the majority of the rural households are employed by farming, the government will support the communities with other income generating activities until such a time as when the region is considered free of the invasion. The situation will normalise in the short term," Kemigyisha asserts.

But as for farmers elsewhere in east Africa, such as Mwangi, if the situation is not contained right away, his sole source of income is at huge risk of being destroyed. "If the government is not going to help us in driving the locusts and destroying their eggs from hatching, I will lose food and money and all those who depend on me for employment will not have an income to feed their families," Mwangi observes.

Dominic Kirui is a freelance journalist based in Nairobi, Kenya. He specialises in themes such as climate change, food security, gender, culture, global development and governance. 🇰🇪

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EAC Secretary General Amb. Liberate Mjumueko flags off the EAC Mobile Laboratories for deployment in the Partner States.



Joint Consultative Meeting on Ministers responsible for Health, Trade, Transport and EAC Affairs on COVID-19 held via video conference.

PICTORIAL



Arusha Regional Commissioner, Mrisho gambo calls on EAC Secretary General, Amb. Liberate Mfumukeyo.



EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors, Hon. Christophe Mazivami hands over keys of the Mobile Laboratories to Officials of the Republic of Kenya



Jomo Kenyatta International Airport staff during the EAC COVID-19 prevention and response training targeting all international airports in the region.

The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women and Girls and COVID-19

Globally,

243 million



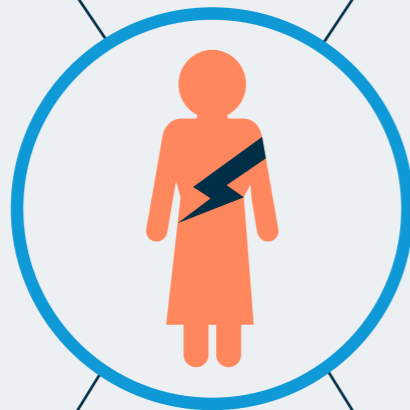
women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months.

The number is likely to INCREASE as security, health, and money worries heighten tensions and strains are accentuated by cramped and confined living conditions.

Emerging data shows that since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and particularly domestic violence, has INTENSIFIED.

In **France**, reports of domestic violence have increased by **30%** since the lockdown on March 17.

In **Argentina** emergency calls for domestic violence cases have increased by **25%** since the lockdown on March 20.



In **Cyprus** and **Singapore** helplines have registered an increase in calls of **30%** and **33%**, respectively.

Increased cases of domestic violence and demand for emergency shelter have also been reported in **Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom** and **the United States**.

As stay-at-home orders expand to contain the spread of the virus, women with violent partners increasingly find themselves isolated from the people and resources that can help them.

87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. The majority of these killings were committed by an intimate partner or family member of the victim.

Violence against women and girls is pervasive but at the same time widely under-reported. Less than **40%** of women who experience violence report these crimes or seek help of any sort.

The global cost of violence against women had previously been estimated at approximately.

US\$1.5 trillion
That figure can only be rising as violence increases now, and continues in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The surge in COVID-19 cases is straining even the most advanced and best-resourced health systems to the breaking point, including those at the front line in violence response.



Domestic violence shelters are reaching capacity, or unable to take new victims due to lockdown and social distancing measures. In other cases, they are being re-purposed to serve as health centers.

National responses to COVID-19 must include:



Services to address violence against women and girls, including increased resources to support shelters, hotlines and online counselling. These essential services should be expanded and adapted to the crisis context to ensure survivors' access to support.



A strong message from law enforcement that impunity will not be tolerated. Police and Justice actors must ensure that incidents of VAWG are given high priority and care must be taken to address the manifestations of violence emerging in the context of COVID 19.



Psychosocial support for women and girls affected by the outbreak, gender-based violence survivors, frontline health workers and other frontline social support staff must be prioritized.





'DIGITIZATION UNUSUAL': How African businesses can thrive in a world beyond COVID-19

BY KEN NJOROGE



The victim who has adopted a wait and see attitude or the one who reads the signs of the times and has started to prepare for the world after? Moving beyond this mode to look out for the not so obvious opportunities to recoup and thrive in a post-Corona world continues to be the greatest test of visionary leadership.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on businesses and the economy both at a global and local level. The domino effect on Africa's informal sector, small and medium enterprises has been and continues to paint a grim picture.

A good number of micro-businesses in the service industry which employ thousands of Africans rely mostly on foot traffic have shut down. This poses a fundamental challenge not just for business owners, private sector leaders but also for the economy as most African governments depend on income from taxpayers to fund development projects as well as delivery of essential services.

Already, Mckinsey estimates a drop in Africa's GDP growth rate by 0.04 percent in the 'least worst case' and by -3.9 percent in case the crisis is not contained globally and in Africa. Organisations and businesses of different sizes have, had to layoff or send their staff on unpaid leave. This is unlikely to abate.

The travel and hospitality industries have been the most vulnerable and were the first major casualties of this crisis. However, the ripple effect will be felt across all sectors triggering an economic downturn as the rate of unemployment begins to skyrocket and the purchasing power for most consumers continues to decline. Should this crisis continue for another 6 months, an economic recession is imminent.

It's no longer business as usual, its digitization unusual

As governments continue to implement curfews and lockdowns in order to enforce social distancing, consumers are now engaging with businesses through online channels. Large consumer segments especially the older generation to whom this whole digital world held little appeal are now becoming active users.

In the wake of the current crisis, digitizing has moved from being a posterity agenda debated in boardrooms to a survival game with many casualties in what has become the new normal. Within just weeks, the world has been flung into 'Digitization Unusual mode' as businesses find ways to survive and ensure continuity. The COVID-19 crisis has become the single biggest catalyst for a digital transformation and has moved digitization from a niche market into mass adoption.

The level of digitization in Africa has generally been quite slow. For all the hype that has been surrounding digital transformation in the past, most industries across Africa have generally been very conservative. This is likely to change and very quickly.

There is an immense opportunity for business to re-invent their business models to enable the delivery of their goods and services online. For us in the payments business, we have to prepare for the inevitable change in consumer behaviour which is likely to spur a lot more digitization for a whole range of services to ensure that the payment platforms and the customer journey are able to cater for different sectors in the new context.

Digital payments have now become a critical service as the governments and regulators implementation short term measures meant to encourage the use of cashless transactions. Going forward, there will be more intentionality on regulations that will accelerate the digitization of services and payments.

Thriving in a post-Corona world

Our response as business leaders to the current crisis has been in 3 phases.

The first reported cases in the continent triggered phase one; businesses have had to make whatever necessary adjustments needed to survive this health crisis by moving to quickly sensitize and ensure the health safety of their staff and customers.

The implementation of various social distancing measures by governments and organisations to adjust to a new way of running operations remotely as teams learn to work from home ushered us into phase two and continues to pose a significant challenge. Few businesses had invested in the infrastructure, policies and guidelines to implement. For most, this has been akin to building an airborne plane.

The first two phases have been towards getting into hibernation mode for survival. Most business leaders have executed fantastically for the hibernation mode. The question now is, what type of mindset do you want to emerge with during this digitization unusual period?

The victim who has adopted a wait and see attitude or the one who reads the signs of the times and has started to prepare for the world after? Moving beyond this mode to look out for the not so obvious opportunities to recoup and thrive in a post-Corona world continues to be the greatest test of visionary leadership.

Jack Ma's quote though brutal is very honest; Today is brutal, tomorrow is more brutal, but the day after tomorrow is beautiful. However, majority of people will die tomorrow night. Most businesses will not survive tomorrow night to see the day after tomorrow.

What will Africa's comparative advantage be in the new world?. How can Africa emerge better? As Africa's business leaders, we need to be preparing to thrive in that new world, whichever way it pans out. 🇳🇬

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Trade in uncertain times: Prioritizing regional over global value chains to accelerate economic development in East Africa

BY ANDREW MOLD & ANTHONY MVEYANGE

Recent global trends like the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate change crisis, and heightened trade disputes among the world's leading trade partners have highlighted the vulnerability of global value chains (GVCs). At present, the scale of the disruption in East Africa is quite dire—imports from China (a common source of intermediate goods) through the Mombasa Port declined by a drastic 20 percent shortly after the onset of the pandemic, between January and February 2020.

In light of these trends, governments and industries in East Africa should consider rapidly shifting from focusing on global value chains (GVCs) to regional ones (RVCs). Given the region's past difficulties with entering global value chains and consolidating the gains from regional integration processes, heightened emphasis on regional value chains could reap compounding benefits. The time is ripe: As documented in our recent report - *CREATING A UNIFIED REGIONAL MARKET - Towards the Implementation of The African Continental Free Trade Area in East Africa*, the recently signed and ratified African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can be the great enabler of that shift.

The stagnation in GVCs

The literature on GVCs emerged in the 1990s, after which the development community began to frame development success in terms of the ability of countries to insert themselves into these GVCs. Although not uncontested, academic research provided evidence of the benefits to workers and improved prospects for poverty reduction from participating in GVCs. However, the current shortcomings of GVCs predate the COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, ever since the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, GVCs seem to have lost their momentum (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Global value chain participation as percent of total exports, 1995-2015



Source: World Development Report 2020

BROOKINGS

The reasons are complex but tied up with the post-2009 slowdown of global growth and investment, as well as the stalling of multilateral trade liberalization. Moreover, many GVCs have already matured, making further specialization challenging and creating additional difficulties for developing countries to enter those value chains. By contrast, intra-African trade, albeit at a low level, has been buoyant and rising rapidly since the global financial crisis (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Intra-African exports as percent of total exports, 1995-2015



Source: UNCTADStat

BROOKINGS

Explanations for the failure to integrate into GVCs

Against this backdrop, it is essential to understand why, beyond the provision of raw materials, a limited number of low value-added textile exports, and horticultural products, East African countries have struggled to insert themselves into GVCs. The reasons for this are multiple—some of them self-inflicted (e.g., a lack of productive efficiency).

In other cases, however, East African countries are blameless. In some instances, their products have fallen foul of excessively demanding phytosanitary standards. Another cause has been the withdrawal or suspension of preferential market access, e.g., in 2018 when Rwanda banned the import of second-hand clothing and subsequently was suspended from specific provisions of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the U.S. law encouraging market access for African countries. In still other cases, harsh rules of origin have undermined the value of preferential market access.

THE URGENT NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO INCREASE AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS

Beyond the historic difficulties experienced by African countries in inserting themselves in GVCs and the current disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis, we can point to several reasons for a new and urgent strategic approach for regional value chains:

- **Environmental costs.** The long-distance transport of intermediate goods by ship or air inevitably imposes a significant environmental footprint. Some of the current supply chains are overly complicated—and the resulting carbon emissions are substantial. For instance, Kenyan textile exports, often with intermediate inputs supplied from India, are shipped out to the U.S. market under the provisions of AGOA, only to be exported back as secondhand clothing. By contrast, geographical proximity means that RVCs, as opposed to GVCs, have the potential to reduce, if not abate, the transport-related carbon emissions, which is a topical subject in the region. A shift to regional value chains could also reenergize the languishing regional textile industry.

- **Acceleration of structural change and diversification.** Reflecting the failure to integrate into higher stages of GVCs, East African Community trade with advanced economies in the global north and Asia consists of over 80 percent raw materials and unprocessed goods. By contrast, around half of all the regional blocks' intra-regional exports are manufactured goods. Especially after the implementation of the AfCFTA, the African market offers a great hitherto unexploited potential, particularly for the development of intra-regional value chains. Thus, to substantially change and diversify the economic structure while encouraging the industrialization of East African economies, the regional route, not the global one, is more expedient.
- **Greater economic resilience.** The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the degree of dependence on international markets in some key export sectors. For example, the Kenyan flower industry has succumbed to COVID-19 due to demand contraction in European markets. By contrast, regional markets in East Africa have a resilience the global ones often lack, primarily due to geographic proximity. Thus, for example, when Kenya suffers drought, neighboring Ugandan or Tanzanian farmers tend to pick up the slack and start exporting more to Kenya. These patterns of trade can be highly beneficial for individual economies too: Uganda's intra-regional trade, for instance, has recently been surpassing that of Kenya's (the region's largest economy), principally thanks to its role as a supplier of agricultural produce to its neighbors.

In summary, we believe developmental and policy discourse has been skewed excessively towards equating "export success" with the ability to integrate into GVCs and sell products in high-income country markets. Policymakers in East Africa have, for a long time, embraced such policy strategies. In turn, the region has become more exposed and prone to GVC-related shocks, as seen with the onset of the current COVID-19 crisis. A more rapid expansion of regional trade, by contrast, is arguably the surest and safest way to diversify trade and reduce vulnerability, with the added plus that it is kinder on the environment. 🇰🇪🇷🇺🇹



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COMMON CURRENCY? Well, region must first build trust and grow investment

By ALOYSIUS UCHE ORDU

With news about West Africa's plan to introduce a regional currency, the Eco, one is reminded that the idea is also an East African Community aspiration.

The East African Currency Board issued the East African shilling as legal tender in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in 1919. It was replaced in 1966 after Independence ushered in national currencies. Fast forward to the 21st century and the EAC plans to launch a regional currency in 2024. Meanwhile, here are some issues to ponder.

First, the Eurozone experience. The EU experience followed the orthodox approach — economic integration started with trade and moved on to a monetary union. The euro resulted in greater financial integration and provided a boost to intra-European trade, the highest in the world.

We must not forget the political history that brought about the EU. After the First and Second world wars, Europe had the political imperative to unite "at all cost". This overarching political agenda was uppermost on the minds of the EU's founding fathers and drove the adoption of the euro.

Eurozone countries have robust institutions and strong macroeconomic frameworks. Nevertheless, challenges abound. The European Central Bank (ECB) has often come under intense criticism from Germany's Bundesbank. The differences between the EU's industrialised north and the southern periphery remain. The experience of Greece, brilliantly captured in Yanis Varoufakis's book *Adults in the Room* (2017) is a stark reminder of the struggles facing countries on the periphery of a monetary union.

EU MODEL

The EU model is favoured by Africa's integration schemes. Is this approach relevant for Africa? To answer this question, let us look at East Asia's experience.

These include 10 countries from the Association of South East Asian Nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and three giants — China, Japan and South Korea. Until recently, many of these countries were less developed. Their policy experience is more relevant for Africa than the experience of "old Europe".

If indeed the regional currency idea is a panacea for enhanced intra-area trade, growth and prosperity, why haven't East Asian nations embraced it? After all, these countries have demonstrated remarkable economic, technological and social success.

Until the Asian crisis of 1997, trade and investment was heavily conducted in US dollars or currencies pegged to the dollar. The crisis left a scar in the minds of policy makers. Dollar-denominated assets fell in value due to devastating exchange rate devaluations. External debt ballooned. Settling international financial obligations was severely constrained.

In those days, there was talk about an Asian monetary union, borne out of the desire to reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Self-reliance and control over the region's destiny was the general feeling. Surely, many Africans can relate to that.

Post-crisis, robust recovery followed as Asians embarked on structural reforms — flexible exchange rates, removal of capital controls, eliminating business regulations and liberalising trade and investments. Talk of a monetary union receded. Crisis prevention gave way to forward-looking growth, measures to boost intra-area trade and Asia's greater integration with the world economy. East Asia boomed.

Asians are pushing the frontiers of development in the 21st century. They are investing heavily in education, health and infrastructure. They recognise that the digital revolution is a new growth engine and are determined to reap the full benefits of digitisation. They are expanding their highly successful export-led growth model, recognising that the region can serve as its own "growth engine".

Aware of the headwinds in the global trading environment, Asians are negotiating to strengthen integration through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, covering the ASEAN + 6 (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea). These negotiations make no mention of a monetary union.

Africa's policy makers need to reflect on the East Asian experience — a region that does not have a regional currency and yet is the world's most dynamic. There are clear trade-offs between the benefits of an EAC currency and the cost of members losing autonomy over domestic monetary policy.

Indeed, a monetary union will mean some surrender of sovereignty. For example, Uganda will give up its right to take certain policy actions unilaterally. At the same time, it is entitled to expect that other EAC members will abstain from potentially damaging unilateral actions. This "harmony of interest" is a result of establishing a supranational body whose decisions are binding on all members.

Is there such "harmony of interest" in the EAC? In ECOWAS? In the African Continental Free Trade Area? Yet it is fundamental for embarking on the herculean task of creating the equivalent of the ECB.

There are other challenges too. EAC has wide economic disparities and structures. Compare Kenya with Burundi. And no suitable anchor currency exists to play the role of the deutsche mark in the Eurozone. Building trust and strong institutions of governance, improving business regulations and developing regional infrastructure are key. These priorities trump the pursuit of a regional currency. The case for EAC's monetary union is not compelling.



Aloysius Uche Ordu is the managing partner, Omapu Associates LLC. He is a former vice president of AfDB and a former director of World Bank.

Africa: Triple Threat - Conflict, Gender-Based Violence & COVID-19



BY NONTOBEKO MLAMBO

The new coronavirus, officially called SARS-CoV-2, has infected more than four million people worldwide – and more than 63,000 in Africa by 10 May – with South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria having the most confirmed cases.

Public health experts warn that true case numbers across the continent are far higher. Without widespread testing, for which few countries have the capacity, an accurate count is impossible.

Women and girls are at high risk for rape and sexual violence, as well as death – whether from armed conflicts, from conditions in refugee camps or from domestic violence while trapped at home with their abusers. Mandatory lockdowns have limited women’s access to life-saving support, including sexual and reproductive health clinics. Deaths in childbirth, already high, are expected to climb.

The combined effect is catastrophic in countries affected by armed conflict and by humanitarian emergencies, such as the locust invasion across eastern Africa. Those fleeing from their homes to crowded camps, where physical distancing is impossible, face increased risks of illness from COVID-19.

Earnings are hit hard

The pandemic’s impact on the informal sector is potentially devastating. Restrictive measures – such as limited hours in markets on alternate days and bans on the sale of non-food items in markets – disproportionately hit women, who are a majority among market sellers and other informal workers. There have been cases of police brutality against informal workers, including women, who continued to sell goods for their livelihoods.

Multiple threats to peace

“The onset of COVID-19 is hampering efforts to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Great Lakes region,” the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy Huang Xia told the Security Council in a 22 April videoconference. The virus, he said, is “already taking a significant economic toll on countries still working to emerge from years of conflict”.

The envoy cited promising progress in Democratic Republic of Congo – where a long-running war in the eastern part of the vast nation has spilled into neighboring countries and led to the deaths of over five

million people in the past decade, according to many estimates. But gains are now threatened, the envoy warned, calling for greater international support to consolidate progress towards sustainable peace.

In South Sudan, the pandemic is likely to delay the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of that country’s civil war, risking a worsening of pre-existing gender inequalities, while threatening the peace process itself. Already, South Sudan hosts 1.5 million displaced persons, most of whom are living in camps.

From fragile Somalia on the east coast to Nigeria on the west, aid organizations struggle to reach hungry people in areas threatened or controlled by extremists. Tens of millions are desperately seeking food in every region, as economic distress and extreme weather fueled by climate change add to the misery of COVID-19.

“We need to pay urgent attention to the protection of refugee, displaced and stateless women and girls at the time of this pandemic,” said Gillian Triggs, the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. “Doors should not be left open for abusers and no help spared for women surviving abuse and violence.”

The agency has warned that millions of people across 21 countries in west and central Africa are facing an accelerating humanitarian crisis. More than nine million people have been forcibly displaced.

Conflict-affected areas are often inaccessible, dangerous and beyond the reach of the state. Violations of human rights include suppression of freedom of speech and of the press, attacks on women an human rights defenders, increased surveillance by the government and heavily militarised responses. All this has hampered peacebuilding efforts but has inspired new determination across Africa.

Peacebuilders at work

A Kenyan organisation called Rural Women Peace Link, which has a focus on women survivors of conflict and gender-based violence, is conducting sensitization on safe practices and hygiene through short radio messages translated to local languages and accessed by women in rural areas. The messages specifically target women at higher risk, due to their roles as primary caregivers for the sick and the elderly.

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) is developing a COVID-19 and Women Peace and Security (WPS) database, which will document the impacts of the virus on communities affected by conflict.



The network also will compile data on how COVID-19 affects work on peacebuilding, on conflict prevention and on sustaining peace. GNWP will use over 100 organizations around the world to collect accurate and up-to-date information. The database aims to encourage the development of gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive interventions on COVID-19. The WPS database aims to be a living document, continuously updated with information provided by local women and youth peacebuilders as well as with data from secondary sources.

Jessica Horn, is programme director at the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), based in Accra, Ghana, which has given more than US\$40 million to local women’s organizations around Africa. “Generalised catastrophe may well be the new ‘normal’ for the privileged,” she wrote on the Fund’s website, “but it has been the backdrop of African women’s organising for generations.”

As the virus headed towards Africa, she wrote, “AWDF grantees we are already outlining a political agenda for the response, warning of possible consequences if we fail to be attentive to the fact that health crises are always gendered.” The responsibility of women,” she said, “is to make sure “that the insights shared by our grantees in this pandemic moment are also setting the compass towards the structural change that needs to be prioritised once the immediate health threat is over.”

Surging domestic violence

The UN Agency for refugees says the lockdowns that have led to restricted movement and reduced community interaction everywhere are significantly exacerbating the risks of intimate partner violence.

Dr. Senait Fisseha, has both law and medical degrees, and a long list of honors – including the highest award given by the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia for “profound contribution to the health sector” – and serves on the Lancet-SIGHT Commission on Peaceful Societies through Health and Gender Equality.

“We have data,” she said, “both from this pandemic as well as past epidemics like Ebola, that women have an increased risk of domestic violence, especially when you have a lockdown.”

Girls need education and protection from abuse to avoid early marriage, closely spaced pregnancies and elevated risks of dying young.

In South Africa, Police Minister Bheki Cele announced that at least 2,230 gender-based violence cases were reported during the first week of the national lockdown, 37 percent higher than the weekly average in 2019. In a discussion on Bush Radio, Africa’s oldest community broadcaster, university and institute researchers said that gender-based violence (GBV) often has roots in children who were abused – and, in turn, became abusers. The scholars said there are studies suggesting that violence in the home leads to higher rates of violence in communities, and even to armed conflicts.

In Zimbabwe, a surge in domestic violence in the two weeks alone illustrates the magnitude of the problem. Between March 30 and April 9, the Musasa Project, a member of the Peacebuilding Network of Zimbabwe, which tracks and monitors conflict, says it received 764 gender-based violence reports. Musasa, the Adult Rape Clinic and Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association have opened dedicated hotlines

to assist women seeking help. Veritas, another women's rights watchdog in Zimbabwe, called on the government to respond to the rising pattern of violence within communities.

"The government should be aware of the problem of increased domestic violence during the lockdown", Veritas said. "More facilities should be made available, and more information on the problem and on where help is available should be distributed nationwide through government channels."

Kenya's Chief Justice David Maraga lamented that too many people in homes and communities, who should be taking care of young girls, instead are preying on them. "There has been a significant spike in sexual offences in many parts of the country in the last two weeks," Maraga said in a video statement on 2 April. "These offenses," he said, "constitute 35.8 percent of the criminal offenses reported during this period."

Women drive global health

This pandemic has highlighted the challenges and discrimination that women everywhere face as primary care givers.

According to a World Health Organization report – Delivered by Women, Led by Men – women are the majority of frontline healthcare workers globally, making up 70 percent. Yet only 25 percent of global leaders are female.

Policy makers have a final say on where funding and research goes – both for peace and security and for health. Without women in these positions, decisions will not sufficiently address either the health crisis or the particular difficulties women face from conflict and gender-based violence.

A report by the Commission on Women's Health in the African Region, presided over by former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, concluded that while women are the majority of the healthcare workforce, their countries have under-invested in women's health.

"We need to realise that the vast majority of frontline healthcare workers across Africa and indeed across the world are women, there will be areas of its primary healthcare workers who are most at risk of exposure to the virus and should be prioritised for the provision of protective gear and equipment to prevent illness to allow them to carry out their efforts," Mark Suzman, Chief Executive Officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, told a group of African journalists during the foundation's announcement of US\$150 million more in funds to fight COVID-19.

Without more equity, the future is perilous.

"Though the data is limited at this stage, there are concerns that in social isolation or physical distancing - when people are staying at home - there are fairly strong anecdotal evidence of increases in issues like GBV which is obviously very worrying. We are trying to get better data and resources around that," Suzman said. In line with this, one of the Gates' goals for 2020 is expanding its gender equality focus.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres is urging all governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans for COVID-19.



The World Health Organisation recommends that governments and policy makers include and fund essential services to address violence against women in the preparedness and response plans for COVID-19. Health facilities should identify and provide information about services available locally, such as hotlines, shelters, rape crisis centers, counselling for survivors and other such measures.

"The increase in violence against women must be dealt with urgently with measures...that meet the gravity and scale of the challenge and reflect the needs of women who face multiple forms of discrimination, said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former deputy president of South Africa and the Executive Director of UN Women. "Shelters and helplines for women must be considered an essential service for every country with specific funding and broad efforts made to increase awareness about their availability."

The imperative to restructure economies

Fisseha worries that if the particular hazards of lockdowns to women and girls and the lost economic opportunities for youth are not addressed, the damage to society will be long lasting. "In Sub Saharan Africa, 50 percent of the population – in some countries 70 percent – are young people," she said.

Politicians and business leaders have described the young populations as a "demographic dividend". Financial and educational support could help that generation transform their countries. But a growing 'youth bulge' of unemployable young people trying to survive – and subject to recruitment by armed extremist groups – is not an asset, but a threat to prosperity and peace.

"How do we invest in our human capital?" asked Fisseha, who was founding executive director of the Center for International Reproductive Health Training at the University of Michigan and is a director of the University of Global Health Equity in Rwanda.

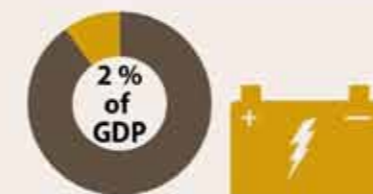
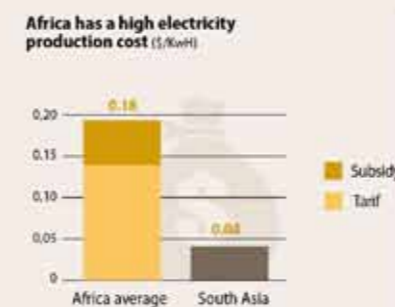
"We absolutely have the talent pool," she said. "We have incredibly bright young people. But if we don't help them delay pregnancy, prevent unintended pregnancy, keep their health, get education and get jobs, they are not going to overnight turn into a productive workforce."

This article by Nontobeko Mlambo, was originally published on 24 April 2020. The Community editors have updated it. Nantobeko is a content producer for AllAfrica and covers Health, Entertainment, Politics Women and children and Human rights.

ENERGY

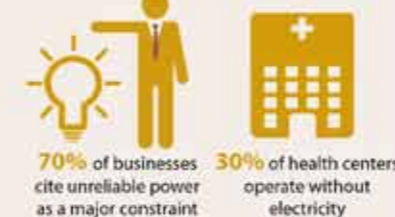
Africa energy challenges and opportunities

Africa has enormous clean energy potential but is faced with big challenges in providing its people with energy access. Over 620 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa – 60% of the population – are without access to electricity.

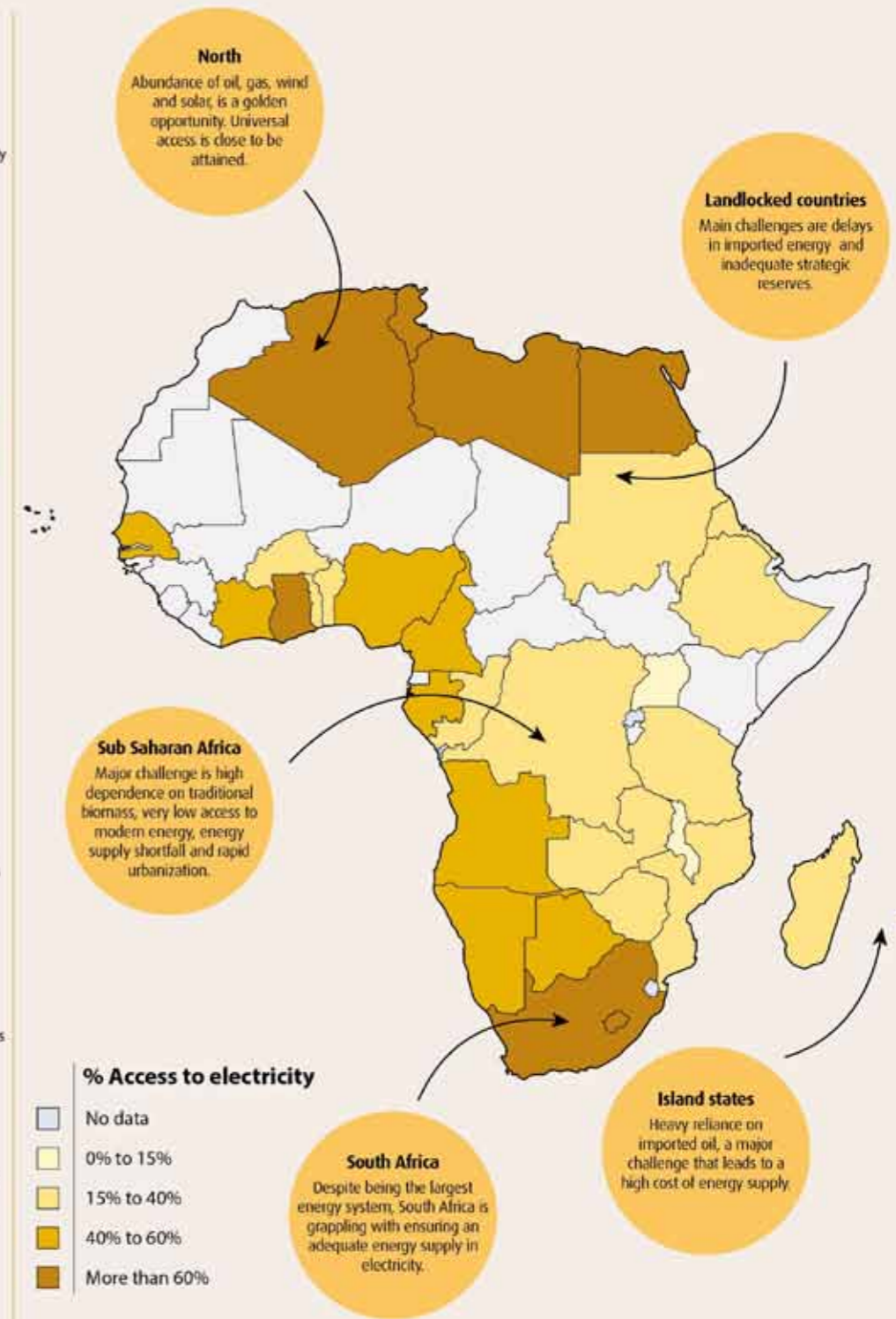


... And unreliable power is the opportunity cost of outage and load shedding, leading to emergency energy generation

This creates energy poverty



Africa has however untapped potential



Where is EAC in the Creative Cities Network?

BY GITURA MWAURA



The first World Art Day was marked on April 15, 2020. In her message during the inauguration, Audrey Azoulay, head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), spoke of how art has the power to unite and connect in times of crisis.

Other than surprise that art never had its international day when “everything” under the sun seems to have one, it somewhat got me wondering how EAC cities might be faring under the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), which I’ll come to.

First, I was taken by Azoulay’s message. “Bringing people together, inspiring, soothing and sharing: these are the powers of art, the importance of which has been made emphatically obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic,” She said.

All these attributes she accords to art about the pandemic we have witnessed — from the African parodies of old, happy songs on YouTube to the heartwarming apartment block sing-a-longs in Italy and elsewhere that many have been in solidarity watching them on TV.

Music was perhaps the first human art form and is the most consumed form of culture. It has the ability to increase social cohesion and direct human attention.

It may therefore not be surprising there have been countless coronavirus-themed songs in countries around the world, talking to audiences in their different tongues and cultural settings in support of efforts against Covid-19.

This has meant that social distancing and geographical isolation do not have to result in social isolation.

Except for one thing: That, the music and other creative expressions of art and culture are being created in isolation, ironically highlighting one of the challenges threatening the cultural sector. UNESCO acknowledges that the mobility restriction or containment measures taken by many countries to stem the pandemic have also drastically curbed access to culture and weakened the cultural ecosystem as a whole.

The closure of heritage sites and related cultural infrastructure (for instance, museums), the cancellation or postponement of events and the interruption of cultural production will have significant economic and social repercussions for the cultural and creative industries.

The impact of the crisis, says UNESCO, will further weaken the professional, social and economic conditions of artists and cultural professionals, in particular individual entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises who often do not have the economic

base necessary to respond to a crisis situation of this magnitude.

This is particularly the case in the fields of crafts, music, film, performing arts, and even gastronomy – the art of choosing, cooking, and eating good food.

While countries are not equal in addressing the challenges – many countries in Africa can’t afford economic stimulus packages, for instance – there have been various international efforts to assist under the aegis of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the various United Nations agencies.

Beyond acknowledging these gestures of international support for the economy and art there ought to be some local initiatives, which is what got me going about how East African cities might be represented in the Creative Cities Network.

The Network, composed of 246 cities from over 80 UNESCO Member States, was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

It dwells on 7 creative fields, namely, Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music. Note that these creative fields are highly practised in our major cities in the EAC.


The Creative Cities under the UCCN mobilised against Covid-19. More than ever, noted UNESCO, in such a challenging time, the power of culture and creativity should be leveraged to strengthen cooperation among cities and reinforce ties between people and communities.

The Cities were mobilised “to further enhance solidarity and collaboration among cities by sharing valuable information, including their innovative measures and good practices, particularly through culture and creativity, being implemented to cope with the global challenge that we are all currently facing.”

Surely, our cities are part of the Creative Cities Network given the encompassing East African Community Arts and Culture Festival under the proud Swahili acronym, JAMAFEST, drawn from Jumuiya ya Afrika Mashariki Utamaduni Festival?

I checked. African cities in the Creative Cities Network include our neighbours Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Others are Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Durban (South Africa), Sokodé (Togo), Cairo (Egypt) among a number in Central, Western and Northern Africa.

I could find none of the EAC cities under the Network, despite the major cities having some reputation as crucibles of literature, craft and folk art and dance. 

TIPS FOR CAR CLEANING



If you are using your vehicle to go to work or run essential errands while practicing social distancing, we recommend disinfecting the interior of your vehicle regularly.

WHAT TO USE



Soft cloth or microfiber cloth
Dampen the cloth with soap and water to wipe down the hard surfaces of the vehicle interior. Dry with a clean dry cloth.



Isopropyl Alcohol
Solutions that contain at least 70% alcohol are effective against coronavirus according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many interior surfaces of a vehicle can be cleaned with a soft cloth or microfiber cloth dampened with isopropyl alcohol.

Cleaning leather

Many automobile leather and leather-like materials have a protective coating, which is safe to be cleaned with alcohol. However, over time, cleaning leather with alcohol can leave it susceptible to damage and discoloration.

✚ An alternative is soap and water to clean spots and spills, followed by the use of a good leather conditioner.



WHERE TO CLEAN

- ✔ Steering wheel
- ✔ Key and remote fob
- ✔ Exterior door handles, both sides
- ✔ Trunk lid or lift gate grab areas
- ✔ Interior door pulls, both sides and interior door panels
- ✔ Start button, if equipped
- ✔ Rear view mirror, back and edges
- ✔ HVAC vents
- ✔ Gear selector
- ✔ Turn signal lever
- ✔ Windshield wiper controls
- ✔ Center stack knobs
- ✔ Center console and arm rest
- ✔ Seat belt and buckle.
Avoid harsh cleaners on the belt itself. They can degrade the fibres and belt's strength.
- ✔ Parking brake handle, parking brake or release lever

The Infotainment screen is a high-touch area, but not a surface that should come in contact with aggressive cleaners. Use screen wipes which are not anti-microbial, or wipe with a soft cloth dampened with soap and water. Wipe dry with a clean, soft cloth.



✚ Avoid touching the center screen, and use your voice commands more often.

✚ Remember to wear gloves while disinfecting your vehicle, and try to do so in a well-ventilated area.



WHAT NOT TO USE



Avoid bleach, hydrogen peroxide, benzene, thinners or other harsh and abrasive cleaners. They will damage your vehicle's upholstery and/or interior surfaces.



Do not use ammonia-based cleaners on the Infotainment screen, as they can damage the anti-glare and anti-fingerprint coatings

The Importance of Self-Care: WHY YOU SHOULD PAMPER YOURSELF

Benefits of relaxing:

- Reduce stress
- Promote the production of your body's "feel-good" hormones
- Improve cellular function



Low-Cost Self-Care Ideas:

-  Search YouTube for a relaxing yoga or meditation routine.
-  Write a list of things that make you happy.
-  Write down what's stressing you and, if you want, rip up the paper.
-  Find a relaxing hobby.
-  Listen to relaxing music with your eyes closed.
-  Get a massage from a friend or partner.
-  Go for a walk.
-  Make a homemade edible facemask.
-  Play with a pet for 15 minutes.
-  Take a bubble bath.
-  Take a break, alone or with friends.
-  Spend some extra time getting ready in the morning.
-  Pick up or make your favorite treat and savor it.
-  Find free local events at places like museums, botanical gardens, and zoos.



Self-care:
Allow yourself to do things that make you feel great!

Good self-care can prevent, delay, or reduce physical and mental health problems



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ONE PEOPLE ONE DESTINY