

# GOVERNANCE LINK

an APRM Newsletter



## SPECIAL REPORT ON COVID-19

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## CEOs Note

I have been trying to think back and count the number of Hollywood movies I have watched in my life with a plot based on an epidemic of the scale of COVID19, and a lone American hero rushing against time to save helpless humanity from an impending dystopic outcome.

The epidemiology of this virus makes it very deathly. It spreads so easily, through innocent human contact and a touch of surfaces. And we do not have a vaccine to disrupt its parasitic, deceptive activities in human cells aimed at duplicating itself to cause illness to its host.

It will go into the annals of history for three reasons. First, it's an obvious example of the "butterfly effect" long understood in Chaos Theory. It shows how a small, invisible, parasitic biological agent that can easily be washed away by a simple soap, could disrupt and cause chaos and panic to such a complex sys-

tem as human society, across the globe, bringing life as we know it, virtually to a complete standstill. We must now start thinking public policy and organizational theory with the “butterfly effect” in mind, and accept, in action, the limitations of our hitherto reliance on mega-categories of analysis of society, and our belief that these categories can comfortably enable us to predict the future.

Second, this incident has shown how a virus can bring a way of life and an established thinking that has been confirmed and reinforced by so many years of experience to its knees. It is true that it takes one evidence to the contrary to falsify an idea that has been confirmed over and over and many times. Post this virus, all of us will be back to the drawing board to re-think our tools, models and forecasts about future global trends. None of all the well-researched publications in my

*“We must now start thinking public policy and organizational theory with the “butterfly effect” in mind”*

physical and cloud library had foreseen that one day, I will be home-bound, under a national lockdown, kept out of streets and our workplaces by a simple thing as a virus.

I browsed through Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds published not long ago by the US-based National Intelligence Council. Then, I tried my luck with the Brentthurst Foundation’s Africa in 2020: Three Scenarios for the Future; the Brookings Institution’s Foresight Africa: Top priorities for the continent 2020-2030 of; and African Futures 2035: Key Trends by the Institute of Security Studies. What these and related studies have in common is that their models for long-term trends assumed that the mega-categories – the economic, demographic, environmental, technological, and socio-political – will be the key drivers to determining our future. Now, these studies have lost their value and strategic fore-

sight. They will thenceforth serve us as a piece of historiographical resource to remind us in the future of how we failed to foresee this pandemic.

Even Agenda 2063, our long-term vision of where we want Africa to be in the next 50 years, did not see this coming. In its ten-year implementation plan, it makes just a passing reference to pandemics in the form of an isolated bullet-point on “health” under one of its seven aspirations, the mega-category “sustainable development”.



Third, this virus will be epoch making, only rivaled in our recent memory by the Second World War. It is set to affect how we organize our societies and prepare ourselves for emergencies in the future. It will change human behavior. Until a vaccine is found, we

will have to go about our daily business wearing face masks and gloves like characters only imaginable in a work of fiction. Those of us who wear makeup or beautiful weaves over our heads will have to adjust. Our manicure, meant to show off our hands and neat nails, will have to give way to the safety of the surgical gloves.

Early February, we were in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the African Union (AU) Summit, as this virus was over two-months-old and making its way to our continent. Yet this menace did not take the center-stage at our gathering. We even planned to convene an extraordinary summit in South Africa in May, which is now likely to be postponed.

We now understand better the limitations of human intelligence, and that even with the help of digital technology and artificial intelligence, we can't cheat the future. As a continent, we have our tools and categories for diagnostic analysis and prognosis of the African condition to blame. Our methodology is heavily invested in the big three categories - sustainable

development, democracy and good governance, and peace and security. The cross-cutting issues are dominated by the usual suspects - gender, youth and so forth. Infectious diseases are lumped under "public health".

Even when we gave specific

attention to infectious diseases, AIDS and Ebola dominated our focus. Important as our work in this area has been, we didn't push our boundaries enough, and further and further, to think outside the box. Perhaps, our subconsciousness told us that AIDS is largely sexually transmitted and that a condom is there to give a safe cover. Ebola, we assumed, can be kept at bay and contained to a geographic region.

### Now this must change

For starters, we have to revisit Agenda 2063 and its national equivalents like "visions" and "national plans" that many African countries have crafted as their long-term masterplans for development. Like Agenda 2063, these national masterplans did not adequately factor the "butterfly effect" in their methodology and orientation, relying, in most cases, on the mega-categories. In revising Agenda 2063, we must interrogate the seven aspirations further and the projections expected in the ten-year implementation plan. We must recognize our limitations as humans and integrate



Picture: #Anataban artists Juba

*“We now understand better the limitations of human intelligence, and that even with the help of digital technology and artificial intelligence, we can't cheat the future”*

this recognition in public policy. How we prepare for emergencies must be given greater prominence in public policy and the allocation of fiscal resources. From now on, our sense of emergencies should go beyond a flood, fire or hurricane to imagine what hitherto could only be imagined in horror movies. Infectious diseases are one example. Another case is potential extraterrestrial invasions into our planet like the asteroid that exterminated the dinosaurs millions of years ago. In the same way that we have national reserves for certain emergencies, we should now build a mechanism at national and continental level, with a war chest, that will help us respond better and effectively to an unforeseen incident with the impact we are seeing around us at this moment.

The AU's Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention may have to be institutionally enhanced, perhaps beyond its current mandate and capacity as a technical body, to be a full organ of the African Union.

*“How best we plan and prepare ourselves for the “butterfly effect” will decide our fate”*

Our dependency model predicated on the notion that Africa will realize its renaissance through donor aid has its shortcomings and is unsustainable even in the shortest of terms. Until we can deal with this elephant in the room, we will keep on living hand-to-mouth on strategic and existential questions concerning the future of our continent.

Africa's weak industrial manufacturing base has also been left wanting. We depend on our partners in China for a simple thing like a hand glove or a face mask. We can't produce a hand sanitizer on a large scale - a simple product whose chemistry is so basic, like making a homemade lemonade. Even for Africa's killer disease, malaria, our savior are our friends in India with their affordable generic drugs.

We thought this was Africa's century. This virus should open our eyes to the reality that we can't be there at the top

in the finishing line of this century if we can't think outside the box to overcome human challenges like this virus, and keep pushing to rattle the comfort zones of our epistemological boundaries. How best we plan and prepare ourselves for the “butterfly effect” will decide our fate ■■■



**Prof. Eddy Maloka**  
 CEO, APRM Continental Secretariat  
 @eddymaloka  
 www.aprm-au.org

## Note from the Editor's Desk



Liziwe Masilela  
Head, APRM Communications  
@liziwe\_s

### Hello, Bonjour, Ola!

As the world grapples with the devastation of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Life, as we know it, has changed. The challenge we face today has been both unexpected and devastating, in the form of a deadly virus that is spreading around the globe and that is challenging how we do things. Governments in their wisdom have imposed lockdown/isolation and social distance restrictions. All these measures to respond to our common and invisible enemy, the Corona Virus.

It is only a matter of time before it is business as usual again. We will be able to go back to enjoying time with family and friends again. Businesses will open their doors again; we will travel and explore the world again. In the meantime, let us heed the call by our leaders to stay home in a bid to flatten the curve and curb the spread of the virus.

The APRM would like to salute the medical practitioners the world over for their selflessness and dedication in the face of this monstrous virus. Their heroism allows the rest of us a degree of reassurance that we will overcome this virus.

Yes, COVID-19 is absolutely the biggest newsmaker of our time. However, it is not the only news, and the 8th Edition of the APRM Governance Link is striving to make sure that other relevant topics and events don't go unreported. Thanks to colleagues from our National Offices, our Strategic Partners and at the Continental Secretariat who from their makeshift home offices have produced amazing pieces. In this edition of our quarterly newsletters you can expect among other exciting contributions, articles

on "Lessons from COVID-19 in Africa: Crisis and Opportunity" by our colleagues at Afrobarometer, to "African Countries' Response to COVID-19 Pandemic - the Nigerian Example" by Adam and of course our Headliner by the APRM CEO, Prof. Eddy Maloka titled "Thinking back to the Future - COVID-19: how we plan and prepare ourselves for the butterfly-effect will decide our fate".

Amid all the uncertainty brought about by the Corona Virus, I want to reassure you that one thing remains unchanged, our resilience as a people.

We shall overcome!

**Shukraan**

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# African Countries' Response to COVID-19 Pandemic: The case of Nigeria

Nigeria's quite proactive response to COVID-19 offers other African countries immense learning opportunities

On Friday, February 28, Nigeria confirmed its first case of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), making it the second African Union Member State (after Egypt) and the first in Sub Saharan Africa, to do so. With a Gross Domestic Product of \$375 billion and a population of 200 million, Nigeria is Africa's biggest economy cum most populous nation, on the continent. Consequently, one out of every four black Africans is Nigerian; this explains why what happens in the country reverberates across the continent.

Though it lacked a proper epidemic preparedness and response mechanism at the time, Nigeria did successfully battled the 2014 Ebola Vi-



rus Disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa<sup>1</sup>. During the outbreak, the then young Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) hurriedly established an ad-hoc Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Lagos to contain the spread of the disease. This initiative

and effort by the government of Nigeria ultimately earned the praise of World Health Organisation (WHO's)<sup>2</sup>.

In consequence, the EVD outbreak was a 'wakeup call' to Nigeria on the need for a robust epidemic preparedness

1 <https://www.africannewspage.net/2019/03/op-ed-its-high-time-nigeria-gets-robust-epidemic-preparedness-funding-mechanism-by-adam-alsqali/>

2 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/168371-world-health-organization-commends-nigeria-over-ebola.html>

and response mechanism, necessary for tackling the outbreaks of public health emergencies. As a result, the NCDC continued to consciously upgrade the country's disease preparedness and response infrastructure and capabilities. Nigeria's potent response to EVD was attributed to three factors i.e capacity to respond in a timely and aggressive manner; human capabilities; as well as effective health systems governance<sup>3</sup>.

Ever since the EVD experience, NCDC has evolved into Africa's best National Public Health Institution (NPHI), in terms of capacity for infection prevention and control. It has since then efficaciously responded to numerous other disease outbreaks including thousands of cases of Yellow Fever; a severe outbreak of Meningitis; several Polio outbreaks; a massive Cholera surge; the country's first cases of Monkeypox in decades; as well the largest outbreak of Lassa Fever in Nigeria's histo-

ry, which the Centre currently battles alongside COVID-19<sup>45</sup>.

### Response Capacity

Nigeria's success in responding to COVID-19 is largely thanks to the capacity of its NPHI. Established in 2011, NCDC was meant to enhance the country's "preparedness and response to epidemics through prevention, detection and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases<sup>6</sup>."

In the beginning, the Centre lacked a legal mandate hence was constrained by dearth of human and financial resources. However, in 2018, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari assented to a bill for an act establishing the NCDC as a "full-fledged parastatal", which led to improvement in its emergency coordination, surveillance, and risk communication capacities<sup>7</sup>.

When the Ebola outbreak occurred in 2014, only one laboratory in Nigeria had the capacity to test for the disease.

As part of Nigeria's 2018-2022 National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS), the NCDC has established a network of national and sub-national reference laboratories, many of which are now part of the WHO's global laboratory network<sup>8</sup>.<sup>9</sup> Also, NCDC had months ago established Rapid Response Teams across all of Nigeria's 36 states, as well as helping 23 out of Nigeria's 36 states set up their own EOCs, linked to the country's national incident coordination centre<sup>10</sup>.

*“the NCDC had also set up what it calls the ‘coronavirus preparedness group’ which “meets daily to review the situation globally”*

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/oct/31/ebola-nigeria-state-public-sector-calestous-juma>

4 <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/anticipating-coronavirus-west-africa>

5 <https://www.devex.com/news/nigeria-struggles-with-largest-recorded-lassa-fever-outbreak-96773>

6 <https://ncdc.gov.ng/>

7 <https://ncdc.gov.ng/news/156/president-muhammadu-buhari-signs-bill-for-an-act-to-establish-the-ncdc>

8 <https://ncdc.gov.ng/themes/common/files/establishment/5e88f9e22d2b4e4563b527005c8a0c43.pdf>

9 <https://ncdc.gov.ng/news/211/nigeria-announces-three-new-laboratories-for-yellow-fever%2C-measles-and-rubella>

10 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewwight/2020/03/24/what-the-us-could-learn-from-nigerias-response-to-covid-19/>

Ahead of the COVID-19 outbreak, the NCDC had also set up what it calls the ‘coronavirus preparedness group’ which “meets daily to review the situation globally, assess the risk of spread and improve on Nigeria’s level of preparedness based on new findings and insights<sup>11</sup>.” As well as providing public health advisory to Nigerians on what to do if there was a suspected case – before the partial and later complete closure of Nigeria’s entry-points – the NCDC had intensified screening for especially passengers from China and other COVID-19 affected countries<sup>12</sup>.

Even though Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation (population: 200 million) and was the first country to confirm a COVID-19 case in black Africa, the country has, as at April 11, recorded far fewer number of cases and fatalities – 305 cases; seven deaths – relative to other African countries. For example, South Africa (population: 59 million) has thus far recorded over 2,000 cas-

es with 24 deaths while Egypt (population: 100 million) has recorded around 1,800 cases with 135 fatalities.

### Lessons for African countries

Albeit some contend the few cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria are as a result of fewer people being tested or even ‘sheer luck’, the relatively low number of cases and fatalities is largely linked to the effectiveness of the country’s epidemic preparedness and response mechanism. Others even argue Nigeria’s response mechanism might be even more effective compared to that of the United States of America

*“the relatively low number of cases and fatalities is largely linked to the effectiveness of the country’s epidemic preparedness and response mechanism.”*

(USA) where COVID-19 cases, as at April 11, are over half a million with about 20,000 fatalities. Consequently, they reason, the USA has got much to learn from Nigeria – in terms of responding to pandemics<sup>13</sup>.

Indeed, Nigeria’s response to COVID-19 offers a lot of lessons and learning opportunities to fellow African countries, at least. So far, the country’s effectiveness in responding to the contagion has earned it the respect and admiration of its peers in Africa. In February, its head, Chikwe Ihekweazu, was part of a 25-member team of experts on a joint WHO-China fact-finding mission on COVID-19 to China<sup>14</sup>.

Some of the key factors responsible for the NCDC’s success in its response to COVID-19 are; first, investment in epidemic preparedness and response (infrastructure and capabilities) at national and subnational level<sup>15</sup>. Second, transparency and accountability in report-

<sup>12</sup> [19/#993bc4d56375](https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewwright/2020/03/24/what-the-us-could-learn-from-nigerias-response-to-covid-19/#993bc4d56375)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewwright/2020/03/24/what-the-us-could-learn-from-nigerias-response-to-covid-19/#993bc4d56375>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theafricareport.com/24046/how-nigeria-is-preparing-for-the-coronavirus/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/03/nigeria-knows-better-fight-corona-us/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/03/lessons-from-nigeria-in-responding-to-coronavirus/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/03/lessons-from-nigeria-in-responding-to-coronavirus/>

ing cases, deaths, recoveries as well as efficient risk communication, one that ensures timely countering of misinformation, disinformation and fake news.

Third, investment in a network of cross-country laboratories which guarantee prompt testing of suspected patients, followed by aggressive tracing of primary, secondary and tertiary contacts of infected persons. Fourth, political will on the part of the Nigerian government which saw the elevation of NCDC into an independent agency, guaranteeing the Centre adequate human and financial resources. Five, the Ihekweazu-led NCDC team which has been very proactive, resourceful and committed to safeguarding the health security of Nigerians.

### Challenges

Despite its impressive record in preventing and containing the outbreak of diseases including COVID-19, the NCDC is not without its own challenges. Although 2.5% of Nigeria’s statutory Basic Health Care Provision Fund is supposed to be dedicated to funding the Centre, it is still underfunded. Consequently, effective implementation of the \$439 million-worth NAPHS is being stalled by lack of funding.

Funding the plan requires the contribution of Nigeria’s federal, state and local governments which will enable the NCDC to establish public health labs and EOCs all over the country’s 36 states. Moreover, while the ventilator is a key equipment in providing intensive care for patients suf-

fering from respiratory failures resulting from severe cases of COVID-19, currently, only 1 ventilator is available for every 1.2 million Nigerians<sup>16</sup>.

Subsequently, if Nigeria would suffer a full-blown outbreak, the country will not have the capacity to provide clinical care to the resulting high numbers of patients - due to paucity of key facilities such as ventilators, medical oxygen and electricity. Also critical are diagnostic facilities; although NCDC is working to increase the number of testing laboratories across Nigeria, a country as vast and populous as Nigeria still need to do much more to ensure timely access to testing for all<sup>17</sup>

16 <https://www.story.dataphyte.com/health/covid-19-only-one-ventilator-exist-for-every-1-2-million-nigerians/>  
 17 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/384620-nigeria-adds-two-laboratories-to-test-for-covid-19/>



**Adam Alqali** is an award-winning journalist and editor of African Newspaper, a digital newsmagazine focused exclusively on reporting sustainable development issues in Africa. Amongst others, he won the 2018 West Africa Media Excellence and Conference Awards (WAMECA) Prize for SDGs Reporting. He has over 10 years’ experience working as a reporter/rapporteur, speaker and moderator including at high-level continental/AU conferences. He can be reached via [a.alqali@africannewspage.net](mailto:a.alqali@africannewspage.net)

# Positioning the APRM as an Early Warning Tool for Conflict Prevention



The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) convened a Workshop Series under the theme “**Silencing the Guns and positioning the APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention**” in order to launch the operationalisation of Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 686 (XXX), issued by the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly (in January, 2018), through which the Assembly welcomed steps taken to position the APRM as an early warning tool for conflict prevention on the continent, in the context of harmony and synergy between the APRM, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA)<sup>1</sup>.

The afore-mentioned APRM workshop took place in Abuja, Nigeria, on 24-25 February 2020, and discussed specifically how to **link the APRM Country Reports to Early Warning and Conflict Prevention initiatives and mechanisms throughout the continent**. The Workshop took place in collaboration with the Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD) and has pointed to the existing gaps in the various early warning systems throughout Africa; highlighted the opportunities for collaboration between actors and mechanisms working specifically in the area of early warning, identified a niche and a role for the APRM, and

<sup>1</sup> See African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government.2018. Decision on the Report of the APRM, Doc.Assembly/ Dec.686(XXX), Assembly, AUJan.686(xxx), January 2018. African Union. Addis Ababa, African Union. Available from: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly\\_decisions\\_665\\_-\\_689\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly_decisions_665_-_689_e.pdf)



local-based conflict prevention structures for a sustainable conflict prevention environment. The workshop culminated in the development of an APRM Early Warning Framework for Conflict Prevention.

**Overview of the APRM Early Warning Framework for Conflict Prevention:**

More specifically, the driving principals which emerged out of the Workshop are, the following, among others:

a. Align the APRM Country Reviews and Targeted Reviews with its expanded mandate: the APRM will incorporate Early Warning in the APRM country reviews methodology and country review report should include a section on Early Warning and Conflict Pre-

vention;  
 b. Policy Harmonisation: the APRM should continue to convene regularly an Annual Civil Society Workshop on “Silencing the Guns and Positioning the APRM as an Early Warning Tool for Conflict Prevention” to appraise efforts throughout Africa and influencing strategy design. In this regard, the APRM will develop a performance indicators template; and undertake Targeted Reviews that can contribute to updating Governance, Peace and Security Doctrines of the AU and the RECs (Popular Uprising<sup>2</sup> ; Border Governance; International Global Health and Pandemic Governance, etc); undertake regular briefings to the PSC on APRM Country Reports and Early Warning (at least twice a year).

2 See African Union Peace and Security Council. August 2019. Press Statement, Available from: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.871.press.statement.popular.uprisings.22.08.2019.pdf>

c. Provide Direct Capacity Support to APSA, RECs and National Conflict Prevention and Dialogue Mechanisms: meet regularly with the AU Panel of the Wise<sup>3</sup> (and the subsidiary bodies) to exchange information and deliberate on joint actions; strengthen the collaboration with civil society on the ground as well as with local governance structures in member states countries with a view of undertaking regional and local governance mapping and dialogues, and assess the implementation of APRM National Plan of Actions (NPOAs) at the local level; initiate continental and sub-regional dialogues on reinvigorating the principles and spirit undergirding the Conference on Security, Stability Development and Co-operation in Africa (CSSDCA<sup>4</sup>) ; share existing APRM benchmarks to complement the AU early warning system which offers room for decisive intervention and response to crisis situations when they are at an embryonic stage; exert routine goodwill visits on the ground in the various member states who are slow in building institutions of political pluralism, genuine civil society, and socioeconomic liberties to follow up on the implementation of APRM National Plan of Actions; Assist CEWS in including economic governance indicators in its modus operandi.

*“The novelty of the Framework is that it takes stoke of the latest progress and developments in the field of early warning”*

The novelty of the Framework is that it takes stoke of the latest progress and developments in the field of early warning (since the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the Continental Early Warning System-CEWS), the existing gaps, and provides recommendations to bring CEWS, as well as APSA up to date and aligned to present emerging threats to peace and security by investing in local information gathering and coping capacities, among other things. Additionally, the Framework provides a roadmap to improve the division of labor and complementarity between the APRM and other AU Organs.

**Expanded collaboration between the APRM and the PSC to Silence the Guns in a Rapidly Shifting World**

In line with the provisions of its Base Document<sup>5</sup> , the APRM is mandated to present reports that have been peer-reviewed before the PSC as part of the fifth and final stage of the Mechanism’s peer review process. This provision and interaction with the AU policy organ provides a great opportunity to inform and influence the deliberations of the PSC on conflict prevention actions to consider.

3 Ngandu Kapinga Yvette, 2017, The Panel of the Wise: Its Role in Preventing Violent Conflict in Africa, United Nations Chronicles, Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/panel-wiseits-role-preventing-violent-conflicts-africa>

4 Available from: <http://www.dirco.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/africa/cssdca.htm>

5 Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/aprm-basedoc.pdf>



The APRM presented its Report before the PSC for the very first time in its history on 19 December 2018, at its 819<sup>th</sup> meeting<sup>6</sup>. On that occasion, the PSC took note of the review reports for various countries, and expressed its support to the APRM as one of the most effective mechanisms for promoting conflict prevention, as it contributes in addressing some of the structural causes of conflicts in the Continent, particularly those relating to governance. On 5 March 2020, the APRM briefed the PSC for the second time, at the PSC’s 914<sup>th</sup> Meeting, through Professor Ibrahim Gambari<sup>7</sup>. On the occasion, Professor Gambari presented the outcome of some of the Base Reports which were carried out in 2019, namely the Base Report on Egypt, as well as the targeted Reviews on Djibouti (Fiscal decentralization) and on Namibia (Youth unemployment). It is important to note that the targeted review do not replace the baseline review that remains statutory. This product offers Member States which have already conducted their baseline

review, but wish to further assess any other thematic areas, the possibility to do so. Other non-APRM member States may also request the conduct of targeted reviews. Targeted reviews were, therefore, conceived to deepen the peer review process.

Furthermore, during the 914<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PSC, Professor Gambari provided a detailed overview of steps taken by the APRM to operationalise the Decision made by Heads of States in January 2018 to “Position the APRM as an Early Warning Tool for Conflict Prevention”, which was endorsed unanimously by the PSC at its on March 5, 2020. In fact, the Communiqué of the 914<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PSC **“Underscores the significance of the pillars of the “APRM Framework on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention”** which provides a roadmap of collaboration between the APRM and the various pillars of APSA, particularly, the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise and the Regional Economic Com-

6 Available from: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.819.press.statement.briefing.aprm.19.12.2018.pdf>

7 Available from: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-914th-meeting-of-the-psc-5-march-2020-on-the-reports-by-the-peer-review-mechanism-apmr-as-well-as-the-steps-taken-to-position-the-aprm-as-an-early-warning-tool-for-conflict-prevention>

munities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs); and in this respect, also underscores the need for enhanced coordination and synergising of efforts of all the stakeholders within the context of conflict prevention, in pursuit of lasting peace, security and economic development”

Additionally, the PSC requested “the Commission, working in close collaboration with the APRM Secretariat, to organise a Joint Retreat of the APRM before the extraordinary summit earmarked for May 2020, aimed at thoroughly engaging and interrogating the various review reports undertaken in the past two years, such as reports on Mozambique, Côte d’Ivoire and Egypt; and in this aspect, underlines the importance of inviting relevant stakeholders to partake in the retreat, including the Panel of the Wise, Pan-African Network of the Wise and FemWise; and agrees to dedicate a session to deliberate and adopt the outcomes of the planned Joint Retreat; Decides to convene twice a year to receive briefings on the work of the APRM”.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the PSC’s endorsement of the APRM Early Warning Framework for Conflict Prevention, as well as the growing collaboration between the PSC and the APRM are direct expressions of the PSC’s determination to enrich its early warning and conflict prevention tools and capacity, and to evolve from operational to structural prevention strate-

gies. The existing PSC Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns<sup>8</sup> will, from now on, include more frequent and regular interactions with the APRM, in order to broaden the scope of the Union’s interventions. The APRM has undertaken more than twenty (20) country reviews, and counting. These are known for having pointed systematically at the fragilities of members states with great levels of accuracy. Forty (40) countries have already adhered to the APRM evaluation process since February 2020, which provides an incomparable repository of information, expertise and capacity to develop home-grown solutions

8 See African Union Peace and Security Council Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns: <https://au.int/en/documents/20200204/african-union-master-roadmap-practical-steps-silence-guns-afri-ca-year-2020-lusaka>



**Kapinga- Yvette Ngandu**

Senior Conflict Prevention Advisor, APRM

yvette.ngandu@aprm-au.org;  
yngandu@hotmail.com

# Lessons from COVID-19 in Africa: Crisis and opportunity

Many African leaders have taken decisive steps to limit the effects of COVID-19 in their countries. They have also made a compelling case for why anything short of an ubuntu response – a truly global operationalization of the mantra that “we’re all in this together” – would not only be unethical but would also be doomed to failure (Ahmed 2020; Oladokun, 2020).

It’s too early to know what COVID-19 will ultimately mean for Africa and the rest of the world. But it’s not too soon to collect insights, reminders, and warnings that the pandemic affords us, both to guide our response to the current crisis and to be better prepared for the next one.

Three preliminary “lessons” draw on the realities and views of ordinary Africans:

1. Long-standing vulnerabilities are being magnified by the pandemic.
2. Freedoms often taken for

granted are being stress-tested by the pandemic.

3. Listening and trust are essential but often scarce resources.

### Long-standing vulnerabilities

Data collected from more than 45,800 survey respondents across 34 African countries during Afrobarometer Round 7 (2016/2018) highlights some of the vulnerabilities that Africans face as they confront the coronavirus. Hundreds of millions do not have access to clean water, making frequent handwashing and cleaning – a major prevention tool for COVID-19 – all but impossible. Almost four of every ten Africans (38%) went without clean water multiple times in the year preceding the survey, and more than one in five (22%) lack clean water frequently (Howard and Han 2020) (Figure 1).

Just as many (38%) report that they or someone in their family went without needed medical care in the previous 12 months; almost one in five (18%) did so frequently (Howard 2020).



**Carolyn Logan**  
is director of analysis  
for Afrobarometer.

clogan@  
afrobarometer.org.  
@carolynjlogan.

**Brian Howard** is  
head of publications  
for Afrobarometer.

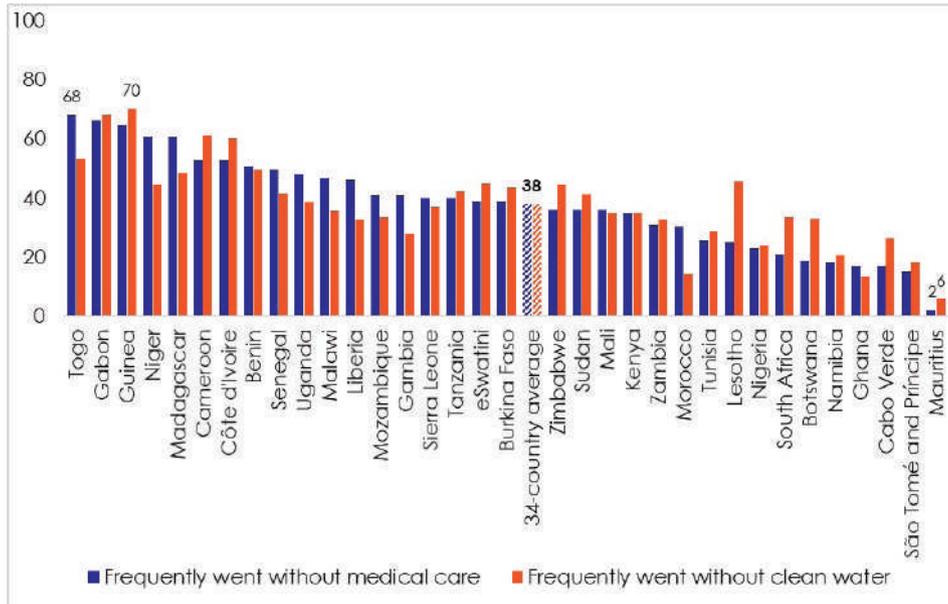
bhoward@  
afrobarometer.org.  
@twitbh1.



**E. Gyimah-Boadi**  
is board chairman  
and interim CEO of  
Afrobarometer.

gyimah@afrobarometer.  
org.  
@gyimahboadi.

**Figure 1: Frequently going without medical care and clean water (%) | 34 African countries | 2016/2018**



**Respondents were asked:**  
*Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough clean water for home use? Gone without medicines or medical treatment? (% who say “several times,” “many times,” or “always”)*

Many African families also lack the economic resilience needed to weather a lockdown (Harrisberg 2020). Two-thirds (66%) of households report going without a cash income several/many times or always during the past year (Mattes 2020). Fewer than one-third say government efforts to improve living standards for the poor (31%) and ensure food security (32%) are effective (Bratton, Seekings, and Armah-Attah, 2019). Stress test for rights and freedoms

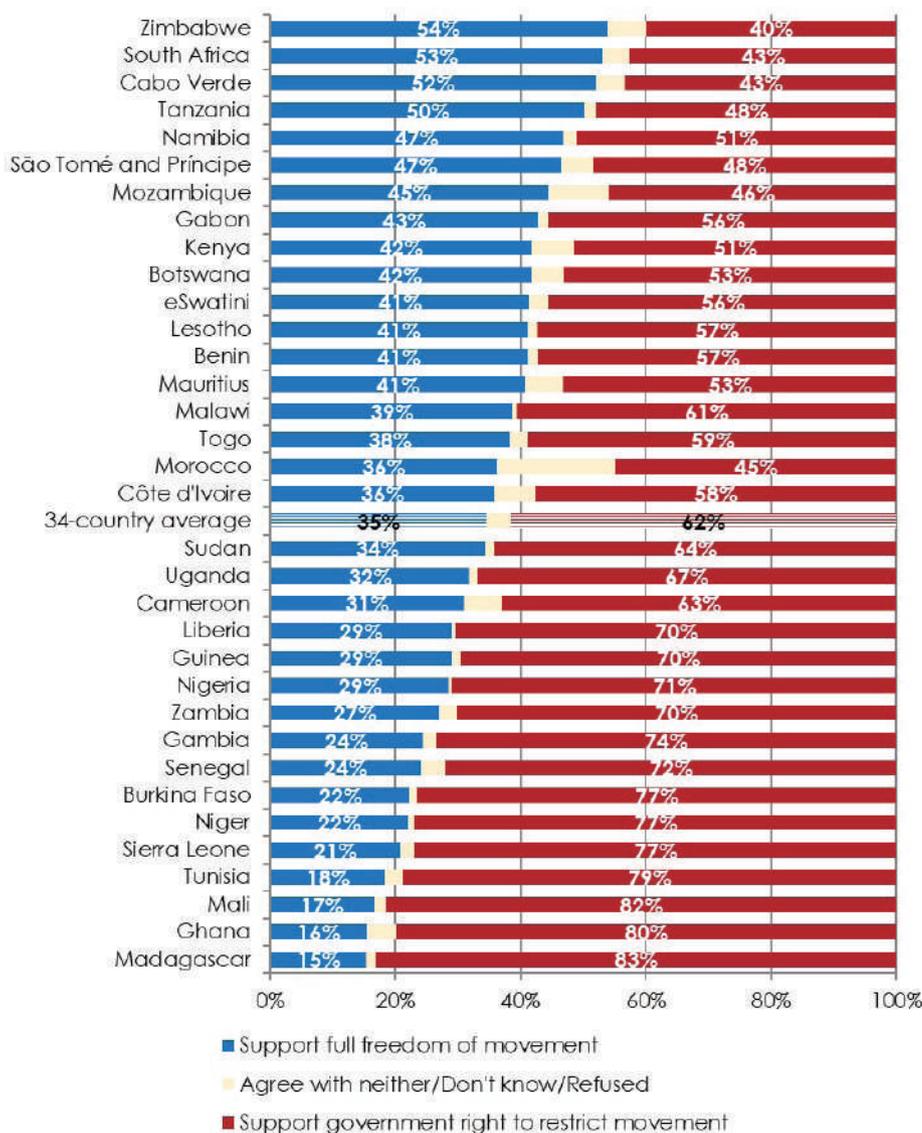
The pandemic presents risks that extend beyond the necessities of daily life. As African governments implement temporary restrictions that are necessary to protect their citizens from the coronavirus, concerns are also growing that unscrupulous regimes may take advantage of the crisis to roll back rights and freedoms on a more permanent

basis. At a time when governments may have to postpone elections and ban public protests to avoid spreading the virus, reports are emerging of leaders using otherwise legitimate lockdowns to strengthen their hold on power (Allison 2020). Fearing COVID-19, citizens may accept restrictions they would resist in ordinary times. When Afrobarometer asked respondents in 2016/2018 about their willingness to tolerate government-imposed limits on freedom of movement when public security is threatened, majorities said they would accept such a trade-off (Logan and Penar 2019) (Figure 2). As the pandemic progresses, citizens’ willingness to tolerate restrictions may well be tested. It is unclear whether the public will accept repression if harsh measures prove unsuccessful in protecting them from

the virus' health and economic effects. At the same time, opportunities for the people to voice grievances may be constrained. Thus, while rapid international support is badly needed to respond to the pandemic in Africa, it is especially important during this crisis that development partners also insist

that restrictions be time-limited and transparent, that media freedoms be assured, and that elections be protected or rescheduled in a timely way (UN Human Rights 2020; Freedom House 2020).

**Figure 2: Support freedom of movement vs. government right to limit movement to protect security | 34 African countries | 2016/2018**



**Respondents were asked:**

*Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*

*Statement 1: Even if faced with threats to public security, people should be free to move about the country at any time of day or night.*

*Statement 2: When faced with threats to public security, the government should be able to impose curfews and set up special roadblocks to prevent people from moving around.*

*(% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)*

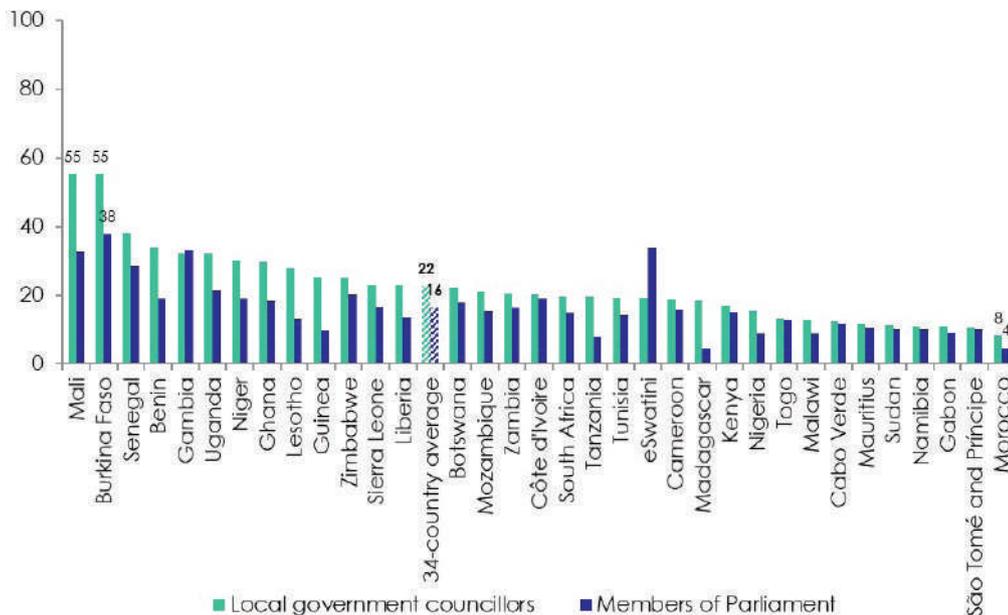
## Listening and trust

Civic activists have been urging African governments to avoid inflexible, one-size-fits-all lockdown decrees. Governments must instead engage local communities in shaping adaptive, context-sensitive measures that accommodate the uniquely difficult circumstances many African communities face [De Waal 2020].

But developing effective local responses will require leaders to listen – not typically regarded as a strength of most governments in the region. Barely one in five Afri-

cans (22%) say that members of their local assembly try “often” or “always” to listen to ordinary people, and even fewer (16%) think national leaders such as members of Parliament do so. In only two of the 34 surveyed countries – Burkina Faso and Mali – do majorities (55% each) think that local leaders listen to them. In Morocco, not even one in ten (8%) agrees (Figure 3). Achieving the necessary collaboration will require that leaders unaccustomed to listening to citizen voices urgently commit themselves to more open and effective engagement.

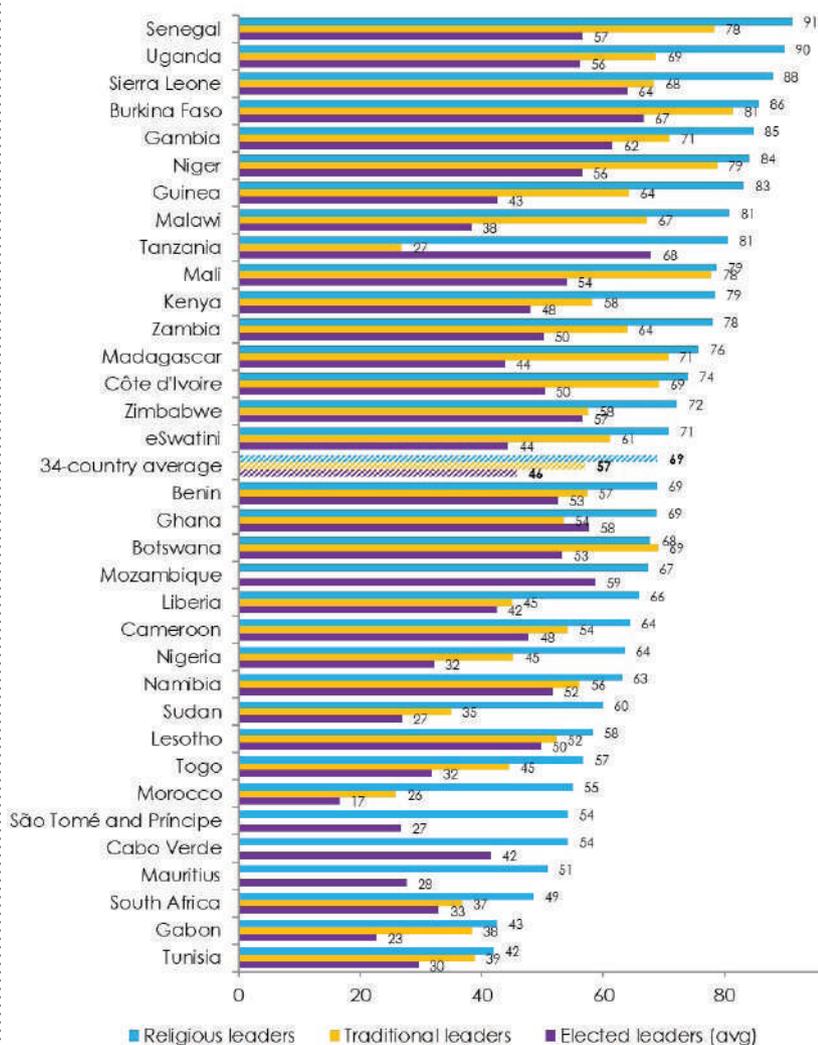
**Figure 3: Do leaders listen to people like you? (%) | 34 African countries | 2016/2018**



**Respondents were asked:**  
*How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say? (% who say “often” or “always”)*

Governments may also face challenges in communicating their coronavirus messages to wary publics. Recent research in Guinea (Grossman 2020) confirms earlier findings from the 2014-16 West African Ebola epidemic (Jerving 2014) that trust in the messenger is critical, especially when it comes to transmitting health messages and inspiring citizens to participate in the response. In many communities, this means that neither national nor international leaders are the ideal conduits. In fact, many of Africa’s elected leaders face a trust deficit. Fewer than half (46%) of citizens trust their elected leaders, when we average trust in the president (52%), Parliament (43%), and local government council (43%) (Figure 4). But governments can and should call on other, more trusted leaders to boost their communication efforts. More than two-thirds (69%) of Africans trust their religious leaders, and a majority (57%) also trust traditional authorities. Engaging these leaders in campaigns to communicate with the public about their role in responding to the crisis may generate critical buy-in.

**Figure 4: Trust in elected, traditional, and religious leaders (%) | 34 African countries\* | 2016/2018**



**Respondents were asked:**  
*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who says "some-what" or "a lot.") \*Note: The question about traditional leaders was not asked in Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe.)*

## Learning lessons, early and often

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is still in its relatively early stages in Africa, it is not too soon to learn from initial national and global responses, and to adapt where appropriate. Doing so could improve outcomes in ways that save lives and secure livelihoods while also better protecting Africans' rights and freedoms. We have already witnessed the folly of trying to enforce social distancing by decree in vulnerable communities that have neither the space nor the household resources to make this approach viable. African governments must instead expand channels of communication, listen more to their people, and be significantly more responsive to their needs. Evidence suggests that they will be more effective if they also collaborate with leaders from outside of government who

enjoy citizens' trust, especially religious and traditional leaders.

Even governments with poor records of responsiveness and communication with their citizens would do well to recognize that their response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be an opportunity to re-boot. Engaging with citizens in open and receptive exchanges will not only critically strengthen their response to the current crisis, but also leave them better prepared to face the next one. Likewise, as the international community provides support to backstop these efforts, it should seek to do so in ways that foster and facilitate stronger relationships between African governments and their most vulnerable citizens.

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# Why the neoliberal policy influence of rating agencies must be neutralised

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The three international credit rating agencies – Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s and Fitch – have had their fair share of controversies over the years. Their inaccurate ratings were at the centre of the major financial crises from the financial markets collapse of New York City in the mid-1970s, the Asian financial crisis of 1997 – 1998, the Enron scandal of 2001, to the global financial crisis of 2008. All of these rating shortcomings cost financial markets billions of dollars in lost investment value for investors who essentially refer to ratings in determining interest rates. Inaccurate ratings therefore distort both the price of debt instruments and the interest rates payable on them.

The three dominant international credit rating agencies, which account for over 90 per cent of the world’s sovereign credit rating business, have further been accused of many other faults. False ratings, flawed methodology, encroaching on government policy, political bias, selective aggression and rating shopping. These shortcomings originate from their ‘issuer-pay’ business model, which has an inherent conflict of interest and regulatory mechanisms are yet to address this problem.

As African governments seek alternative options to support their fiscal budgets, many have considered issuing sovereign bonds on international financial markets. But to do this

successfully, governments need a sovereign credit rating from at least one of the three dominant international credit rating agencies. The number of African countries seeking a sovereign credit rating has thus increased from one in 1994 to 32 in 2020.

### How ratings are influencing Africa's economic policy

The role of rating agencies in government policy formulation is being debated, and here is how I think they are constraining policy direction and scope. The rating methodologies and recommendations promote economic liberalisation policies such as privatisation, fiscal consolidation, austerity, central bank independence, deregulation and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy. The methodologies have economic, fiscal, monetary, institutional and vulnerability-to-event-risk as rating factors, each one with its sub-factors and weights. The closer the sub-factors and their indicators are aligned with austerity policies, the higher the scores each rating factor receives.

In addition, every rating activity is accompanied by a report giving an explanation of the rationale behind the rating action. The explanation has two facets. Firstly, it details what a country has been doing well and what it needs to maintain or improve in order to be upgraded. The report details a recommendation on what 'prudent' policies a country must pursue to obtain

a higher rating. Secondly, it explains on what factors the country has been downgraded as well as what it needs to change to avoid a further downgrade.

Data<sup>1</sup> shows that the rating agencies have downgraded more African countries than they have upgraded over the past 24 years. There have been more than 50 downgrades, compared to only 23 upgrades and 120 negative changes in outlooks; only 10 positive changes have been recorded. The majority of downgrades are accompanied by a rating report outlining that governments are not committing to policies on structural reforms and fiscal consolidation, as key rating drivers. These recommendations heavily point towards austerity policy – make efforts to reduce public debt and government spending.

The warnings for a downgrade and recommendations for upgrade leaves governments with no choice but to come to a compromise on recommended austerity policy direction. Any government that pursues an economic policy contrary to the recommendations of the rating agencies faces imminent sovereign downgrades. A downgrade comes with sharp increase in cost of debt and pressurise the exchange rate as investors adjust their portfolios to align with new risk perception on government bond. Thus, a government has to comply with rating recommendations to avoid further downgrades.

*“Data shows that the rating agencies have downgraded more African countries than they have upgraded over the past 24 years”*

<sup>1</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/rating>

### Neoliberal policy approach

The neoliberal policy influence of credit rating agencies does not resonate with Africa’s developing states, which are still grappling with challenges such as unemployment, inequality and poverty. A focus on economic efficiency in such an environment compromises other more important factors such as social injustice and promotes exploitation of both resources and people. Neoliberalism de-emphasises public goods that are driven by equality, environmental concerns and social justice, and are not conventionally monetised, ignoring the government’s social objectives. Restricting governments to a neoliberal policy direction is tantamount to undermining the basic elements of democracy as a government can no longer actively participate in economic redress, leaving a trail of economic misery, rising unemployment and economic inequality. It has been proven that free market policies do not always lead to economic efficiencies.

On the contrary, neoliberalism often reproduces economic inefficiencies by replacing state-owned monopolies with private-owned monopolies, privatising profits. A 2016 report by researchers at the International Monetary Fund (IMF<sup>2</sup>) find that rating agencies’ neoliberal policy recommendations, such as free movement of capital and fiscal consolidation, result in increased economic inequality, shift economic power to corporations and benefits to the elite class, in turn negatively impacting the level and sustainability of economic growth.

### Countries that have complaints

There has been growing dissatisfaction with the dictatorial policy tendencies of the three international rating agencies by a number of rated countries in Africa. In 2015, the Zambian government<sup>3</sup> urged investors to ignore an unsolicited credit downgrade from the rating agencies. It challenged the correctness of its rating, which it said was im-



<sup>2</sup> Ostry, Jonathan D.; Loungani, Prakash; Furceri, Davide. 'Neoliberalism: Oversold,' IMF Finance & Development volume 53, Issue 2, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Statement of the government of Zambia, 'Ignore Moody's Credit Downgrade on Zambia, government tells Investors and the Public,' September, 2015. Available at

posed without being discussed with the government’s representatives. In 2017, Namibia<sup>4</sup> rejected Moody’s decision to downgrade the country’s credit rating to junk status. It contested that the downgrade was contrary to the progress it had made in policy implementation and the country’s generally stable economic outlook. The government of Nigeria also strongly disagreed with its downgrading<sup>5</sup>. It questioned both the general rating premises as well as the agency’s conclusions. The government believed that its chosen policy direction would have positive results as the economy had successfully emerged from a recession and recorded important improvements across a broad range of sectors. In 2018, Tanzania criticised Moody’s decision to assign a low credit rating with a negative outlook on the country’s first international credit rating<sup>6</sup>. Tanzania rejected the rating, arguing that it hadn’t been thoroughly consulted on its policy direction.

*“Through the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Union has developed a continental policy framework aimed at addressing unfair and exploitative business practices by rating agencies.”*

### Credit rating process

Central to these problems is that the rating process is centred on a lead analyst who recommends a rating to the ratings committee according to his/her ideological persuasion. This is how the credit rating process works<sup>7</sup>: after an issuing government contracts a rating agency, the ratings agency assigns an analytical team (lead and support analysts) to gather information about the country from different sources they deem credible. The analytical team should consult the country through meetings before making recommendations to a ratings committee that is convened by the lead analyst. The lead analyst also determines the size and composition of the ratings committee based on the size and the complexity of the credit analysis.

Another problem is that rating agencies are bound to be concerned about the relevance and sustainability of their revenue sources because they are profit-driven businesses. They will fight for policy space to protect their income. Thirdly, the individual analysts and employees of a

<https://www.lusakatimes.com/2015/09/28/ignore-moodys-credit-downgrade-on-zambia-government-tells-investors-and-the-public/>.

4 Statement of the government of Namibia, ‘Moody’s rating downgrade is “speculative”,’ August 2017. Available at <https://af.reuters.com/article/africaTech/idAFL5N1KZ0gD>

5 Statement of the government of Nigeria, ‘govt Disagrees With Moody’s Downgrading of Nigeria to B2 Stable rating,’ November 2017. Available at <http://www.besitimesafrica.net/index.php/details/item/2436-nigeria-govt-disagrees-with-moody-s-downgrading-of-nigeria-to-b2-stable-rating>.

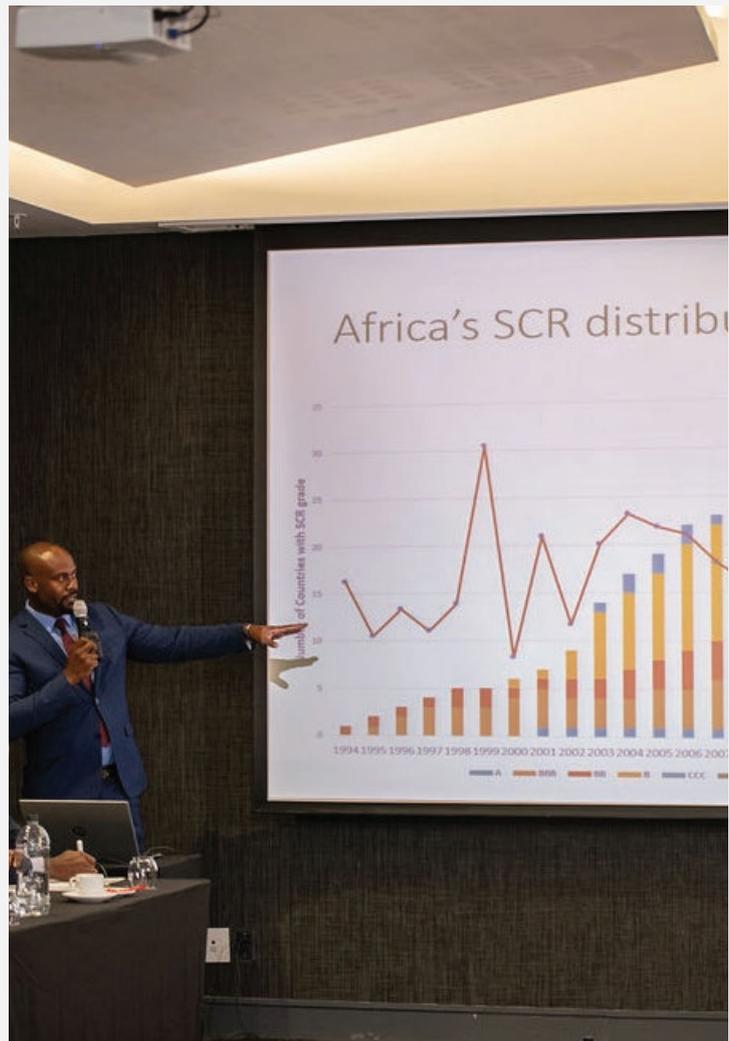
6 Statement of the government of Tanzania, ‘We rejects the negative outlook on the credit rating,’ March 2018. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/tanzania-ratings/tanzania-criticises-moodys-for-negative-rating-outlook-idUSL5N1qN4U8>.

7 Moody’s Investor Service, Moody’s rating process, 2018. Available on <https://www.moodys.com/ratings-process/How-to-get-rated/002001>.

rating agency face no criminal liability, despite the fact that rating misconduct usually manifests itself through members of the analytical team. Lastly, the credit ratings industry is highly concentrated on the ‘big three’ credit rating firms that seek to maintain dominance in the industry through discouraging any activities that may lead to a loss in their market share.

### Solution and action plan

African countries are designing a collective response mechanism to save the continent from rating abuse and to bring the operations of rating agencies under control. Through the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Union has developed a continental policy framework aimed at addressing unfair and exploitative business practices by rating agencies. This policy framework will be critical for establishing a basis for governing the cross-border activities of rating agencies and a continental regulatory platform.



#### Dr. Misheck Mutize

He has research interests in sovereign credit rating, African policy research analysis and economic governance. Currently working as a consultant with APRM on the initiative to support African countries in the field of international credit rating agencies.

Misheck.mutize@aprm-au.org  
www.aprm-au.org



## Managing the Covid-19 Project

As a governance driven agency, the covid-19 pandemics gives the APRM secretariat a strategy of communicating and working with the member states during and post the pandemic, on a case to case/country to country approach.

From Uganda perspective, the management of pandemic situation has been a bit of a dictatorial approach by His Excellence, giving directives to the country, which has totally changed culture in all walks of life. The directives are summarized in one word “lock-down”, as an effective measure has helped to isolate the uninfected from the infected

in the long run, quarantining the infected or the suspected, etc. has worked. The very approach is a lesson from the Smallpox outbreak in Uganda in 1940 and also the Korea, in 2015, upon the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak.

Like any other change, lockdown has affected lives in different ways, for instance;

### 1. Education sector;

Schools were closed down in March, which causes delay in syllabus coverage, affecting exams periods, etc., but shall any dead or sick attend class, either? The employees in private schools are not certain of salaries/wages for the period

of April onwards, till lockdown ends, Suppliers and other service providers to schools are out of business, momentarily.

## 2. Medical sector;

A chance to look at how effective in terms of personnel, physical infrastructure and all such amenities to handle the emergency as well as continue with management of patients suffering from other diseases. The expectant mothers, hypertensive, all other sorts of casualties.

## 3. Business sector

Only those trading in essential items like food, the media and health-care are trading. Public transport was called off, save for inter-border merchandise trucks, movement has been well restricted given the statistics that a great number of Ugandans use commuter taxis for movement.

## 4. Agriculture sector

Government allowed agricultural input and veterinary-related service dealers to keep operating, but because of the limited transport means, this option is still quite not making sales. Recent engagement with an agricultural support agency revealed that planting has been minimal, because of limited or no proximity to agro input shops. To some extent there might be a downward trajectory in production of food this season.

## 5. Professional Eco-system

Knowledge workers have been working from home since mid-March and have postponed and cancelled several events

and programs that require in-person gatherings as trend tends to devising new ways to host such events digitally.

## Can Africa match its previous successes with epidemics like Ebola to win the fight against the corona virus pandemic?

YES;

HOW?

There is just a need for more illumination of the old adage “prevention is better than cure” in public health, hence going a long way to ensure resource-poor countries like Uganda, are better positioned to fight future disease outbreaks.

Thank God for The Stay-Home Action Plan, Isolation of the infected and curfew at 1900hrs EAT - where all have to be in doors by 1900hrs EAT.

## Funding the management of the pandemic:

The Parliament of Uganda quickly approved a Supplementary Budget worth UG.304 BN, on 7th April 2020 as initial action to fight the spread of the pandemic.. Unfortunately, the breakdown of the Supplementary Budget is about allowing the implementing departments/ministries to do the work of the Ministry of Health. There is duplication of services, amongst the various implementing entities. Some members instead decided to author their dissenting report - aka minority report. This Minority Report highlights a few interesting facts and hence concluded that all the supplementary budget be allocated to the Ministry of Health, to help ac-

quire some of the vital items lacking in the health-care system; as opposed to having some money allocated to the security, KCCA, among others.

APRM being a tool for sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices, identifying deficiencies, and assessing capacity-building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration can use this scenario to guide the civil society to ensure that leaders are held accountable.

#### **Transiting the pandemic experience:**

By the blessing of God, good management of the situation by the medical personnel, lockdown/isolation approach, Uganda has as of 19th April 2020, registered no deaths of COVID-19 patients, and also been spared of other adverse effects of the disease. As of 19th April 2020, a total of 11,332 individuals had been tested, 55 nationals (27 have been discharged as recovered) and 2 foreigners were confirmed COVID-19 positive. The 2 (two) were repatriated back to their countries. Of the confirmed 55 cases, the greater percentage are individuals who had flown into the country from countries that had already been hit by the disease, the others were simply contacts of the infected.

It's important to also note that;

1. There are some Ugandan nationals in other countries like the USA, UK, among others, who have succumbed to the disease-may their souls rest in eternal peace.

2. Experts have warned that it's just a matter of time, before it hits Africa hard because this virus has a mutant gene that makes it complicated and difficult to fine cure.

May God continue blessing Uganda.

For this publication, allow me say "COVID-19 has become business as usual".

Yet, basing on the successful management-so far, and the few mentioned impacts, Uganda shouldn't be too blinded and choose not to see the several good opportunities right in front of us. Beyond the containment of the pandemic, how can our communities, best prepare for a fast recovery - socioeconomically?

The APRM network should galvanize leadership action to imagine a new, progressive post-COVID-19, world for our respective countries.

The possibility of achieving this is evidenced in instances where some sectors have been able to still operate amidst the lockdown, for instance, the knowledge/information workers - inclusive of the authoring of this article has been from "home office". The work pressures we experience as professionals are unrelenting, even in the "home office." However, there is one undeniable reality; it's now evident that we can work from our homes, and be equally, productive.

We don't have to absorb all the pressure and accompanying mental stress caused by the nightmare of the city traffic jam commute.

Behind the enlists of the several good things, is Embracing Technology. Technology and specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become the biggest business enabler/disrupter. Many business now days are concluded and executed virtually without any one having to supervise another. The local Ugandan case; population growth and technology index are in reverse directions. In Uganda we need the hierarchies to create jobs. The question then is; how do we use technology to improve business performance, agricultural systems, education systems, innovations, and business flexibilities without necessarily breaking structures/eliminating others?

Managing the COVID-19 project is more than keeping to the lockdown, but a beginning of a new era to the way of life in Uganda and Africa - at large. Is the finish line of the COVID-19 "Project" a dawn of the 4th industrial age for Uganda and Africa at large? ■



Richard Bigirwa



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# Opacity in COVID-19 Crisis: The Case of Zambia

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Picture: James Brighton-Flickr

As news of the Corona virus (COVID-19) broke on the African Continent towards the end of 2019, the death toll across the world continued to spiral on an upward trajectory into other countries. Two months into 2020, it became clear the virus could no longer be contained in China alone.

As it spread to other continents and countries, Africans began to brace themselves for possible spread onto its shores. The constituent question was, what is the state of preparedness for COVID-19 on the continent. The first confirmed case on the continent was in Egypt, and the first confirmed case in sub-Saharan Africa was in Nigeria. Most of the identified imported cases arrived from Europe and the United States rather than from China.

Slowly country by country cases of the deadly virus were re-

corded, Zambia was no exception.

On March 19, 2020 Zambia recorded its first COVID case. It was a couple that had travelled to France for a holiday tested positive and were quarantined. Their children had tested positive and in days to come they would be treated and eventually test negative.

The immediate reaction to the news of the first case by citizens was how dare the couple travel at a time such as this. The identity of the couple was sought and while the Ministry of Health did their best to keep the identity of the family private, social media was abuzz with fake news and images of the suspected couple.

The next positive case was from some people that had returned from Pakistan. As the citizenry began to believe that

COVID-19 cases were being brought in by those coming from abroad, they begun calling upon government to go into lock down like other countries a decision government to-date has not taken.

Zambia is a landlocked country and lock down would not only weaken the country economically but would also leave the country vulnerable as it largely depends on imports.

However, while the country contemplated issues of a lock down its neighboring countries were recording lock downs and also shutting down their borders placing the Zambia in the very position it was still trying to avoid.

*“Zambia is a landlocked country and lock down would not only weaken the country economically but would also leave the country vulnerable as it largely depends on imports.”*

On 25 March, President Edgar Lungu addressed the nation for the first time regarding the measures taken to deal with COVID -19. Key among the measures undertaken by the government were the closing down of schools, colleges and University, shutting of bars, gyms, cinemas with the exception of restaurants which would only operate on delivery and take away basis. All airports except for Kenneth Kaunda airports were closed indefinitely. Social distancing was highly recommended. Social gatherings were banned including funeral gatherings.

Organizations and businesses either closed completely or devised stringent measures within the workplace and new shifts for employees, in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Whilst this was happening, it appeared the matter was perceived as an inconvenient truth by some, with many consciously refusing to adhere to the new policy adjustments that had been instituted by the cabinet. Some bars took chances and citizens continued

to patronize them, others met in car parks to drink alcohol totally disregarding social distance etiquette and for some communities life continued as normal as they went about holding wedding ceremonies with large gatherings.

Although the new COVID-19 guidelines did not suspend the constitution or Human Rights, Police Spokesperson Esther Mwata Katongo informed citizens through the media that the police would begin whipping those that did not respect or adhere to guidelines. The sentiments were reiterated by the Lusaka Province Minister Bowman Lusambo. He led the police on impromptu checks at bars and other gatherings. Once found, police whipped patrons of drinking places, attending church service and wedding guests.

The Human Rights Commission of Zambia called for observance of respect for Human Rights during the enforcement of guidelines on preventing the spread of Corona Virus. The commission cited Statutory Instru-

ment number 22 of 2020 which was instructive and that those failing to comply with the guidelines be liable to a fine not exceeding 2500 penalty units or face up to 6 months imprisonment or both<sup>1</sup>.

Although the Lusaka Province Minister did not agree with the Human Rights Commission's position and said they would continue whipping people, the Minister of Home Affairs, Hon. Stephen Kampyongo condemned the action pointing out that there was need for respect of people's liberties in how the law was enforced.

In view of the many unknown variables of the Corona Virus, we continue seeing many policy changes from adjustments of social instructions to lockdown of towns and mandatory testing and wearing of masks.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have not been spared by the Pandemic as most organizations have suspended activities that require physical contacts with community members. Those who engage in livelihoods programs face an even bigger challenge in executing their mandate as some provide feeding programs in schools and structures that have since been locked down.

There has been limited participation in governance processes by CSOs for instance while many stakeholders have been focusing on the pandemic, others are out engaging citizens on the contentious Constitution Amendment Bill 2019 also known as Bill 10 aimed at amending certain sections of the Republican Constitution<sup>2</sup>.

1 Press Release: Human Rights Commission of Zambia calls for observance of respect for Human Rights during the enforcement of guidelines on preventing the spread of Corona Virus.

2 [www.parliament.org.zm](http://www.parliament.org.zm)



Picture: Sander Hengeveld-Flickr

The issue of transparency and accountability of public resources entrusted to government including supplementary budgets and donations made towards COVID-19 remains a source of concern. There is no clear mechanism of how funds and material donations are being accounted for. Suffice to say the COVID-19 will have major political, economic and social implications.

For Most CSOs in Zambia, delayed program implementation and alteration of project schedules due to uncertainty are imminent. Public service delivery will be affected by the shifting focus by government to address COVID-19. As result of suspended CSO programs, the poverty levels may increase among project recipients which will also erode gains made on many projects. This may lead to social unrest due to the escalating costs of food and absence of employment.

As the world talks about the looming economic recession coming through as a result of Corona Virus pandemic, CSOs may also be affected as funding to development work is likely to reduce.

As the New Zambian Director, Kiss Abraham succinctly put it, “the covid-19 brings to the fore an amplification of all the problems the sustainable Development Goals seek to address through progressive government policies. With the pandemic, government authoritarianism is justifiable and domestic abuse even worse due to victims being locked down to be abused by their abusers”.

Civil society is thus facing a moment of reckoning - are CSOs and their work essential amidst this context?

Most organizations have had to halt their activities and cannot conduct outreach programs due to justifiable lockdown measures, revealing the defect and shortfalls in most CSO programming. Therefore, now is the time - more than ever - for effective and efficient CSO engagement when people are at their point of desperate need.



**Susan Mwape**

is the Founder and Executive Director of Common Cause Zambia (CCZ), an organization that seeks to promote citizens participation in various governance processes

March 09, 2020, we had the honour of celebrating APRM day on the margins of the induction of APR Chairperson H.E Senzo Mchunu. APRM day was celebrated at the APRM Continental Secretariat in Midrand, South Africa.

The African Peer Review Mechanism marks yet another milestone, 17 years of shaping and influencing African countries Governance landscape. Since its inception, in 2003, 40 countries joined the APRM with the most recent accessions of Zimbabwe and the Seychelles This is a milestone to celebrate following the maiden launch of the Africa Governance Report in March 2019. The African Narrative is slowly changing through these and many other developments. Each year the APRM has drawn a step closer to improving Governance for the greater purpose of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the induction H.E Senzo Mchunu, was given his responsibilities as the chair, these include but not limited to:

The APR Committee of Focal Points



shall be led by a Troika comprising a Chairperson who is the Focal Point of the Member State that holds the position of Chairperson of the APR Forum and shall be assisted by his/her immediate predecessor and his/her immediate successor in that position. In terms of the APRM statutes, the APR Focal Points Committee shall have the

following responsibilities:

- Make recommendations to the APR Forum on the appointment of the CEO of the APRM Continental Secretariat;
- Review the annual budget and work programme of the APRM submitted by the CEO of the APRM Continental Secretariat, make recommendations relating thereto, and submit them to the APR Forum for adoption;
- Make recommendations to the APR Forum on the structure of the APRM Continental Secretariat;
- Oversee processes for resource mobilization for the APRM through Member States, partners and other donors; and
- Oversee the management of the APRM Trust Fund and audit reports.

Overall, the APRM day was a great success, with everyone in a jolly mood. Too many more years of transforming Africa. Cheers

# APRM DAY IN PICTURES



SILENCING THE GUNS THROUGH THE PROMOTION AND DEEPENING OF THE AU SHARED VALUES

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