



POLICY BRIEF

April 2020

Kenya: State, Personal Responsibility, and Community Cohesion; Key in Fighting Covid-19 Pandemic

Target Group

- Policy makers and planners in government and non-state institutions.

Key messages

- Covid-19 has exacerbated conflict in Kenya
- Covid-19 can be used as a catalyst to socio-economic transformation in Kenya
- While Covid-19 crisis is causing widening societal fragmentation in Kenya, there is notable resilience helping people cope with the fight against the disease
- If the state, non-state actors, and citizens synergize their efforts to fight the pandemic, embrace national unity, then Kenya will not only survive the Pandemic but will emerge stronger

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Covid-19 unprecedented crisis is devastating Kenyan communities with extended impact on social life. Kenya faces a multiple challenge considering pre-existing inter-communal conflicts, locust invasion and threats of violent extremism. The crisis has potential to ignite or exacerbate grievances, mistrust, and sense of injustice over access to services, widening social and economic inequalities thereby undermining the fight against the pandemic and the overall goal of social cohesion and peaceful

coexistence.

This, therefore, calls for multifaceted approaches to addressing inequalities across groups; meeting the immediate needs caused by the pandemic; and tackling underlying conflict drivers, in order to effectively win the fight against Covid-19.

To achieve this, all actors, government, non-governmental and communities alike, should play a role in the prevention and management of the pandemic by doing the following:

The Government should: adopt more policies that cushion the vulnerable populations and low-income earners from a possible livelihood crisis; deploy more security agents to combat cattle raids in hotspots border points and counties; enhance trust between the state and citizens; embrace broad communications that is both top-down and bottom-up; sensitivity to language being used and simplification of key messages. On the other hand,

non-state actors should: collaborate with government to fight the pandemic; reach out to vulnerable groups; and emphasize peaceful coexistence in their messaging; act as the watch-dog and speak out on ills and excesses observed especially those committed by state on its citizen. Finally, the Communities should: be at the frontline of fighting the pandemic; help manage the infodemic; and maintain zero tolerance for discrimination and xenophobia, that has been witnessed arising from the pandemic.

Members of the fourth estate (Media): should provide accurate and consistent information without fear and discrimination.

Covid-19 can be used as a catalyst for social cohesion and economic transformation of Kenya. If the state, non-state actors, and citizens synergize their efforts in the fight against the pandemic and the call towards national unity, then Kenya will not only survive the pandemic but will emerge stronger.

BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 crisis is devastating Kenyan communities with extended impact on social life and social cohesion. Price-Smith observes that epidemic diseases ‘erode prosperity, destabilize relations between state and society, render institutions sclerotic, foment intra-state violence

and ultimately diminish the power and cohesion of the state.¹ This pandemic is already taking some of the characteristics described above for example, perpetuating discrimination and stigma, widening inequalities, increasing crime, deteriorating livelihoods, decreasing trust between the state and the citizen, compounding psychosocial risks, and aggravating conflict and violence. These will be discussed in depth in the subsequent sections.

Social cohesion is “a sense as well as a feeling that they are members of the same community engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and accessing similar opportunities.”² As such, national unity is at optimum in instances where individuals (and regions) are satisfied with their relational needs thereby displaying solidarity and sense of belonging to a system (government) designed to provide welfare for all. It therefore, goes without saying that all policy interventions and other government responses and measures against Covid-19 bear potential for long and short-term consequences to national cohesion and stability in the country.

It is wide knowledge that epidemics and economic crises can have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population. Kenya is a highly unequal society.³ Kenya’s Gini Index of 41.60⁴ in 2018 vindicates this assertion. The country’s poverty headcount at \$1.90 a day is 36.1% (World Bank, 2015). Yet, Oxfam affirmed that the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen, in fact, less than 0.1% of the population (8,300 people) own more wealth than the bottom 99.9% (more than 44 million people).⁵ According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased from 205.40 in January to 208.24 in February

1 Price-Smith Andrew T., (2009) Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology and National Security in the Era of Globalization London: MIT Press

2 NCIC, (2014) The State of Social in Kenya Nairobi: NCIC

3 KNBS & SID, (2013) Exploring Kenya’s Inequality: Pulling Apart or Pooling Together? Nairobi: KNBS & SID

4 <https://knoema.com/atlas/Kenya/topics/Poverty/Income-Inequality/GINI-index>

5 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/kenya-extreme-inequality-numbers>

2020.⁶ This means that the average price of a food basket increased and is bent to continue rising as the pandemic hits harder.

This Kenyan scenario vindicates Emile Durkheim's assertion that 'social cohesion is an important but elusive concept.'⁷ Even without the pandemic, it is almost impossible to foster national cohesion with the stated reality, yet it is against the above backdrop that Covid-19 pandemic has arrived. So, how is the pandemic and the resultant government responses affecting social cohesion?

Discrimination and Stigma:

Fear and anxiety about a disease such as Covid-19 can lead to social stigma and discrimination towards people, places, or things. The National Cohesion and Integration (NCI) Act mandates the Commission to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity or race.

Stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease such as Covid-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk of the disease. During this Covid-19 period, there have been reports of anti-Chinese racism and xenophobia in some countries.⁸ In March, BBC News reported a case where a Chinese man and woman were bullied in

Kibra.⁹ This xenophobia seemed to worsen after a flight from China with 239 passengers landed in Kenya contrary to the global travel advisory issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in mitigating risks against the spread of the virus. This kind of xenophobia may increase given the reports that Chinese landlords are discriminatorily ejecting blacks from their homes in Beijing, China allegedly for spreading Covid-19.¹⁰ That being said, the racist attacks observed in China must be loudly condemned by Africa states, Kenya included.

On the other hand, urban-rural migration is creating a new generation of tensions at the community level and reinforcing xenophobic feelings across the country. As such, instances of regional discrimination within the country have increased pitting the rural communities against the urbanites especially from Nairobi and Mombasa. This is based on the fears that people who come from hotspot counties such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi or Kwale or who take long travels may have contracted the disease along the way. A case in point, the two people who tested positive for Covid-19 in Mandera County. They, brother and sister, travelled from Kilifi to Mandera County by road with many stops along the way.¹¹

¹² The lessons we learnt during the HIV pandemic in the 80s should not be forgotten

6 KNBS, (2020) 'Consumer Price Indices' Nairobi: KNBS accessed online at <https://www.knbs.or.ke/consumer-price-indices/>

7 Pahl R. E., (1991) 'The search for social cohesion: from Durkheim to the European Commission' JSTOR Vol. 32, No. 2, Citizenship and social bonds (1991), pp. 345-360

8 West John, (2020) 'Advantage Asia: Social Cohesion as King in the Covid-19 Era' The Globalist Rethinking Globalization April 9th 2020

9 BBC News, 'Letter from Africa: The spread of coronavirus prejudice in Kenya' 9th March 2020 accessed online on 9th April 2020 at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51770856>

10 Sahara Reporter, (2020) 'Chinese Ejecting Africans From Homes, Hotels Over Claims Of Importing Coronavirus Into Country' Sahara Reporters New York 7th April 2020 accessed online at <http://saharareporters.com/2020/04/07/chinese-ejecting-africans-homes-hotels-over-claims-importing-coronavirus-country>

11 Muigai Raquel, (2020) 'How two unsuspecting Covid-19 patients travelled from Kilifi to Mandera by bus' Citizen Digital April 8th 2020

12 Kipkemoi Weldon, (2020) 'Man killed in Kwale after 'showing' coronavirus symptoms' The Standard Digital 18th March 2020

quickly.¹³

Finally, stigma can also occur after a person has been released from Covid-19 quarantine or upon recovery, even though they are not considered at risk of spreading the virus. Brenda Cherotich was the first patient in Kenya to be confirmed positive with Covid-19. The story of Brenda started with the joy of recovery on 1st April, 2020 but ended in intensive cyber bullying and attack against her person on and off the social media. Stigma undermines social cohesion and prompts possible social isolation of groups, which might contribute to a situation where the virus is more, not less, likely to spread.

Stigma is also being experienced against people who have tested positive for Covid-19. In some instances, patients were considered reckless thereby spreading the virus further by their failure to adhere to WHO health guidelines. For instance, the Kilifi Deputy Governor (DG), Gideon Saburi who appeared before a Mombasa Court on 6th April, 2020 to answer to charges, for deliberately spreading Covid-19 by defying the protocol to self-isolate following his last trip abroad. Worse still, the Standard Digital reported that George Kotini Hezron was killed in Kwale County by a mob of youths after exhibiting some Covid-19-like symptoms.

Inequalities:

The pandemic has not only highlighted existing inequalities but has also anchored on and is magnifying such pre-existing inequalities in the Kenyan society. Covid-19 has exposed the failure of government in upholding the social contract that envisages the collective wellbeing of all Kenyans particularly in ensuring a functional health-care system. The quarantine directives by the Kenyan government impose the greatest cost on those already worst off. Most of the jobs and livelihoods that have been affected are in the informal sector while better paid knowledge workers have at worst faced only the nuisance of working from home. To make it worse, those in low-wage jobs who can still work, are often risking their lives. On the other hand, the closure of schools has affected the parents who relied on school feeding programs to nourish their young ones. In addition, the digital form of learning, currently adopted by the Ministry of Education, has cut out substantial populations that do not have access to online tools or equipment. The fact is, as Covid-19 widens social and economic divisions, inequality in turn spreads the virus further. This means that the success of the prevention and management of Covid-19 is dependent on the management of inequalities across groups.

13 Some of the lessons as covered in the UNAIDS 2020 Report include: (a) Engage affected communities from the beginning in ALL response measures—to build trust, ensure suitability and effectiveness, and to avoid indirect or unintended harm and ensure the frequent sharing of information; (b) Combat all forms of stigma and discrimination, including those based on race, social contacts, profession (healthcare workers), and those directed towards marginalized groups that prevent them from accessing care; (c) Ensure access to free or affordable screening, testing and care for the most vulnerable and hard to reach; (d) Remove barriers to people protecting their own health and that of their communities: fear of unemployment, healthcare costs, presence of fake news/misinformation, lack of sanitation infrastructure and so forth; (e) Restrictions to protect public health must be of limited duration, proportionate, necessary and evidence-based and reviewable by a court. Put in place exceptions where necessary for vulnerable groups and to ameliorate the consequences of such restrictions. Blanket compulsory bans are rarely effective or necessary. Individuals should not be criminalized for breaching restrictions; (f) Countries must work to support each other to ensure no country is left behind, sharing information, knowledge, resources and technical expertise; and (g) Support and protect health care workers. Be kind to each other. Join and support efforts that build trust and amplify solidarity, not sanctions.

Crime:

With health directives like staying at home, one would think that crime would also be on recess at such a time when the country is faced by a huge crisis. The Secretary for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in the Executive Office of the President, noted that “since the curfew, crime has gone down by 80%.” Although certain crimes have decreased following the curfew and other government directives in response to Covid-19, other offences like domestic violence, violent extremism and cattle raids are persisting. The security agents are busy enforcing the health regulations on the one hand while attending to their normal duties, on the other hand. Informal settlements are worst hit given the fact that inhabitants are barely making ends meet. The upsurge in crime is likely to be aggravated by the release of close to 4,000 inmates, of which 898 were petty offenders who had served their terms, 2,267 who had their sentences revised by the High Courts, and 627 whose bail/bond terms were reviewed by the Magistrates Courts.¹⁴ These inmates were released in a bid to decongest prisons and prevent the spread of the disease.

On the other hand, cattle rustling has also not rested. The Tugen and Pokot communities living along the volatile border of Baringo North and East Pokot have experienced increasing cattle theft. Some reports insinuate that school going children who are currently at home are being incorporated in these escapades. The security agencies along this border have increased their vigilance. They are reported to recover animals most of the time. Similar challenges of cattle rustling are still being experienced on the Nandi-Kisumu border and in Turkana West. In

other places, criminals are taking advantage of the stretched security situation to effect highway banditry. Bandits waylay lorries and even dare the security as was the case in Turkana East Sub-County where three people, including a Rapid Deployment Unit officer, were shot dead by suspected bandits between Kapedo and Lomelo villages in Turkana County.¹⁵

The National Council on the Administration of Justice (NJAC) documented an increase in domestic violence rape, defilement and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). For instance, the cases of FGM, may considerably go up, since most girls are at home, away from ‘safe haven’- school environment, which is largely viewed as the safest place to be. In some cases, the perpetrators are close relatives, guardians and/or persons living with the victims.¹⁶ It is observed that stressful home environments contribute to increased domestic violence. The restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to make it harder for survivors to report abuse and seek help and for service providers to respond efficiently.¹⁷

Livelihoods for Low Income Earners:

There is a growing humanitarian crisis among the vulnerable population. These include people living in informal settlements, street families, unsalaried workers, unemployed youth, child and grandparent headed households, the elderly persons, and persons living with disabilities. With the partial lockdown, many domestic workers have been laid off by their employers, in fear of contracting Covid-19. Women seeking domestic work has increased many folds. There should be proper mechanisms of identification of the genuine cases from

14 Ministry of Interior, ‘Petty Offenders Released’ Press Statement GoK 2nd April 2020

15 Lutta Sammy, (2020) ‘Three killed, 14 injured in Turkana banditry attack’ Daily Nation January 28, 2020

16 NCAJ, (2020) ‘Statement on justice sector operations in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic’ 1st April 2020 accessed online at <http://ncaj.go.ke/statement-on-justice-sector-operations-in-the-wake-of-the-Covid-19-pandemic/>

17 Guyo Liban, (2020) ‘Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence key in containing novel coronavirus’ The Star 29th March, 2020

these population segments; and providing clear linkage with the already established social protection systems for the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are about 2.5 million people in Nairobi who live on one meal a day. Most of these people rely on their daily paycheck to get that meal. Yet, most of them are bound to lose their wages due to the anticipated massive job losses brought about by the pandemic. As ILO observed, the Covid-19 crisis is expected to wipe out 6.7 per cent of working hours globally in the second quarter of 2020 – equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.¹⁸ Citizen Digital estimates job losses in Kenya to affect about 20,000 in the informal sector.¹⁹ An online study with a sample size of 2,359 respondents in Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Cameroon, Eswatini and Botswana, revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the Kenya's workforce with pay cuts and job losses higher than the other countries in the study.²⁰

Moreover, people living in informal settlements use 30% of their income on water, a prized commodity in these areas. Suffice to say that, water is a critical component in the fight against Covid-19 since the basic requirement world over is hand washing. Yet, in a 2016 survey, nearly two-thirds of the respondents in Kibra had difficulty in meeting their daily household water needs

with challenges like inconsistent availability of water at the source, financial constraints on water purchase, and lack of water storage facilities.²¹ Communities in North Eastern and Coast regions, like Mandera, Wajir, Marsabit, Tana River are faced with water scarcity. The reality of frequent hand washing is almost unattainable. Given this current scenario, there is need to go to the basics.

Conflict, Violence and Violent Extremism:

Kenya has lived to Price-Smith's assertion that pandemics do not only foment intra-state violence but they also catalyse conflict beyond the state.²² There have been emerging and persisting conflicts between various ethnic communities in the country. On 1st April, more than 20 homes were torched in renewed clashes between two Maasai clans over Nkararo-Enoretet border in Transmara, Narok County.²³ The pandemic is also creating additional stresses to existing conflicts. For example, incidences involving transnational conflicts were experienced in Mandera and Marsabit Counties.

Unfortunately, conflict amplifies the burden of disease. Active conflict contributes to the dissemination of existing pathogens and to the emergence of novel microbial agents.²⁴ Therefore, there is need to curtail these conflicts.

18 ILO, (2020) 'ILO Monitor 2nd edition: Covid-19 and the world of work Updated estimates and analysis' International Labour Organization 7th April, 2020 accessed online at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf

19 Ahmed Faizal, (2020) 'Over 20,000 formal jobs in Kenya may be lost this year due to coronavirus' Citizen Digital April 3, 2020

20 Michira Moses, (2020) 'How coronavirus has hit households' The Standard Group April 6th, 2020

21 Worrell Caitlin et. Al, (2016) 'A Cross-Sectional Study of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene-Related Risk Factors for Soil-Transmitted Helminth Infection in Urban School- and Preschool-Aged Children in Kibera, Nairobi' PLOS 2016; 11(3)

22 Price-Smith Andrew T., (2009) Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology and National Security in the Era of Globalization Op. Cit.

23 Sayagie George, (2020) 'Form 3 student killed, homes torched in Transmara clashes' Daily Nation April 2, 2020

24 Price-Smith Andrew T., (2009) Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology and National Security in the Era of Globalization Op. Cit.

Trust between State and Society:

The most powerful weapon in the fight against Covid-19 is public trust. The biggest test to the trust between the society and state has and will occur as the police try to enforce government directives during this Covid-19 period. A state-citizen conflict was experienced when the police were enforcing the curfew orders and some Kenyans defied arguing that it was not practical in their situation. In Kakamega and Homabay Counties, the police had to use teargas to repulse people who were still defying the curfew orders beyond the stated time.²⁵ In Mombasa, it was reported that the police beat people who were waiting for the ferry services without sparing the journalists too.²⁶ Such reports will generate bad blood between the citizens and security personnel thus being counterproductive to the efforts made towards the prevention of Covid-19. These incidents further increase public resentment of government and its responses and heighten the risk of triggering violence and civic unrest in the event of a total lockdown and potentially thereafter.

Information and Misinformation on Covid-19:

Kenya faces a heightened spread of misinformation particularly on social media, followed by TV and radio. A Geopoll survey revealed that 75% of Kenyans had seen information on WhatsApp regarding Covid-19; 66% of these rated the information they saw on WhatsApp as 'somewhat truthful', 14% said it was 'completely untruthful', while 20% felt that it was 'completely truthful'.²⁷ It is on this basis that the government spokesperson encouraged Kenyans to get information from credible sources such as the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization.

The Ministry of Health gives constant updates on Covid-19 via press conferences. The speeches as well as information on the virus are also shared through their website. All the speeches are written in English.

Psychosocial risks and trauma:

Following the pandemic, there has been an increase in anxiety, stress, panic, trauma and mental illness.²⁸ There should be a major healthcare concern during and post Covid-19 period. Ministry of Health in conjunction with private and public institutions in counselling and psychology fields should set up toll free counselling help lines and other support systems to help the victims and families cope with Covid-19. Immediate support should go to front-line workers i.e. health care workers, security personnel, paramedics and all officials involved in providing day-to-day support for victims of the pandemic. Long-term measures to be established to enable Kenyan people cope post Covid-19.

Impact of Covid-19 on Peacebuilding in Kenya

The Covid-19 pandemic which was first viewed as a health crisis, metamorphosed quickly to a mega crisis, which halted nearly all the sectors, peacebuilding not spared either. Conventional means of peacebuilding, which include, holding physical meetings with peace actors, dialogues and mediation forums to mitigate community conflicts could no longer happen, yet peaceful coexistence, cohesion and integration remain an integral component in the fight against the disease. This caused reawakening of peacebuilding stakeholders' to begin conversations around, continuity of work; and the impending drivers of conflicts arising from the pandemic; and

25 Nation Team, (2020) 'Chaos, teargas as Kenyans rush home to beat curfew' The East African March 27, 2020

26 Otsieno Namwaya, (2020) 'Kenya Police Abuses Could Undermine Coronavirus Fight' Human Rights Watch March 31, 2020

27 Elliott Roxana, (2020) 'Coronavirus in sub-Saharan Africa' Geopoll Survey Reports International Development Research March 17th, 2020

28 Reuters, (2020) 'Online therapy for those stressed over coronavirus' Standard Digital 26th March 2020

the urgency to promote conflict sensitive aid delivery. Unprecedented times, enabled quick embrace of technology to facilitate what needed be done. Peacebuilding actors have quickly embraced the use of technology to conduct virtual meetings; up scaling the use of social media and online platforms to pass information and peace messages; reorganisation of plans and priorities to realign with the emerging needs arising from Covid-19 crises; intensified resource mobilization to mitigate the current resource gaps and post-Covid recovery programs.

Kenya's Resilience in the face of a Pandemic

Community resilience is the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. Kenya's resilience has emerged in the face of the Covid-19 invasion. The government enacted a law requiring everyone in Kenya to wear a face mask when in public. The local textile industry has risen to the challenge. Rivatex East Africa and Kitui County Textile Centre (KICOTEC) are producing 8,000 and 30,000 face masks per day, respectively. Students of Kenyatta University assembled a prototype ventilator for the market while the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) innovated testing protocols that will enable the country process 35,000 Covid-19 samples in 24 hours. The Country has also embraced innovative means to deal with the proceeds of corruption. Over 400,000 litres of ethanol that were confiscated from tax evaders was used to manufacture hand sanitizers for free distribution to the public. The East African Breweries Limited, a local beer manufacturer, contracted local companies to manufacture hand sanitizers using 100,000 litres of ethanol that they donated.

The spirit of philanthropy has been

29 Ombati Cyrus, (2020) 'DPP, EACC donate Sh2b of graft proceeds to Covid-19 emergency fund' Standard Digital 7th April, 2020

30 Kanja Kristen, (2020) 'Landlady waives rent amid Coronavirus outbreak' Standard Digital 16th April, 2020

31

highly exhibited throughout this period from companies, institutions as well as individuals. For instance, the Covid-19 Emergency Fund has received 100 million food donations from the Hindu Council of Kenya, and 2 billion shillings proceeds of graft from ODPP and EACC among others.²⁹

On the other hand, kindness was manifested by several Kenyans to their fellow country-men and women. As the pandemic predisposes many to job losses, some landlords were reported to have waived rent for their tenants. Christine Karimi asked her 65 tenants in Kangemi not to pay their rent until the pandemic is over.³⁰ Additionally, Super Foam Limited donated 50 special mattresses and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Kenyatta National Hospital Isolation Centre to enable Covid-19 patients to have quality rest as they recuperate.³¹ Amina Ramadhan, a police officer at Embakasi helped mother and baby with luggage under the intense pressure of enforcing the curfew. In Tot in Elgeyo Marakwet County, police constable Caroline Makena, 29, has been busy juggling between her police duties with production of face masks that she distributes free of charge to the local population. These and many other acts of kindness have cemented the resilience of Kenyans during this trying period.

CALL TO ACTION

In this crisis, the concept of social cohesion has emerged as a promising lens to help unpack the issues and offer some insights on how these issues might be addressed. Practically, social cohesion should be considered as 'the willingness of members of a society to help one another as a basic shared value.' In this way, social cohesion is at the heart of the kind of societal resilience that is required now more than ever.

Despite its disruptive nature, Price-Smith argues that a contagion also contains the seeds for catalytic socio-economic and political transformation.³² We should therefore use the crisis to undergo some serious public policy soul-searching on many fronts.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a defining moment in Kenya's history. As we write this history, we shall be judged not by the actions of any single set of government actors taken in isolation, but by the collective responses of all institutions from all sectors. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission therefore proposes the following:

Government of Kenya

Deploy more security agents to combat cattle raids in hotspots

One of the ways to effectively fight Covid-19 is to reduce interaction between people who may be positive and those who are healthy. Community engagement, ethnic group dialogue forums and interactions have been halted to avoid the spread of this disease. Nevertheless, parts of the North Rift have experienced a heightened spree of cattle rustling. As such, the police who are present at grassroots level should combat the theft of livestock and bring the raiders to book. If the police are stretched, the government should consider deploying other security units.

Adopt more measures to cushion the vulnerable populations and low-income earners from a possible livelihood crisis

The economic repercussions of this crisis have hit those in informal employment first and hardest. There is a real risk that they may fall into further poverty and social exclusion. In addition, inequalities will be widened more even after the pandemic. Therefore, current policies should target at keeping the vulnerable populations

32 Price-Smith Andrew T., (2009) Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology and National Security in the Era of Globalization Op. Cit.

33 Johannessen Guzman Gloria, (2019) Bilingualism and Bilingual Education: Politics, Policies and Practices in a Globalized Society USA: Springer Link

afloat in the short term and at closing in the inequalities in the long term. These measures should cover the areas of basic needs such as food (including water), shelter (majoring on rents) and clothing (including personal protective devices).

Enhance the trust between the state and the society

It is in the best interest for social cohesion if public trust is maintained at substantial levels particularly now as we experience fragility resulting from the pandemic. The government should therefore ensure the preservation of citizens' dignity and protection of human rights in the enforcement of responses to the pandemic.

Make Government communications clearer by being sensitive to language needs

One of the crucial ways of reducing fear and anxiety among the population is by delivering clear information about the situation as it is, what is expected of an individual and the picture of the foreseeable future. The NCIC commends the government for giving Kenyans timely, easy-to-understand and accurate information, and for reaching out to the deaf community too. Unfortunately, this communication is delivered only in English when only 15% of Kenyans speak English competently.³³ The language used is too technical and full of medical jargon. Therefore, the government can improve the reach of this communication by using Swahili or translating the speeches of the Cabinet Secretary of Health to Swahili and Sheng.'

Build on positive examples to promote social cohesion

This crisis has seen the emergence of servant leadership, empathetic leadership as well as cohesive leadership. This is the exact kind of leadership we need now to

spur optimism as well as lay a foundation for the health, stability, and resilience of our societies. Therefore, to nurture this crop of leadership and to provoke massive replication of good values, there is need to recognize and celebrate such selfless leaders.

Install virtual reporting of cases to the police

Given the fact that people may not be able to move freely at all times of day and/or night to reduce the risk of contracting and/or spread of Covid-19, there is need for the police to adopt virtual means of reporting crime and insecurity.

Stop Racism against China while Supporting affected Kenyans

Governments should deploy diplomatic measures to bring a stop to the racist attacks against China. At the same time, there is need to put in place measures to support Kenyans affected in China.

Non-State Actors

Collaborate with government to fight the pandemic

Governments have been at the helm of the battle against Covid-19 the world over. However, non-state actors such as the civil society, religious organizations, the private sector and even citizens have a role to play in the fight against the pandemic and the call towards national unity. Therefore, this fight should be a unifying effort between the government and its people through the various non-state actors.

Practical reach to vulnerable groups

Civil society and grassroots organizations, community based organizations and faith-based organizations play a vital role at the local level. Since these organizations operate within communities, they can assist the most vulnerable populations by bringing economic and livelihood opportunities and adapting responses to the community

context.

Need to emphasize peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness in our messaging

Covid-19 does not know ethnicity, religion, race nor class. All human beings, and all Kenyans are fighting the one enemy. Our unity is therefore paramount and even proportionate to the likelihood of our victory over this pandemic. Therefore, there is need for all of us to preach peace and embrace togetherness during this crisis.

Communities

Help manage the infodemic

Community members should be vigilant when sharing/ forwarding messages. If you find a message valuable, ensure you fact-check it with Ministry of Health and/or World Health Organization sources before forwarding.

Maintain zero tolerance for discrimination and xenophobia

All Kenyan citizens are urged to shun discriminating others, stop indulging in cyber bullying and to counter instances of intolerance and xenophobia and other forms of “otherization” based on identity, ethnicity, language, religion or culture. If this is not adhered to, the fight against the virus may be counterproductive to the cohesion efforts so far invested in the Country.

Engage actively in the fight against Covid-19

The fight against Covid-19 is hinged on personal responsibility and community cohesion. As such, communities and community leadership should be at the forefront of fighting the pandemic by embracing and promoting government protocols and directives. All should embrace the pledge, ‘I am a responsible citizen; I am taking Covid-19 seriously; And I am staying at home to save lives!’.

The Media

Provide timely and accurate information

Members of the fourth estate should also provide accurate and consistent information without fear and discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Pandemics like Covid-19 have a capacity to induce profound turmoil but often function as catalysts of change, generating transformation in the belief structures of survivors, social and economic structures, and relations between state and society. Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal and inclusive societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other challenges we face. Every crisis presents multiple opportunities, which could be tapped into at various levels by individuals, groups, communities, the state and the society as a whole; so let us discern the opportunities presented by the Covid-19 pandemic with a view to building a more cohesive, united, peaceful and integrated Kenya.

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