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The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Support Operations: The Challenges and Opportunities for PSO in Africa and Beyond

Perspective on the Implications of COVID-19 on Women and Girls' Livelihoods in Africa

The Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Security: The African Experience

"Towards more Inclusive Peace and Security Approaches"

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"Towards more Inclusive Peace and Security Approaches"

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Foreword

The International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) is a research and training institution focusing on Peace Support Operations (PSO) capacity building at the strategic, operational and tactical levels within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

IPSTC addresses the complexities of contemporary United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) integrated Peace Support Operations (PSO) by analysing the actors and multi-dimensional nature of these operations. The research conducted covers a broad spectrum of themes ranging from conflict prevention through management to post-conflict reconstruction. The Centre has made considerable contribution in training and research on peace support issues in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa through design of training curricula, field research and publication of Occasional Papers and Issue Briefs.

Issue Briefs are secondary literature-based papers which are produced quarterly. They provide a snapshot of current issues that may be of concern to sustainable peace and security and are an important contribution to the vision and mission of IPSTC.

The First Quarter Issue Brief No. 1 (2020) has three papers; 'The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Support Operations: The Challenges and Opportunities for PSO in Africa and Beyond'; 'Perspective on the Implications of COVID-19 on Women and Girls' Livelihoods in Africa'; and 'The Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Security: The African Experience'.

The papers provide valuable knowledge to policy makers that can inform the current peacebuilding discourse and praxis.

Brigadier Charles L Mwazighe
Director, IPSTC

List of Acronyms

APSA	Africa Peace & Security Architecture
AU	Africa Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEWS	Conflict Early Warning System
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	Eastern African Community
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
KPA	Kenya Ports Authority
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NAP	National Action Plans
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PSO	Peace Support Operations
REC	Regional Economic Community
RM	Regional Mechanisms
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARS-Cov-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Resolution(s)
USA	United States of America
VAW/C	Violence against Women and Children
WHO	World Health Organization
WPHF	Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
MNC	Multinational Corporations

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Introduction to the Issue Briefs

This first quarter Issue Brief addresses the impact of Covid-19 on Peace Support Operations, livelihoods of women and girls, and urban security.

The first article titled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Support Operations: The Challenges and Opportunities for PSOs in Africa and Beyond", seeks to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on peace support operations. It commences by shedding light on the effect of the pandemic on strained relations between the super powers and how it affected funding of PSOs. The logistical issues manifest in PSO are discussed such as movement of cargo as well as vital staff such as peace keeping troops. It discusses how COVID-19 affected PSOs along the lines of healthcare provision and peace education as the implementation of WHO guidelines as well as state-instituted measures to curb its spread were implemented. The aspect of the world staring at an economic meltdown with further effects on PSO funding is discussed as states engage in deep discussion about economic recovery strategies which include economic stimulus and budget cutbacks on external spending. This is within the framework of more challenging dynamics in logistics due to damaged infrastructure, increasing ungoverned spaces as well as the threat to food production. The paper then discusses the opportunities that the pandemic presents to PSOs and further gives prescriptions as to how the PSO environment could adopt to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second article titled "Perspective on the Implications of COVID-19 on Women and Girls' Livelihoods in Africa" examines the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in Africa and its effects on their security and livelihoods. Women and girls' vulnerability to this pandemic is evident in measures implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO) through National Governments where restrictions on movement and social interaction confine them within their households. These measures have left them with little access to education, quality healthcare (Sexual and Reproductive Health) and economic empowerment, and vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Women participation in decision making processes and platforms at the grassroots level may be hampered hence their voice and needs are missing in strategies, measures and policies that seek to address crisis responses to COVID-19.

In the midst of the pandemic, women and girls have been impacted at the

humanitarian response level as many organizations scale down their activities crucial to community development. The role of the Grand Bargain, an agreement fostered by humanitarian organizations, member states, and UN Agencies ensures that response and management of all crisis including the current pandemic is well coordinated at all times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, their focus has been on ensuring that resources are allocated to improving the welfare of women and girls through Community Based Organizations (CBO).

The paper concludes by recommending action to be taken to ensure that women and girls remain in a secure environment and enjoy social protection that address their vulnerability.

Finally, the third paper titled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Security: The African Experience" brings out the unique manner in which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the security situation in the urban areas from a multi-pronged perspective. It touches on matters such as how the implementation of the lockdown laid bare the frailties of the social safety nets in many urban centres in Africa. In particular, the aspect of food scarcity as a result of the effects and interruptions of supply chains. It also discusses how the curfew brought about the gains and challenges existent between civilians and the police. Forms of harassment are also discussed in the transport sector especially along the lines of gender. The paper looks at the informal sector as well, interrogating the security situation in the informal sector. It concludes by giving recommendations on how the issues stated above can be addressed.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Support Operations: The Challenges and Opportunities for PSO in Africa and Beyond

By Sitawa Michael M (PhD.)

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), an acute respiratory disease, caused by the novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, previously known as 2019-nCoV), took the world by storm, spreading throughout China and further beyond her borders. On 30 of January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 epidemic a public health emergency of global concern (Guo, Y. R., Cao, Q. D., Hong, Z. S., Tan, Y. Y., Chen, S. D., Jin, H. J. & Yan, Y., 2020). According to the WHO (2020), retrospective probes by Chinese authorities were able to trace human cases with initial reported symptoms in early December 2019. In as much as a number of these known cases as per the earliest reports were linked to a wholesale food market, the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, some did not. On 11 March 2020, WHO declared the disease a pandemic.

Three views were quickly fronted to 'help' the world understand the COVID-19 pandemic. The first was that by the United States of America (USA) conspiracy theorists who linked the virus to being a product made at the Wuhan Institute of Virology with the sole purpose of biological warfare. The aftermath of this was global outcry, asking China to compensate states for damages caused by the pandemic. In the USA, one lawyer is said to have filed a case against China at the International Criminal Court (Jaaved, 2020).

On the other extreme was the Chinese view. The allegations were that the virus, as per Chinese social media platform Weibo, was introduced into the country when 300 USA military personnel arrived in the Wuhan region for the Military World Games in mid-October and infected the local population (Winter, 2020). These allegations were later on proved unfounded as all the servicemen who were on the mission to Wuhan tested negative for COVID-19. The Chinese position however went ahead to base the COVID-19 attack on China and the rest of the world as a way of the US

government trying to distract its citizens from focusing on their own domestic problems.

The third position which was supposed to be the rational and objective one was by the WHO. Theirs was one that sought to solely get the world focused on the looming threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was based on the fears that the virus was bound to claim the lives of many across the world whilst putting immense strain on health systems. The WHO termed the war of words as "infodemic", spreading faster and more easily than the virus itself, and just as dangerous. On the 19 February 2020, 27 public health scientists from the United States, Europe, and Asia put in writing that they stood in solidarity against the conspiracy theories. They further indicating that COVID-19 lacked any natural origin. They argued that the only outcome of these theories was to create fear, anecdotes, and unfounded predispositions that threatened the global unity in the fight against the virus. The elucidation by the WHO, especially on the mammoth task that awaited mankind was not convincing enough as the US government threatened to halt funding to the organization to the tune of 400 million US dollars; a move premised upon the alleged poor handling of the 'Chinacentric' virus by WHO. This was a blow that hit hard, threatening the global mandate of an organization which according to United Nations Peace Keeping (2020), is supposed to provide much needed health care support, coordinating with global experts, governments and partners to rapidly expand scientific knowledge on the new virus, to track the spread and virulence, and to provide advice to countries and individuals on measures to protect health and prevent the spread of the outbreak.

With the COVID-19 pandemic biting hard, affecting all spheres of life - social, economic, political and cultural, it has not left peace support operations (PSOs) unscathed. This paper discusses the manner in which COVID-19 has impacted PSOs. It highlights the key areas of interest including logistics, WHO guidelines, funding, health and peace education and natural disasters. These aspects are discussed in terms of their effect on conflict prevention, peace-making, peace enforcement, peace building and humanitarian assistance.

Transport/ Movement of Personnel and Supplies
Peace support is heavily reliant on global movement of personnel, through various means of transport (air, road and sea networks), moving human resource and

supplies to the frontline and further moving human resource out on rotation. Through measures instituted in a bid to mitigate the spread of the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, actual or partial lockdowns were instituted which severely disrupting movement of people. Air travel, on the basis of its ability to spread the virus fast and to far flung destinations, took the greatest hit. Flights in and out of the epicentre of the virus, China, were all suspended. Neighbouring states were forced to follow suite and suspend flights. The ripple effect of the suspensions was global. Figure 1 gives a summary of the impact on air travel.
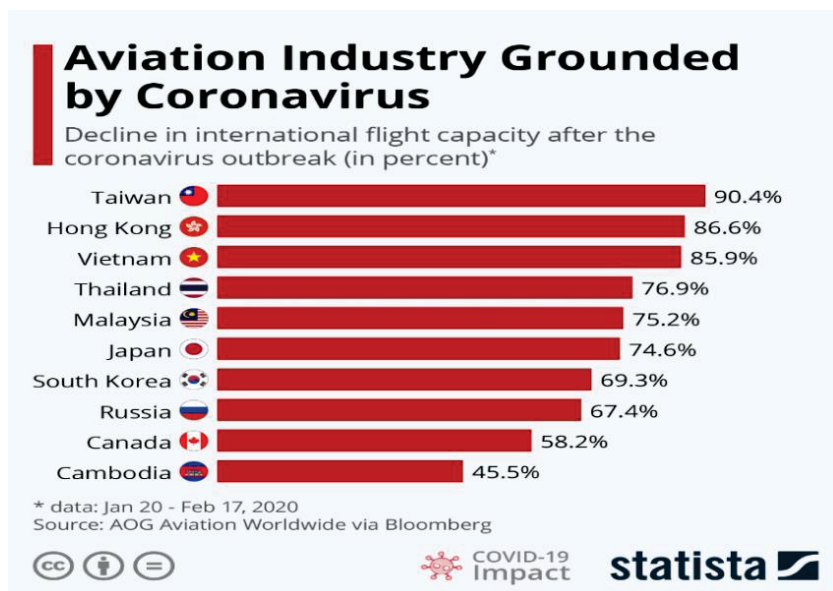
Figure 1: Aviation Industry Grounded by Corona Virus

The global movement of freight by sea was also been affected. Upon the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2019) issued guidelines on the health and safety of the crew of the sea vessels as well as port workers to avoid contracting and spreading the virus. The foresight that informed these guidelines was indeed just as in East Africa, the fears of transmission via sea ports were confirmed. On 3 April 2020 the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) staff were asked to work from home, others to self-isolate and 16 others sent on mandatory quarantine after Covid-19 cases were reported at the Port of Mombasa (Kitimo, 2020).

The knock-on effect of these specific guidelines affected movement of cargo with

delays lasting days. Vessel operators are subjected to Covid-19 testing prior to further steps of handling their cargo. Kitimo (2020) notes that in line with this, players in the sector warned of delays of up to more than 72 hours due to shortages of staff following the new orders on port operations issued by the KPA.

Missions undertaking PSOs through the various agencies involved in cargo handling managed to negotiate with government for special treatment of cargo being shipped through sea ports. In the ports of Mombasa and Matadi in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) respectively, cargo meant for humanitarian assistance is expeditiously cleared through the ports. This significantly helps to ease pressure that would otherwise have been experienced by the Missions as a result of delayed deliveries of essential goods.

Country Directives: The Lockdown, Cessation of Movement and Curfew Effect

On 23 of January 2020, China imposed a lockdown and terminated all forms of movement of people in 13 cities in Hubei province (Shen, M., Peng, Z., Guo, Y., Xiao, Y., & Zhang, L., 2020). The city of Wuhan, the epicentre of the global coronavirus epidemic, ended its 76-day lockdown on 8 April 2020. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] (2020), over 100 countries worldwide had instituted either a full or partial lockdown by the end of March 2020. The trend in Africa is summarized in figure 2 below.
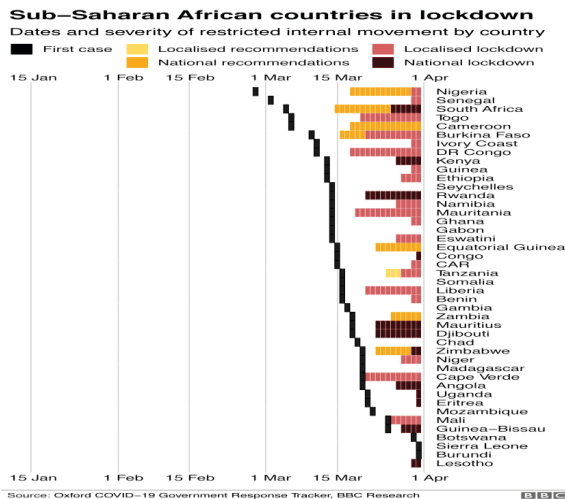

Figure 2: Sub-Saharan African Countries in Lockdown

"Towards more Inclusive Peace and Security Approaches"

The rationale behind African countries going the lockdown route elicited mixed reactions with the main debate being the availability, or lack thereof, of social safety nets to cushion low-income wage earners particularly those engaged in informal sectors. In regard to the enforcement of measures to contain the spread of the virus, there has been increased tensions between civilians and the police with accusations of the use of excessive force and killings by the latter.

World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines

The COVID-19 guidelines issued by the WHO are difficult to apply fully in view of the multi-cultural complexities of various communities where PSOs are found. The very nature of the PSOs especially in humanitarian assistance for example, healthcare provision necessitate close contact between different stakeholders – service provider and their clients. In refugee camps for example, social distancing is almost impossible. Basic amenities like soap and water needed to maintain hygiene are not readily available.

Furthermore, the manner in which suspected cases of Covid-19 are to be handled as per the WHO guidelines for example, staying at home and self-isolation when even minor symptoms such as a cough, headache, mild fever are detected presents a significant strain on humanitarian resources.

Informed by these challenges, a model has been developed by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland for trials in Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion Site in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The model estimates that with a total of 340 beds in the encampment, the worst-case scenario would exhaust that capacity just 58 days into an outbreak, resulting in more than 2,000 deaths (Subbaraman, 2020).

The stay-at-home guideline has seen approximately 10% of international civilian staff now working from outside their mission areas. This means that most of the planning and support work is being done electronically. In respect to needed diplomatic negotiations regarding PSOs, the discussions are held online mainly through webinars; a phenomenon that is being referred to as '*zoomplomacy*'. In as much as this is meant to mitigate against the challenges of COVID-19, actual presence on the ground is vital since not everything can be done remotely (de Coning, 2020).

Conflict prevention and peace enforcement have also not been spared through cancellation of meetings. Kenya's president, Uhuru Kenyatta, called off a summit that was scheduled for 16 March 2020 with counterparts from Ethiopia and Somalia. It was aimed at diffusing tensions between Nairobi and Mogadishu. Equally, a summit geared towards efforts to enhance counter-terrorism operations between European Union leaders and the "G5 Sahel countries" was also cancelled (International Crisis Group, 2020).

The peace keeping and peace enforcement components of peace support operations has also taken a hit. De Coning (2020), for example, observes that all rotations of peace keeping troops have been frozen until the 30 June 2020. Among the approximately 80,000 AU and UN soldiers and police officers currently deployed in Africa, approximately 40% were due for rotation and replacement.

A two-pronged outcome can be drawn from this. On one hand, the troops in this situation may find themselves feeling 'trapped' in the frontline with the added threat of COVID-19; one that Peace keeping missions were also not prepared for through training, causing panic in the camps. On the other hand, is the very fact that peace support operations still have brave men and women on the ground ready to protect the lives and rights of the vulnerable populations. This is seen as a big win majorly for the pillars of conflict prevention, peace keeping and peace enforcement of PSOs.

COVID-19 on Health and Peace Education: The Present and the Aftermath

Following government directives, various non-governmental organizations that run peace education programmes in communities, mainly in schools, have been forced to halt operations until further notice. Teachers/peace support agents involved in these activities have also left the mission stations in fear of contracting Covid-19. Another reason for their leaving is the fear of getting locked out of their home regions or countries, due to the lockdowns being put in place across the world. The Peace Corps for example, withdrew all their personnel from their areas of operation around the world. This has negatively affected conflict prevention, peace building and humanitarian assistance in PSOs (Peace Corps, 2020).

Uncertainties of when normalcy and by extension, schools resume leaves the seamless use of this vital component in doubt, threatening the erosion of gains in the conflict prevention, peace-making and peace building efforts. Of concern to PSOs in regard to the resumption of normalcy is the probability of immediate continuity of peace education programmes, especially in schools. The fear is that governments through the various mandated ministries are bound to relegate the initiative to footnote status as it is 'not examinable' through the various national curricula.

Likewise, the vital component of healthcare involves significant civilian support, particularly in the pillars of peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian assistance. With the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of medics leaving the frontline were reported. In Libya, for example, the UN-backed government in Tripoli took a blow with the collapse of their health system prompted by an outflow of foreign medics during the war (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Funding and Global Recession

Funding from development partners for PSOs prior to COVID-19 had already seen significant reductions. In 2016, the EU announced that it would be reducing the funding for allowances to the troops in AMISOM by imposing a cap on the coverage of allowances to 80%. The remaining 20% was expected to be funded by the troop contributing countries either through own resources or from alternative partner contributions.

Africa in response sought to pursue a possible legal route for the African Union to finance its peace and security programmes. In July 2016 the Union settled on the introduction of a 0.2% levy on eligible non-African imports. The end goal is to have AU self-finance 25% of the peace support operations; the AU Peace Fund is also expected to contribute to meet funding gaps for peace operations. Such financing through the 0.2% import levy therefore moves the AU towards achieving financial autonomy and implementing the overall structure of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). United Nation's assessed contribution support for UN-authorized AU-led peace support operations was to be up to 75% of the cost of the mission. Discussions for the UN to finance this 75% cost of missions have not yet been resolved (Apiko and Aggad, 2017).

The measures discussed above are under severe threat because of COVID-19. Many

countries are staring at the likelihood of their economies going into deeper recession than been witnessed since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In addition, the unprecedented measures adopted by states across the world that have resulted in a global economic standstill. This has led to calls for radical policy interventions to mitigate the economic damage caused by pandemic (Gourinchas, 2020). In a nutshell, what this means is that the African countries will not be in a position to avail resources to mitigate the effects of the pandemic which may include the financing of PSOs.

Reduced Income Generating Opportunities

Nearly 30 million people worldwide are currently asylum-seekers or refugees (UNHCR, 2020). According to the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (2020), the private sector can be central to assisting refugees in capacity building as part of post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2018), Kakuma refugee Camp, located in the North Western part of Kenya, is a worthy model of economic opportunities available within refugee camps. With an estimated population of 196,050, Kakuma has more than 2, 000 businesses with a 56-million-dollar market. The investment sectors include housing, retail, telecommunication, sanitation, energy, among others. This has been through the efforts of humanitarian agencies since 1992.

Economic slowdown and limited movement as a result of COVID-19, will undoubtedly affect PSOs. Reduced economic activity for example, is bound to create a situation of job losses. With it comes unrest due to factors such as hunger; crime rates are also bound to increase as the beneficiaries jostle for the limited resources available. The escalated tensions are bound to erode the gains made in PSOs and in particular, will put extreme strain on the maintenance and preservation of law and order.

Post COVID-19 and Peace Support Operations: Opportunities for Progress

Renewed Focus on Peace Talks

The threat of COVID-19 has laid bare the true state of affairs on matters related to the health infrastructure. The global lockdown has forced citizens across the world

to rely on their local facilities irrespective of social standing. This has presented a drastic shift from the norm whereby leaders would seek healthcare services abroad, ignoring the need to invest in local healthcare. South Sudan, in spite being an oil exporting economy with a population of 11 million, has more vice presidents (five) than ventilators (four). The Central African Republic has three ventilators for its five million people. Liberia, which is similar in size, has only six ventilator machines. In all, less than 2,000 working ventilators are meant to serve hundreds of millions of people in public health facilities across 41 countries in Africa, compared with more than 170,000 in the USA (Macleen and Max, 2020).

PSOs have a lot to ride on from this reality just as much as the leaders of these conflict threatened, ravaged and/or recovering regions and states. Peace means development, development means infrastructure, infrastructure means disaster preparedness which now, has pandemics high on the agenda. It is time to move away from retrogressive politics that instigate conflict and focus on the agenda of peace building and development.

Prayer and Calls of Ceasefire by Religious Bodies

Pope Francis called upon people of all faiths to come together in prayer, fasting, and works of charity on the 14 May 2020 in order to bring an end the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, talks of global ceasefire in aid of the fight against Covid-19 have received a great deal of support from religious leaders. Indeed, following a call made by the UN Secretary General António Guterres on the 31 March 2020 in response to the UN Security Council's failure to agree on a global ceasefire to enable COVID-19 action, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) appealed for an immediate ceasefire in ongoing conflicts in order to guarantee humanitarian access and protection of people from the pandemic. This call to action, requires all actors in conflict to end hostilities in Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Cameroon, Colombia and other countries (Lutheran World Foundation, 2020). An opportunity thus presents itself for PSOs to receive the much-needed audience by local leadership of the warring factions to negotiate and seek to end hostilities.

Conclusion

Peace Support Operations, just like the rest of the world has been shaken by the widespread and far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the medical fraternity exerts itself in attempts to find a cure, life must continue. In as much as the pandemic has significantly constricted normalcy, there are underlying opportunities that would support restructuring of the norms that we are used to in PSOs. This are majorly geared towards efficiency in resource use, ownership of the process by key actors involved in the conflict resolution as well as a renewed commitment to post-conflict reconstruction with the appreciation in key infrastructure investment which in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, would be health.

Recommendations

- More investment in setting up and/or strengthening of Trainer of Trainers' (ToTs) programmes on peace education to promote the sustainability of the initiatives involved. This would be key in unprecedented times such as these of COVID-19 where expats have limited mobility in and out of the areas of operation.

- Going by the nature of indiscriminate infection and the demands on the healthcare systems based on the manifestation of symptoms of the COVID-19, there is an opportunity for negotiation, as a vital aspect in PSOs, to reach peace agreements and functioning systems.

- COVID-19 has seen a reenergized call from religious movements towards the push for global ceasefire. An opportunity presents itself for PSOs whereby a more elaborate agenda can be packaged to drive peace initiatives.

- Inter-religious dialogue to end religious-based conflict for example in Jos-Nigeria, attacks and killings of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, among others could make significant contributions to peace and the fight against COVID-19.

- There is need to capacity-build personnel (troops and civilians) involved in PSOs with the relevant knowledge on how to operate in situations of pandemics. This would ensure sustained operations during such times and mitigate against mass exit of professionals.

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Perspectives on the Implications of COVID-19 on Women and Girls' Livelihoods in Africa

By Watson Karuma Karomba & Angela Olive Ochwada

Introduction

The Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) was officially confirmed in January 2020 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) after the first case was reported in Wuhan City in the People's Republic of China. The pandemic has effectively disrupted livelihoods and key Peace Support Operations (PSOs) activities on a global scale. In addition, the pandemic has had a profound impact on the safety and wellbeing of women and girls (WHO, 2020).

This paper highlights the impact COVID-19 has had on women and girls in Africa. The focus will be on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in relation to humanitarian responses, access to education, economic empowerment, food and nutrition, and healthcare.

Gender Dimensions Focusing on Women and Girls

The gains in gender equality aimed at enhancing women participation in the political, cultural and economic sphere were meant to be celebrated in 2020. The celebrations were also to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing platform of Action and the major milestones achieved thus far. Unfortunately, a United Nations (UN) Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women posits that the effects of the pandemic will water down the gains made. As women's role in community driven initiatives are impacted by the pandemic, so will the activities that propel them in decision making processes. The policy brief states that the negative impacts of COVID-19 will have substantive effects on women and girls mainly because of their vulnerabilities arising from their socially assigned gender roles (UN, 2020). To this end, it is recommended that respective countries review their National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 to ensure that the impacts of the pandemic are considered and for women to be actively involved through the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in prevention, and management at all levels of society.

As livelihoods are disrupted in Africa, gender gaps will continue to widen and affect communities at large. Further, as the economic ripple effects are felt as a result of job losses and dwindling income, men become susceptible to pressures assigned to them by cultural and social gender norms. The need to provide basic needs for the household where resources are limited results in feelings of inferiority complex by the men and this may exacerbate Gender Based Violence (GBV). Indeed, men may be inclined to use negative coping mechanisms such as indulging in alcohol to seek solace or isolating themselves from other members of the family and which may lead to depression. In sum, these negative ripple effects from COVID-19 have an effect on women.

As the effects of the pandemic continue to manifest, gender perspectives play a key role in delineating the plight of the most vulnerable persons in society. From an economic, cultural and social angle, vulnerability as a result of the negative effects of the pandemic is felt more by women and girls as their access to education, economic empowerment, quality healthcare and proper nutrition shrinks. As gender is socially constructed, the roles assigned to either male or female inhibit their individual functions in society and exerts undue pressure on either gender as they endeavour to meet their prescribed roles.

Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Livelihoods of Women and Girls

COVID-19 has put negative pressure on the livelihoods of women and girls in Africa. Women and girls earn less and save less and hold jobs that lack security that could cushion them from the effects of measures put in place to mitigate and manage health pandemics like the COVID-19 (UN, 2020). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates a significant rise in unemployment and underemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of mid-2020, 42% of women as compared to 32% of men were employed in the informal economy which was the first to be overrun by the COVID-19 Pandemic (ILO, 2020). It has also been observed that Africa is one of the regions where 56% of women work in high-risk sectors compared to 39% of men (Acemogly, Daron, David H. Author and David Lyle, 2004). This translates to their increased vulnerability to job losses as the effects of the pandemic worsens. This might mean that women and girls will fall into

extreme poverty and food insecurity thereby exposing them to negative coping strategies such as engagement in criminal activities, sale of assets, prostitution, and illicit sex, among others.

Delavelle (2020) observes that the closure of schools and limited access to economic empowerment programs for girls has left them vulnerable to situations of Gender Based Violence (GBV), and Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (SEA) either within their households or in the community. In addition, the impact of measures adopted to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic may give rise to cases of teenage pregnancies and school drop outs rates of girls.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Fight against Gender Based Violence within Households

Fraser (2020), Palermo and Peterman (2011) have observed that crises and times of unrest have been linked to increased interpersonal violence, including incidence of violence against women and children (VAW/C). Indeed, as a result of COVID-19, cases of GBV and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) have risen sharply in Somalia and Kenya (Save the Children, 2020; Reuters, 2020). In Somalia, the confinement and cessation of movement have exposed young girls to forceful FGM rituals. Many of the cases go unreported as monitoring programs have been affected by lack of personnel to undertake surveillance and reporting of the rising numbers of FGM cases. The rise in rate of FGM cases emanates from the fact that FGM is legal in the country. This means that girls who do not wish to undergo the rite can be forced by their guardians who are protected by law to do so (Plan International, 2020). Furthermore, school closures have opened the window for door-to-door FGM campaigns. Up to 13 districts in Somalia are perpetrating FGM with about 52 girls aged between 6-13 years subjected to the rituals. The surge has been witnessed within the COVID-19 period that shows an almost 50% rise in cases as compared to the period between December 2019-end of January 2020 prior to the pandemic (Save the Children, 2020). In Kenya, the pandemic has equally hampered the government's clamp down on the FGM vice that is still practiced by some ot he communities. Government officers in charge of Counties and sub-counties have been impeded by restrictions emanating from measures adopted to curb COVID-19 (Reuters, 2020). The limited number of availble police officers, for exmple, have

been re-assigned to enforce COVID-19 measures and thus have little or no time to enforce anti-FGM measures. Notably, FGM is being perpetrated for the purpose of preparing young girls for marriage as families seek all available means possible to meet basic survival needs.

As hospitals and healthcare centres struggle to manage COVID-19 cases, the burden of care for the sick is primarily left to women and girls which increases their exposure to infection. A 2020 report by the UN has observed that women are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response as the default family caregivers especially in informal settlements, marginalized areas and rural areas in many affected states.

Health Risks Emanating from COVID-19 on Women Healthcare Providers

As healthcare workers, women constitute between 60% and 90% of healthcare providers with countries like Egypt averaging about 90% of women in the sector. In addition, women endure an extra 4-hours of homecare of infected family members upon returning from work. Women in Mali are involved in care-giving up to 11 times more than their male counterparts at home (Chuku et al., 2020). The role of women expose them to the virus and if infected can then be easily spread to their children. The threat of infection among women and girls is exacerbated by the fact that they may be forced to undertake the care giving as a socially assigned role. In addition, the risks of infection are heightened by the fact that only one third of the African population has access to proper hand washing and safe water, and in majority of countries there is less than one doctor per one thousand people (UNSDG, 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 on Girls and their Access to Education Services

Many countries in Africa and the world in general decided to close learning institutions as a mitigating measure to curb the spread of COVID-19. This has had adverse effects on the well-being of girls that are out of school. CARE International (2020) posits that where the mother is incapable of being a caregiver in a household, it is automatically assumed that the girls will take over. This not only denies the girls a chance to interact with their peers but it also overburdens them with the stresses of

management of households. Where schools have feeding programmes, girls access a balanced nutrition diet that ensures that they are healthy and productive but with the closure of schools the access to nutritious food is severely affected. The schools in addition offer support to the girls' sexual and reproductive health programs which cushions them against vulnerability.

Girls living in refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps have a safe haven in schools from all manner of threats that may impact on their health. Social distancing, work from home programs and restriction of movement affects the provision of gender programs in the camps. The support the schools would offer to abused girls seeking guidance and counselling or other empowerment programs is severely compromised by their closure.

Humanitarian Responses to the Needs of Women and Girls in the Wake of COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across Africa, its effects are being felt more particularly in countries experiencing other humanitarian crisis especially those emanating either from armed conflict or those induced by climatic changes. Humanitarian responses are coordinated by independent donors, individual states, and international organizations (IOs) under a unique Agreement known as the Grand Bargain. The Grand Bargain is comprised of member states that include Japan, USA and UK; UN Agencies including UN Women, UNDP and UNICEF; and humanitarian organizations such as the Save the Children International. The Grand Bargain has a collective aim of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action through women led Community-based Organizations (CBOs). Through the CBOs, affected communities are empowered through cash transfer programmes that enhance social protection against effects of COVID-19 ((IASC, 2020). With women and girls forming part of the vulnerable group impacted by the pandemic, social protection mechanisms have been scaled up to ensure that households are protected from the effects of diminished income generating activities. The support to the communities prevent households from falling into poverty.

The Peace Support Operations (PSO) domain is increasingly affected by the negative impacts of Covid-19 that is an addition to other existing humanitarian

crises under their mandate. According to Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO, 2020) in South Sudan, women and girls in PSO settings are the most vulnerable to COVID-19 infection:

> The COVID-19 pandemic stands to worsen women and girls' already in dire situation in South Sudan where women are already playing a disproportionate role in responding to different diseases by being frontline healthcare workers, caretakers at home and community volunteers and mobilisers. Investing strategically on combating COVID-19 pandemic with full commitment on building linkages with pillars of the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 is essential. Prioritization of prevention and protection of women including genuine women representation and participation in the efforts of combating COVID-19 should be taken seriously by the South Sudan authorities at all levels.

Reporting mechanisms where sexual abuse or gender-based violence has occurred have been affected by restrictions of movement and social distancing requirements. The fear of contracting the virus in health centres or from peacekeepers, or humanitarian personnel has made it difficult for abuses to be reported. In addition, perpetrators and victims are living in confinement at home as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Where the perpetrators are peacekeepers or humanitarian workers, the 'stay-put' model of controlling the spread of the virus means that neither can persons facing disciplinary action be sent home to face the law nor can the rule of law be applied fully as many government agencies in affected countries including the judiciary have scaled down their operations. Thus, perpetrators continue to conduct their duties in the full glare of their victims which contributes to psychological trauma arising from threats, intimidation and possible retaliation if cases are reported.

The Role of the United Nations in Responding to COVID-19 in the Protection of Women and Girls

The United Nations (UN) has been instrumental in providing a platform for the prevention, protection, and participation of women in peace and security through Women, Peace and Security (WPS) under UNSCR 1325 and other subsequent

resolutions. In addition, the UN responds to pandemics through Security Council Resolutions which are specific in ensuring that a pandemic does not affect a PSO environment or the populations in respective states. Instances where this has happened are in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) under resolution 2439 (2018) on Ebola to end hostilities as the country battled the virus; resolution 1308 (2000) on HIV/AIDS relating to testing including peacekeepers before deployment (Reliefweb, 2020), and resolution 2177 (2014) relating to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, especially in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in the period 2014-2016 (UNSC, 2014). As it can be seen from these cases, concerted efforts are called upon to address public health emergencies and indeed, Resolution 2177 (2014) set a precedence as it recognized epidemics/pandemics as a threat to peace and security. Hence, where a resolution recognizes a threat to peace and security in times of a pandemic, it should take into account the need to uphold and protect gains from WPS. This can be crucial to informing policy and National Action Plans aimed at the realization UNSCR 1325.

The Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have been at the forefront of giving concrete direction for a concerted global response to pandemics through respective resolutions. A slow reaction by the UNSC on addressing COVID-19 that cushions women and girls from its impact will affect their well-being. It is important to ensure that existing Mandates in mission areas are given a way forward on measures taken to ensure activities are not crippled by the Covid-19 pandemic thus putting civilians at risk. The lack of a Resolution from the UN Security Council on COVID-19 frustrates mitigating efforts including backing the UN Secretary General call for cessation of all hostilities in order to give room to focus on fighting the pandemic (IRC, 2020).

Recommendations

Impact on Humanitarian Response:

- UNICEF, Save the Children International, UN Women and UNDP, in collaboration with respective national Governments should support continued access to healthcare facilities especially in the provision of sexual and reproductive health care, continued access to gender desks at police

stations for women, girls and boys when reporting issues of SGBV, rape, defilement and other form of abuse and exploitation within emergency areas of operation, either in PSO or disaster scenarios.

- There is need for the national governments, relevant government agencies, UN Women, Save the Children International and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that decision making on the management of pandemics is gender inclusive in a bottom-up approach and is aligned to the UNSCR 1325 and other subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact on the livelihoods of women and girls:

- UN Women through their project partners and other stakeholders should conduct studies on the accessibility and effectiveness of active gender responsive psycho-social structures that cater for the specific special needs of vulnerable persons in the households and communities including women and girls, and boys.

- National Governments through legislative processes should avail a toll-free line, basic digital texting platforms and an online social media presence that is accessible on a 24-hours basis and run by qualified staff to help and support girls who are out of school.

- The national governments and relevant ministries should include cash transfer programs with an established system of disbursement taking into account the special needs of women and men within respective households.

Impact on the Health Risks Emanating from COVID-19 on Women Healthcare Providers:

- Ministries of Health should ensure that funding and quality assurance is guaranteed in the provision of personal protective equipment, ventilators, IV saline and other critical medical supplies for enhanced safety of healthcare providers, support staff and patients within health facilities.

- UN Women, UNICEF, Save the Children International, National and County/sub-county governments should conduct a study on the prevalence and rate of risk of infection from COVID-19 and abuse of girls and women in households.

Impact on girls' access to education services:

- Ministries of Education, should explore the need for digital learning and the capacity building of teachers to provide it.

- The national government and relevant ministries should put up measures that support the Ministry of Education towards ensuring there is constant and adequate power supply and internet connectivity for all households to support home-based digital learning in urban, rural and marginalized areas.

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Security: The African Experience

By Constant Cap

Introduction

Strategic Density for Urban Convenience

The last few decades have seen an increase in the drive towards denser neighbourhoods in urban areas. Density is promoted as a positive aspect of urban development due to shorter travel times required for citizens, increased human interaction, ease of service delivery, among others (Lehman, 2019). Density should not be confused with crowding, an experience normally witnessed on the streets of the global north and in underserviced neighbourhoods in the south and has been pointed out as one of the contributors to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Density and crowding are distinguished by urbanist Bret Toderian (2020) as "Density is generally used as a measure of how many people live and work on how much land, or how much building space is in an area. Crowding is literally how close everyone is to each other at a given time and place."

This human interaction aspect of urban life aligns closely to Jane Jacobs notion on the importance of having 'eyes on the street,' a concept that she explains as one of the key contributing factors to enhance security of a neighbourhood. She expounded that when people within buildings or shops have full view of the street and when there is a lot of social activity on a street like restaurants and cafés, it is highly unlikely for the street to experience various forms of crime. In her words:

> There must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to ensure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind (Jacobs, 1961).

The contradictory thing about many African cities is that the exact opposite is being done now. Not only are we fortifying out upper- and middle-class buildings and

neighbourhoods, we continue to view efficient streets as carriageways that vehicles should pass through as fast as possible. Pedestrian space and infrastructure for other forms of non-motorized modes are rare to find. Though one may witness various economic or social activities along a street, in many cases these go against municipal regulations or by-laws.

It is not surprising that one of the early measures taken by the authorities in parts of Nairobi during the COVID-19 pandemic was the destruction and confiscation of temporary structures used by informal vendors. This is despite the reality that African cities are largely dependent on informal economies. Economic informality provides livelihood and employment to most of the urban population. Common trades in the sector include hawking, craftsmanship, manufacturing, markets, and repairs. However, the sector continues to be a major source of conflict as it is perceived to be a contrast to the required modernity and order in the city (Kinyanjui, 2014).

The dependence on informality is very strong. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, over 70% of the wage or income earning population in Kenya are said to be in the informal sector (Kinyanjui, 2014). This is among the highest on the continent though countries like Rwanda (73%) and Uganda (59.2%) also follow closely. The informal sector creates opportunities like affordable products, labour and employment while providing a social safety net for many. However, it's irregular and inconsistent returns put it as one of the most vulnerable sectors in the case of civil strife, natural catastrophes or global pandemics.

The Lockdown and Urban Insecurity

African governments have attempted to take various measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. A lot of concerns have emerged on the feasibility of these initiatives in Africa's urban areas. One considerable fear is how the poorer communities and wage-earning communities will make it through taking into consideration the inability of African states to provide any financial cushion for their citizens.

Unlike their European counterparts, who already have some forms of social safety

nets in place, African governments do not have such elaborate structures. The few attempts at establishing such structures, like Kenya's National Social Security Fund (NSSF) for retired persons, have faced challenges through allegations of corruption and mismanagement as variously reported in the media. Oloo (2019), for example reported that six people, among them three former National Social Security Fund (NSSF) senior officials were arraigned in court over the loss of Ksh.1.2 billion (USD 11.1 million) pension funds.

In an effort to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19, South Africa imposed a total national lockdown, Kenya and Uganda instituted partial lockdowns while Tanzania opted to continue with business as usual. The experiences from quarantines and lockdowns in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak offers vital lessons on humane and effective ways of helping poorer communities during pandemics. These include community engagement, recognizing data gaps and working with informal health workers, ensuring food supply, and taking advantage of local governance structures (Wilkinson, 2020).

Within a short period of time after the implementation of the restrictive measures, there were reports of civil unrest and riots in many South African townships as wage dependent citizens protested lack of food and basic supplies (Burke, 2020). Shops were looted and desperate citizens took to the streets. Analysis of the traditional top-down approaches that governments in Africa prescribe was faced with challenges. This time, the attempt to lock down communities without providing any social safety net created a desperate citizenry. The South African experience served as a lesson for other African countries, but little change has been witnessed. In some places, communities have tried to engage governments but to little avail. A coalition of non-state actors working within Nairobi's Mathare informal settlement wrote a letter to the Government of Kenya on 12 May2020 giving five recommendations on the handling of COVID-19. These were:

1. Work through local led organizations
2. Use local youth as community health volunteers
3. Provide residents with running water
4. Condemn violent and corrupt modes of enforcement
5. Work with residents and Community-based Organizations to locate safe isolation centres.

By the end of July 2020, the coalition of non-state actors had not received a response to their letter from the government appointed COVID-19 steering committee.

The Urban Food Scarcity and Conflict

Unlike rural areas, urban areas are very sensitive in regard to food security. Urban food security is directly related to income earned and when sources of income are depleted, starvation or the threat of starvation sets in which can lead to anarchy. Conservationist Mordecai Ogada (2020), stated that one of the key aspects that ought to come from the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of African people recognizing their inherent attachment to rural areas.

In the rural areas, other than during occasions of severe drought, food security does not create a crisis as is the case in urban areas. Urban areas are viewed by many as temporary habitats to earn their living but eventually retire and invest their savings in the rural areas, which is considered 'home.' This also brings about a stronger sense of internal and social security as well as community attachment within these rural settings. It explains the angry response from citizens when the Kenyan government made the decision to prohibit movement into or out of the capital city, Nairobi and the port city of Mombasa.

It is a known fact that there are no safety nets provided for people in urban areas on the African continent (Bailey, 2008). There is also a low sense of community as people fight for their own survival. Many times, this has led to young people in underserved communities getting roped into crime. This has also emerged as one of the major concerns in the COVID-19 era. As people experience reduced incomes and job losses, there are fears of a resulting crime wave in urban areas (Onyango, 2020). Though a few charitable organizations and well-wishers like 'humanity.ke' and 'Homeless of Nairobi' have attempted to assist and rescue many of the vulnerable in the society, the demand far surpasses the supply. In a country like Kenya, with a median age of 19, the low level of government support could be creating a time-bomb for the large number of unemployed youth.

Curfew Enforcement and Insecurity

The response by law enforcement officers to government directives like the national 7 p.m. – 5 a.m. curfew, and the requirement to wear facemasks have left many people

in fear. Though the country responded quickly upon the reports of the first two COVID-19 cases, lack of experience or a rather wanting approach from enforcement officers led to tragic outcomes including severe injuries and loss of life (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Police beatings were experienced on the first day of the curfew with videos recorded by their colleagues who shared them on social media. Beatings of essential service providers who identified themselves and presented the necessary documentation portrayed a gap in the understanding of the rationale of the curfew as well as the approach behind its enforcement by police officers (Ambani, 2020). The lockdown also brought about other concerns as the sprawling capital has developed strong rural-urban linkages not only for movement of essential goods but also labour. Workers who live in the periphery suddenly found themselves either stuck in the city or unable to come to work within the city (Gikandi et al., 2020).

Public transport management has for many years been approached from an arms-length by many African governments. This is in spite of its importance in creating access to job opportunities and improving travel time savings for the business generation. The response from most governments during the COVID-19 pandemic have made attempts to enforce reduced numbers in public transport vehicles and specifically emphasised on the need to sanitize vehicles, crew and passengers (Bastmeijer, 2020).

Transport Service and Urban Security

The transport sector, specifically the matatu industry is a vital lifeline to the operations of urban functions in Kenya. The failure to recognize it as an essential service has taken a toll on the security of the operators. The crew have been significantly affected as they are not only forced to work for much lower wages in view of the shorter period of time available for operation but run the risk of finding themselves on the receiving end of the law in an attempt to get home before curfew hours. The women who work in the sector find themselves exposed to sometimes compromising situations that pose risks ranging from economic, physical, health, among others.

According to a research study carried out by Flone Initiative (2020), women in the transport sector are not only working for a lower income but also face job loss following the measures put in place by the government of Kenya to flatten the

COVID-19 curve. As a result, there have been reports of a number of attempts to sexually exploit some of them in favour of some of the few jobs still available in the sector (Mwaura, 2020). Fear of not being able to have money to meet household expenses remains one of the biggest concerns for the women in the public transport sector. The inability of government to provide some form of cushion for this group stems from the perception and perspectives towards the public transport sector.

The Security Debate in the Informal Sector

Informal settlements and poorer neighbourhoods are sadly hotbeds of unrest during times of scarcity of basic goods and services. Post-election violence, health epidemics, and economic slumps tend to hit the people who live in these places hardest. The people who live in these poorer and underserviced neighbourhoods comprise of the largest single block of urban residents but remain the least represented and serviced. The result is open exploitation to obtain basic services like water, health, education, food and even security. It is a well-documented fact that these residents pay more for water per-capita than those who live in the affluent areas (MSJC, 2018). These residents are also occasionally forced to pay vigilante groups to guarantee security within their neighbourhoods. In addition, news of violence, murders and deaths in these areas is rarely reported by the mass media as has been the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human rights groups have raised alarm over police brutality, so much so that at one point there were more deaths from brutality than from the virus itself (Wasike, 2020). A woman in Mathare is yet to be found from Thursday 16 April 2020 after she was chased by the police for not observing the curfew directives. The woman jumped into a nearby river for fear of being assaulted by the police (Owino, 2020). Cases of domestic violence are also said to be on the rise as people vent their frustrations against family members. Several Non-Government Organizations have pointed out that there was a dramatic increase in complaints of domestic violence targeting children as well as students following the closure schools (Kamau, 2020).

Food for Thought

There will be many discussions emerging after the COVID-19 such as the increased vigilance within neighbourhoods and the influence of the security forces in

impacting the lives of citizens. There also will be many planning-related questions coming up that would be worth musing over in joint forums such as round table-discussions, symposia, among others. There is need to comprehensively interrogate the rationale behind planning principles of our cities in the global south and determine what needs to be done to greatly improve the state of urban security. This also leads to the question of what kind of resilience strategies urban areas on the continent should develop to respond to the kind of security shocks that visit upon many of the vulnerable groups particularly in times of pandemics.

Recommendations

The paper gives the following recommendations.

Research recommendation:

- A review of the levels of community participation in creating enabling environments that are safe and secure for all, especially women, children and persons with disability, is important. Deepening community participation not only falls in line with the principle of subsidiarity but also enables more ownership of processes at neighbourhood levels. 'Nyumba Kumi' – a government initiative has been one such attempt, but its effectiveness and weaknesses have yet to be fully studied.
- There is need to inform existing policies on a bottom-up approach on how to ensure a secure upbringing of children in urban areas. This cuts across socio-economic barriers and has implications not only on the future of the society but also in ensuring that the urban space is secure for all. The saying by the Mayor of Bogota-Colombia, Enrique Penalosa while describing his urban transformations that 'a street that is not safe for a child to cycle on is not safe for anyone' may have been in the context of road safety but also applies to the safety and security of both children and adults in urban areas.

Training recommendation:

- The mandated institutions (state and non-state) should build the capacity of women in the transport sector on matters surrounding their rights, protection and general well-being and empower them to seek justice whenever need

arises and particularly towards their quest for financial security. This would cushion them from a myriad of insecurities and further allow them to play their roles as homemakers and mothers in society.

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Highlights of Key Messages from the Issue Briefs

The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Support Operations: The Challenges and Opportunities for PSO in Africa and Beyond

- The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), an acute respiratory disease with its epicentre in China was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. With similar catastrophic effects to mankind to the Spanish flu of 1918, operations in all sectors have been drastically affected. This includes peace support operations (PSOs).
- The effects of COVID-19 on PSOs are in logistics particularly in terms of movement of cargo and personnel and lockdowns imposed by various governments and which affects the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Health and peace education has reduced civilian presence on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19.
- The economic impact of COVID-19 is predicted to result to a global recession that could further reduce the financial resources channelled to PSOs by development partners, state and non-state actors thus affecting all pillars of PSOs.
- The reduced income generating opportunities in refugee camps and asylum seekers in refugee camps has affected self-sustenance activities that hold the potential to affect security within refugee camps and beyond.
- The recommendations to bolster PSOs include stronger strengthened investment in ToTs for peace education, call for inter-faith dialogue and discussing COVID-19 realities as an impetus for hastening negotiations towards peace and personnel preparation in the handling of pandemics whilst in the line of duty.

Perspective on the Implications of COVID-19 on Women and Girls' Livelihoods in Africa

- Gender gaps are widening and affecting communities as negative economic effect rise due to job losses and dwindling incomes that make men susceptible to pressures assigned to them by cultural and social gender norms and which has led to exacerbated cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

- The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) ability to meet and pass necessary resolutions that would guide responses that address secondary repercussions that may impact current peace support operations (PSOs) activities and especially those that cushion women and girls.

- The Grand Bargain addresses the negative impact of Covid-19 pandemic on women and girls by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action through the empowerment of communities through cash transfer programmes and other social protection measures.

- COVID-19 has put negative pressure on the livelihoods of women in Africa who earn less and save less and hold jobs that lack security that can cushion them from negative effects arising from mitigating measures imposed to curb the pandemic.

- Women are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response as the default family caregivers especially in informal settlements, marginalized areas and rural areas in many countries.

- Gender-prescribed roles for women and girls push them to take up responsibilities and chores that place them at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection.

- As a result of COVID-19 response measures, cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are reported to be on the rise.

- Lack of access to education facilities impedes psycho-social support for boys and girls in cases where they are faced with overwhelming workloads and expectations at the household level. It also limits girl's access to sexual and reproductive health support and leaves them vulnerable to threats of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and gender-based violence (GBV).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Security: The African Experience

- The urban setup is rather unique, presenting the deliberate move to densely populate the dwellers to realize certain strategic gains that would support the nature of economic and environmental operations involved.

- The hustle and bustle of urban life has adversely been affected by the Novel

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with African cities proving the most unique, despite the relatively lower death rates reported as a result of the virus.

- Civilians have sometimes been pitted against each other as well as law enforcement agencies. These spring from the lockdowns (full and partial) where allegations of excessive use of force by the police has been reported.

- Urban food scarcity has been prompted by the cessation of movement in certain regions (majorly urban), resulting to food shortages.

- The women who work in the transport sector as part of the service providers find themselves in situations that pose risks that range from economic, physical to health effects.

- Within informal settlements, Human Rights groups have raised the alarm over police brutality and at one point reported that there were more deaths from police brutality than from the Covid-19 itself.

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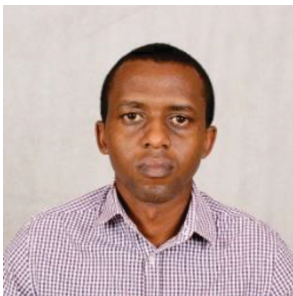
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