

THE REPORT ON A WEBINAR
DISCUSSING THE FISCAL
IMPLICATIONS OF NATIONAL AND
GLOBAL EMERGENCIES; THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

RAPPORTEURS REPORT BY
GUINEVERE KAHYAH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	3
ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC.....	4
THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON PEOPLE WITH DISSABILITIES	5
AN AFRICAN REACTION TO THE PANDEMIC	6
THE GENDER DYNAMIC OF COVID-19	6
A HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE	7
A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PANDEMIC	8
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION.....	8
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee on Fiscal Studies hosted a webinar, the first of its kind, on the fiscal implications of the pandemic.

Economically, we need to get into war- time economic management as soon as possible because we are inevitably going to face an economic meltdown in not more than two months.

We also need to ensure our combative measures take into account the special needs of people with disabilities. Similarly censorship and content take down is a self - defeating move by governments.

We need to formulate African responses to the pandemic. These responses need systems that are transparent whereas access to information is a major challenge for many African countries.

Women face special challenges as a result of the pandemic. Women are locked down with their abusers and are doing more unpaid domestic work.

Police brutality has caused tension between the government and its people at a time where cooperation is of the utmost importance.

We need to brace ourselves for the harder times to come as statistically, sub Saharan Africa and S.E Asia are the worst hit by lower respiratory tract infections.

INTRODUCTION

Following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, various sectors in the country have taken a hit, given the nature of the prevention measures the government has put in place. In light of the above, The Committee of Fiscal studies, chaired by Prof. Attiyah Waris, had the honour of hosting a Webinar that sparked a discussion on the

implications of the pandemic on the various sectors in the country. This was the first of its kind given that our tax talk series always took place at the School of Law.

We were privileged to have high profile speakers with excellent experience and achievements in their various fields. The speakers of the day were:

1. Prof. Attiyah Waris – fiscal lawyer
2. Dr. David Ndii - economist
3. Dinah Musandarwezo – gender specialist
4. Comm. Lawrence Mute – disabilities specialist
5. Dr. Richard Ayah - medical practitioner
6. Waridah Makenah – researcher

The two- hour webinar-as planned- began at exactly 10 am with James Muraguri, a public finance practitioner, as the moderator and ended at exactly 12 noon. The session began with Dr. David Ndii's presentation, Comm. Lawrence Mute, Prof. Attiyah Waris, Dinah Musandarwezo, Waridah Makena and Dr. Richard Ayah respectively.

There were approximately 140 people who joined the webinar. The largest number of participants the tax talk series has had.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Dr. David Ndii who is a renowned economist presented this topic. According to him, given the current situation, markets are not going to work because the economy depends on social interactions and mobility so as to function. These are the two major aspects of human life that the current pandemic is restricting.

He also highlighted that the current trend of trying to prioritize the ‘most important sector’, be it economics, public health e.t.c is irrelevant. This is because all these sectors are interdependent and neglecting one will affect the other. The dichotomy should now come in towards which sector of the economy to prioritize. Is it food, transport, medical commodities?

He also mentioned that political, psycho-social, moral-ethical factors are now disrupting the economy more than the actual pandemic itself. Similarly, all talks of trying to achieve economic growth at this time should cease. We need to get into war- time economic management as soon as possible given that Kenya has only two months at most before a total economic meltdown.

THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON PEOPLE WITH DISSABILITIES

Commissioner Lawrence Mute largely based his presentation on adapting Covid- 19 measures to suit the special needs of people with disabilities.

For example, how does the giving of tax waivers impact people with disabilities who might not even be affected by it given that they are the low- income earners?

What does social distancing mean for people with severe disability who need a lot of help from people to go about their daily business?

What does online education mean for say blind students?

In his capacity as a human rights advocate, Mr. Mute mentioned that access to information is of essence in such a situation. The information must also be timely, accurate and accessible. He gave an interesting example of how the Nigerian government proactively defeated Ebola by adequately sensitizing the public.

AN AFRICAN REACTION TO THE PANDEMIC

Prof Attiyah waris led this discussion and made a very important statement to the effect that; a reaction to the pandemic is important but more importantly, we need to formulate an African reaction. This is because although we are facing a similar pandemic, its effects will be experienced differently here in the global south as compared to the global North, given our different circumstances be it financially, climate wise.

She also went on to highlight that for this we need systems that are transparent, accountable, fair, just and responsible.

In furtherance of the above she highlighted a sad truth of how only a few countries have data that is available to the public. This in effect, leaves citizens in the dark and coupled with police brutality creates a public relations nightmare. What makes the government think that the same people it has such strained relationship with, will heed to the directives needed to save lives? She asks.

Similarly, Prof. highlighted that we need detailed information on how the funds given by the World Bank are going to be used.

THE GENDER DYNAMIC OF COVID-19

Miss Dinah Highlighted how the surge in unpaid domestic work that women do is going to affect how women keep up with their paid jobs, which they now have to do from home. This is because with everything shut down, all the family members are home and thus the woman – because of social norms- has to take care of the home.

She also highlighted a sad fact of how women are now quarantined with their abusers. Reports of domestic violence, in which 90% of the time women are the victims, has increased by 30% during this lockdown period. This statistic has been recorded by countries all over the world, including china.

A HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

The discussion was led by Ms. Makena. She highlighted how police brutality, which sadly is not a new phenomenon, has been reported all over the world in enforcing the various government directives aimed at combating the pandemic. So far we have recorded 3 deaths in Kenya owing to police brutality and a few others have been maimed. Such behavior according to Waridah is a self-defeating in that this is the time government needs to foster a good relationship with its people to ensure cooperation in the fight against covid-19.

She also highlighted that the use of brutal force on people who violate government directives shows a lack of creativity on the part of the government. She gave an example of France and Greece where those who violate curfews are fined instead of being brutalized.

Police brutality also has fiscal implications on the families of those affected. For example the loss of bread- winners should the victim succumb to injuries and the medical bills they have to incur. This is adding financial strains to already strained people in these hard times.

Makena also mentioned the need to cater for the homeless people.

A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PANDEMIC

Dr. Ayah mentioned that lower respiratory tract infections e.g pneumonia, of which COVID-19 is, hit Sub Saharan and S. E Asian Countries the worst. It is therefore a matter of time, should proper care not be taken, before the situation becomes dire.

He also mentioned that previous research has indicated that most people don't know that they have chronic illnesses such as diabetes, HIV, hypertension. These people, because of their underlying illnesses, are the most vulnerable to COVID. Contracting COVID will consequently expose their underlying illnesses and the health care system needs to prepare for a crisis within a crisis. The crises being a surge in patients with chronic illnesses.

Similarly, we need to think about how to manage the illness given the fact that prevalence of lower respiratory tract illnesses experience a surge in the colder months of April, June, July.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

In this segment something that stood out was a suggestion by Miss Layla Latif tailored to curb the apparent lack of a program to mitigate loss for low -income earners. She says that part of the funds given by the World Bank need to be transferred to those in need. To do this she gave an example of how Muslims have a 'zakat fund' that helps the vulnerable members in their communities. Her suggestion is to use these program as a conduit for the dissemination of these funds. She also

gave a reassurance that as per her research Christians are also beneficiaries of the program thus issues of discrimination are not relevant.