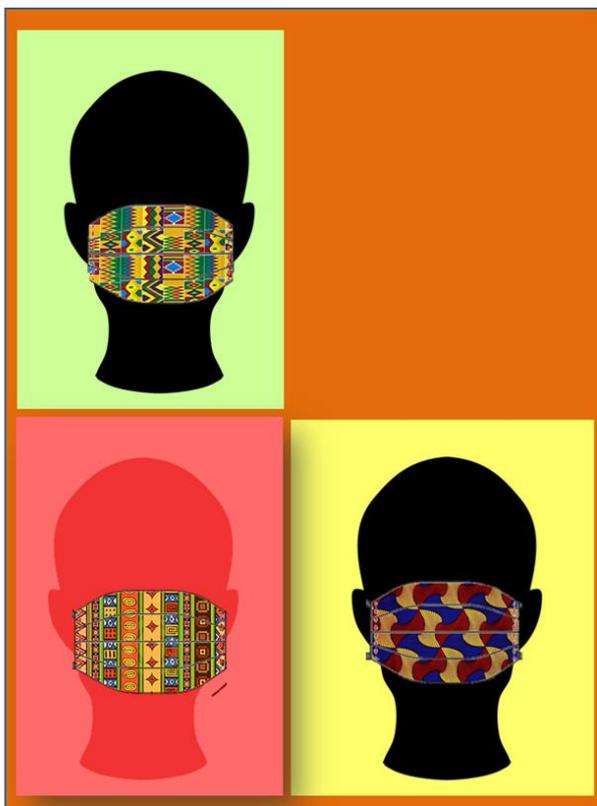NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION SOUTH HUB

June 2020

NSD-S Hub Webinar
AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

www.thesouthernhub.org

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Executive Summary

"Good coordination with the African Union, Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations, WHO, WFP and others will be absolutely key in this crisis. They all have their own response plans and joint advocacy is needed for effective management and recovery from this crisis and others to come."
Survey respondent

NATO Strategic Direction South Hub (NSD-S Hub) and Three Stones International (TSI) collaborated to conduct a live online webinar on the 28 April, 2020, supplemented by secondary data review and an online survey, to better understand Africa's response to COVID-19, and relative successes, challenges and recommendations for NATO's contribution. The three-hour webinar was moderated by NSD-S Hub and TSI utilizing the Zoom platform, with 10 subject matter expert panellists and 22 audience participants. A pre-webinar video was also shared in advance of the dialogue session to collect responses to the survey and increase interest for audience members to join the session.

The webinar dialogue and audience comments allowed the NSD-S Hub to engage and learn from African experts sharing regional experience from eight different countries. The discussion addressed COVID-19 preparedness and response across the African continent, including the overall impact on political, economic and social stability. While the panellists touched on matters related to the immediate impacts on health and wellbeing of citizens, they also addressed the long-term implications to trade, national and regional economies, political stability and regional cooperation. Additionally, the dialogue explored recommendations for support which African nations and NATO could employ both in pandemic response and post-pandemic recovery.

The topics discussed covered public health and the social measures governments have taken as part of their pandemic responses as well as the how lockdown measures have substantially affected food security, education, livelihoods and economies. Experts also shared their experience regarding human rights violations, national and regional conflict, political instability and national communication strategies to control the spread of misinformation.

While many were concerned that the virus would be particularly devastating in Africa, others hoped that the advanced warning, young demographics and the experience of fighting infectious diseases would give African countries an advantage and an ability to avoid the worst of the pandemic. Most of the panellists' concerns cantered on the socioeconomic impact the pandemic would have on nations. Additionally, the speakers highlighted that the social protection and preventative measures to support vulnerable groups during lockdown which were implemented were inadequate and unsustainable.

The experts also discussed how political instability and conflict were hindering efforts to trace active cases and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Many countries are turning to military forces to assist in the crisis by enforcing curfews, quarantines and lockdowns, as well as to distribute food or supplies. While these efforts are put in place to protect populations, panellists reported that this militarized response has started to create fear, social resentment, resistance and violence amongst citizens.

Regional and global coordination and collaboration, including collaboration between NATO and the African Union, are seen as the keys to success for Africa's response to COVID-19 and post pandemic recovery efforts.

Introduction

The global community is facing an incredible task to mitigate and eventually stop the spread of COVID-19, a pandemic which has claimed thousands of lives and affected the health of more than 4 million people.[1] African countries have moved from COVID-19 readiness to response as all countries have confirmed cases.

The main objective of this webinar was to capture insights from local, regional and global experts regarding Africa's response to COVID-19 and what measures have been enacted to confront the unique challenges Africa faces. Focus was given to the overall effect COVID19 would have on stability in Africa and the precautions needed to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Key questions were posed in a survey format on NATO's and TSI networks prior to the April 28, 2020 webinar with twenty-nine (29) individuals responding. The survey focused on gathering insights into national and regional responses to the pandemic including; successes and challenges, systems and capacity reinforcements, support to vulnerable groups, involvement of armed forces, potential for instability and government overreach and recommendations for NATO to consider for how to best support African governments.

The expert panellists involved in the COVID-19 response webinar were from different regions across Africa and had been identified through TSI and NSD-S's professional and social networks. Each panellist presented their experience of pandemic preparedness and response in their respective countries or region. Following the panel presentation, NATO posed questions to further explore emerging themes. The session concluded with each panellist offering recommendations to NATO and member nations for consideration in supporting African nations during COVID-19 response and post recovery process.

An audience was invited to take part in the dialogue session and was comprised of 22 members from international and civil society organizations joining from various locations across the globe. The audience members were given the opportunity to pose questions and comments within the sidebar chat of the Zoom platform. These questions were moderated by Three Stones, answered by panellists within the chat zone and brought into the facilitated discussion.

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[1] WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Situation Report-112. 11 May 2020.

Countries represented through survey and webinar panelists

1. Burkina Faso
2. Burundi
3. Cameroon
4. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
5. Ethiopia
6. Germany
7. Guinee
8. Italy
9. Kenya
10. Libya
11. Mali
12. Mauritania
13. Rwanda
14. Somalia
15. South Sudan
16. Togo
17. Tunisia
18. Turkey
19. Uganda
20. USA
21. Zambia
22. Zimbabwe

Panelist and Survey Respondents Areas of Expertise and Disciplines

Public Health
Epidemiology
Medicine
Social Work
Counter Terrorism
Human Trafficking
Human Rights
Democracy and Peace Building
Community and Youth Engagement
Gender Equality
Donor Engagement and Resource
Mobilization
Migration and Development
Agriculture, Resilience and Climate
Change
Research
Cultural Heritage Protection
Journalism
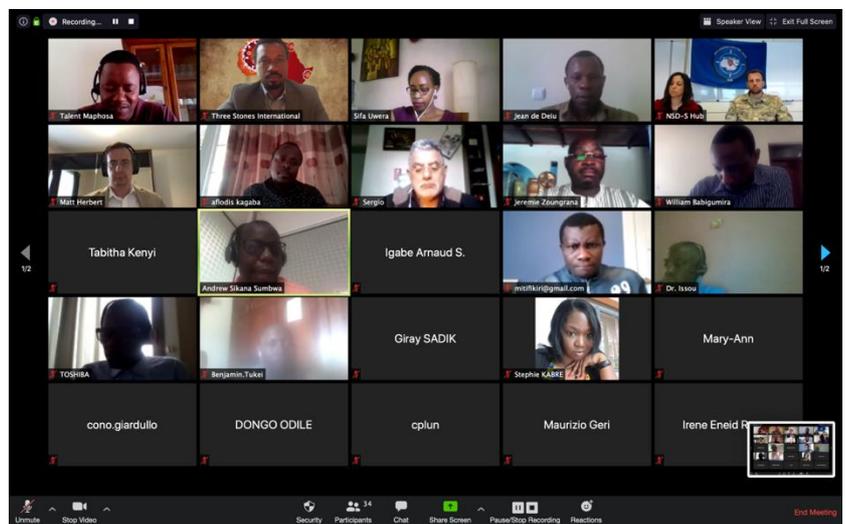
Ahead of the live webinar the following dialogue prompts were posed to the Panellists:

1. *In your area of expertise, what has been your experience of the COVID-19 response in your country and/ or region? Do you feel it is adequate and timely?*
2. *What would you recommend for multilateral organizations and NATO to prioritize in supporting African governments during the pandemic response and post COVID-19 pandemic recovery?*

The discussion focused on COVID-19 preparedness and response across the African continent, issues facing various countries and regions and its overall impact on political, economic and social stability. The panellists discussed matters beyond immediate impacts on health and wellbeing of its citizens, also looking at the long-term implications to trade, national and regional economies, political stability and regional cooperation.

Background

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic started in December, 2019 in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and has since affected 212 countries and territories around the world. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic when the number of cases outside China had increased 13-fold within two weeks. The WHO chief Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus said this shift in labelling coronavirus from an outbreak to a pandemic was a critical step indicating the severity and reach of the outbreak and was a push for governments to take "urgent and aggressive action."

Globally, attention has been focused on reducing the rate of spread in order to slow the pandemic and allow time for health systems to stabilize and cope while an eventual vaccine is developed. In order to reduce the spread of COVID19, countries have responded by closing borders and introducing state and country lockdowns which include home-quarantining, limiting outdoor movement of individuals to interactions with only essential services , closing of non-essential businesses and the stopping of international air travel. To date, there are 4,284,277 confirmed cases and a toll of 288,092 deaths attributed to COVID-19.[2] Initially Africa had few reported cases, but this began to change rapidly after the first confirmed case in Africa was reported in Egypt on 12 February, 2020. Within weeks the virus had spread to dozens of African countries. Currently, all African countries have confirmed cases of COVID-19 with a total of 66,373 cases and 2,336 deaths. South Africa (10.7k), Egypt (9.7k) and Algeria (6.3k) have reported the highest number of cases.[3] Africa was advised by the WHO to prepare for the worst.

> **COVID 19 Definitions**
>
> COVID- 19 is a flu-like illness (symptoms include fever, cough and breathing difficulties) caused by a coronavirus (SARS CoV- 2), the same family of viruses that range from the common cold to the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus. COVID-19 is spread from persons infected with the virus through small droplets from the nose or mouth when a person coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces, spreading to other people as they come into contact with these surfaces and then touch their own eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can also be spread when a person inhales the droplets from a person who coughs or exhales and is infected with COVID-19.
> *Source: WHO COVID19 Situation Report*

"The best advice for Africa is to prepare for the worst and prepare today. Don't assume your community won't be affected. Prepare as if it will be. Don't assume you won't be infected. Prepare as if you will be. But there is hope; there are many things that all countries can do." Tedros Adhanom, Head of WHO

The immediate and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on health, economy and politics are worrying for Africa. The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies recently conducted a mapping of risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 in Africa taking into consideration varying levels of risk.[4] The relative levels of vulnerability across the continent were scaled from 1 to 5 (with 5 being the greatest level of vulnerability) in the following areas: International Exposure; Health; Urban Density; Urban Population; Population Age; Government Transparency; Press Freedom; Conflict; and Displacement. The table below details the results of the analysis:

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[2] Worldometer. Countries where COVID-19 has spread. [website] https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/ (Accessed 12 May 2020).
[3] Africa CDC. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Dashboard. [website] https://africacdc.org/covid-19/ (accessed 12 May 2020).
[4] Mapping Risk Factors for the Spread of COVID-19 in Africa, Africa Center for Strategic Studies. April 3, 2020.

Table 1: Composite Chart of Risk Factors[5]

Country	Int'l Exposure	Public Health System	Density of Urban Areas	Total Pop. in Urban Areas	Pop. Age	Gov't Transparency	Press Freedom	Conflict Magnitude	Forced Displacement	Risk Total (out of 45)
South Sudan	2	5	5	3	2	5	5	5	5	37
DRC	3	5	3	5	1	5	4	5	5	36
Nigeria	5	5	2	5	2	4	3	4	5	35
Sudan	3	3	4	4	2	5	4	5	5	35
Cameroon	3	4	3	3	2	4	5	3	5	32
Egypt	5	1	3	5	4	3	4	2	4	31
Ethiopia	3	3	4	5	2	2	4	3	5	31
CAR	1	5	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	30
Somalia	1	5	1	2	2	5	4	5	5	30
Chad	1	5	5	3	1	5	4	1	4	29
Equatorial Guinea	4	5	3	1	3	5	5	1	1	28
Libya	3	1	1	2	4	5	4	4	4	28
Uganda	3	2	4	4	1	4	4	1	5	28
Algeria	4	1	2	4	5	3	4	1	3	27
Angola	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	1	3	27
Côte d'Ivoire	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	1	4	27
Mali	2	5	4	3	1	3	3	2	4	27
Morocco	5	1	3	4	5	2	4	1	2	27
Mozambique	4	4	3	3	1	4	3	2	3	27
Republic of Congo	3	3	4	2	2	5	4	1	3	27
Burkina Faso	2	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	26
Burundi	1	3	3	2	2	5	5	2	3	26
Djibouti	1	4	4	1	4	3	5	1	3	26
Kenya	4	2	1	4	3	4	3	1	4	26
Tanzania	3	3	3	4	2	2	4	1	4	26
Mauritania	1	4	4	2	3	4	3	1	3	25
Niger	1	4	4	3	1	3	3	2	4	25
South Africa	5	2	1	4	5	1	2	1	4	25
Togo	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	1	2	24
Zambia	3	3	3	3	1	3	4	1	3	24
Zimbabwe	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	1	2	24
Guinea-Bissau	1	4	4	1	2	5	3	1	2	23
Madagascar	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	1	1	23
Senegal	3	2	5	3	2	1	3	1	3	23
Comoros	1	4	3	1	3	4	4	1	1	22
Eritrea	1	2	2	2	3	5	5	1	1	22
Guinea	2	5	2	2	2	3	3	1	2	22
Ghana	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	2	21
Liberia	2	4	1	2	2	4	3	1	2	21
Rwanda	2	2	2	3	2	1	5	1	3	21
Tunisia	4	1	2	2	5	1	3	1	2	21
Eswatini	2	3	1	1	4	3	4	1	1	20
Gabon	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	1	1	20
Lesotho	2	5	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	20
Sierra Leone	1	5	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	20
The Gambia	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	1	2	20
Malawi	2	3	1	2	1	3	3	1	3	19
Botswana	4	2	1	1	4	1	3	1	1	18
Namibia	4	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	18
Benin	1	4	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	17
Cabo Verde	2	1	4	1	5	1	1	1	1	17
Mauritius	3	1	1	1	5	1	2	1	1	16
Seychelles	2	1	1	1	5	1	3	1	1	16
São Tomé and Príncipe	1	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	13

While many are concerned that the virus will be particularly devastating in Africa, there is hope that that due to advanced warning, Young demographics and past experience in fighting infectious diseases, African countries may have an advantage and a unique ability to avoid the worst of the pandemic. In fact, nine weeks into the pandemic, Africa, a continent of 1.3 billion people, accounts for less than 1% of the world's cases. Initial scepticism arose as to whether Africa's resilience was due to lack of testing and under-reporting, but as each week continued without a major increase in the number of cases, this could no longer be used as an explanation. Responses have varied greatly across Africa in terms of the speed in which governments have imposed preventative measures but most countries have instituted social distancing and various levels of lockdown measures. Social distancing and early lockdown measures have clearly been effective globally; however, some countries have done neither and still reported only a few cases such as in Myanmar and Cambodia. There is reason to maintain optimism that Africa can avoid extreme levels of disruption going forward.

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[5] Mapping Risk Factors for the Spread of COVID-19 in Africa, Africa Center for Strategic Studies. April 3, 2020.

African nations have experience in responding to and containing Ebola outbreaks, contributing important lessons in understanding how to engage communities in dealing with infectious diseases. There are also many African governments, including Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, South Africa and Zambia, leading the response and introducing robust restrictive measures. Africa had time to prepare and took advantage of that time to close borders early, monitor and restrict air travel, close schools and ban large gatherings before a majority of cases were confirmed. Uganda and Rwanda closed borders and airports even before registering many cases and Sierra Leone declared a 12-month state of emergency before a single confirmed case. Advanced warning also allowed Africa to boost its testing capacity with over 40 countries gaining the ability to test for COVID-19 since February 2020, when initially only Senegal and South Africa had the capability.

Youthful populations may be seen as a potential positive for Africa, with the median age in Africa 19.7 years in contrast to the median age in China of 38.4 years, and the median age in the European Union of 43.1 years.[6] International data shows that risk of serious medical complications and death from COVID-19 rises significantly with age. However, the high prevalence of concurrent endemic conditions which affect the immune system such as malnutrition, anaemia, malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, may increase the severity of COVID-19 and affect younger patients at a greater rate than seen in the rest of the world.

Subsequent to Ebola outbreaks, many African countries made improvements in health security, including the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa recently discussed the benefits of applying lessons learned from the continent's Ebola virus disease response.[7]

"The important lesson we learned from the Ebola outbreak, which is being applied now, is how to start work early at the community level, because communities are key at the start of an outbreak, in terms of surveillance and recognizing patterns of illness." Survey respondent

It may be too soon to conclude that any country has been spared the long-term effects of COVID-19. With the devastating socioeconomic impact lockdown measures have created, countries around the globe are starting to ease precautionary measures in order to restart economies. With the easing of measures, experts fear that a second, and potentially more lethal, wave will occur with a resurgence of new infections.[8] To mitigate this, the WHO produced guidelines for the easing of restrictions, urging governments to put in place a comprehensive set of measures which continue to slow down transmission and prevent loss of life, while protecting all their citizens, especially the most vulnerable populations. Before easing restrictions three criteria are fundamental:
   1. Is the epidemic under control?
   2. Is the health system able to cope with a resurgence of cases?
   3. Is the surveillance system able to detect and manage the cases and their contacts?

Panellists, audience and survey respondents shared key insights on COVID-19 response in Africa, looking at the health systems, socioeconomic, security and instability factors which have the

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[6] Worldometer. Countries where COVID-19 has spread. [website] https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/ (Accessed 12 May 2020).
[7] World Health Organization. How the lessons from Ebola are helping Africa's COVID-19 response. Africa Renewal. March 2020.
[8] The Lancet. Beware of second wave of COVID-19. Vol 395, page 1321-1322. April 8, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30845-X

potential to affect the way Africa manages the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, as well as ways in which NATO can support the process.

NATO's Role

Obtaining and maintaining peace is the fundamental goal of NATO with the understanding that open, bilateral communication is key to achieving this goal. With this in mind, the NSD-S Hub was formed to stimulate dialogue around peace and stability. In order to do so, a deeper understanding of the regions' dynamics, challenges and cultures is required. The NSD-S Hub is a forum and acts as a docking station for open information sharing connecting NATO allies and partners with subject matter experts from Africa and the Middle East. The NSD-S Hub chose to look into the impact of COVID-19 preparedness and response on the stability in Africa on both political and economic levels. Therefore, various local subject matter experts were invited to partake in an online video discussion to share information and news from the ground and to present their various perspectives and future expectations, hopes and concerns for the region.

Discussion and Key Insights

The webinar and survey conducted by the NSD-S Hub and Three Stones International revealed a number of compelling thematic areas for discussion regarding Africa's response to COVID-19. The section below highlights data and significant insights discussed by panellists and survey respondents with regard to; public health and social measures, food security, education, livelihoods and economic impact, human rights violations, conflict and political instability, and communication strategies and control of misinformation. The dialogue also brought out recommendations and ways in which NATO could support Africa's COVID-19 preparedness and post pandemic recovery and maintain stability across the continent.

Public Health Measures-Health and Health Systems

The biggest current concern across Africa is the potential for COVID-19 to spread rapidly and overwhelm health systems in countries with relatively fragile health systems. There is also a high level of concern surrounding concurrent epidemics of vaccine-preventable and other infectious diseases, inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructures, population mobility and the susceptibility for social and political unrest during times of crisis.[9] Sub-Saharan Africa has approximately one doctor for every 5,000 people, compared with one per 300 in Europe[10] and preventative measures such as social distancing and frequent handwashing with soap and water will prove difficult in overcrowded areas without regular access to fresh water.

Panellists shared insights regarding government responses in their country or region implementing public health and social measures. While most shared that governments had responded promptly to implement preventative measures such as closing schools and borders, most panellists were concerned that limited national capacities for contact tracing and uncoordinated regional approaches and measures could hinder prevention with inconsistent rollout of screening, surveillance and testing at crucial points of entry. Challenges in regards to lack of health infrastructure, weak health systems and minimal capacity to screen, test, prevent spread and treat COVID-19 were noted.

Additionally, the pandemic response has increased pressures on healthcare infrastructures to the detriment of routine healthcare services to prevent, control and treat the spread of HIV, TB and malaria. Little provision has been given to ongoing healthcare services such as growth monitoring, immunization, prenatal and post-natal care, especially considering the absence of public transport. A few countries have enlisted private healthcare providers to offer routine screening and immunization campaigns, while others rely on continued care through established healthcare facilities.

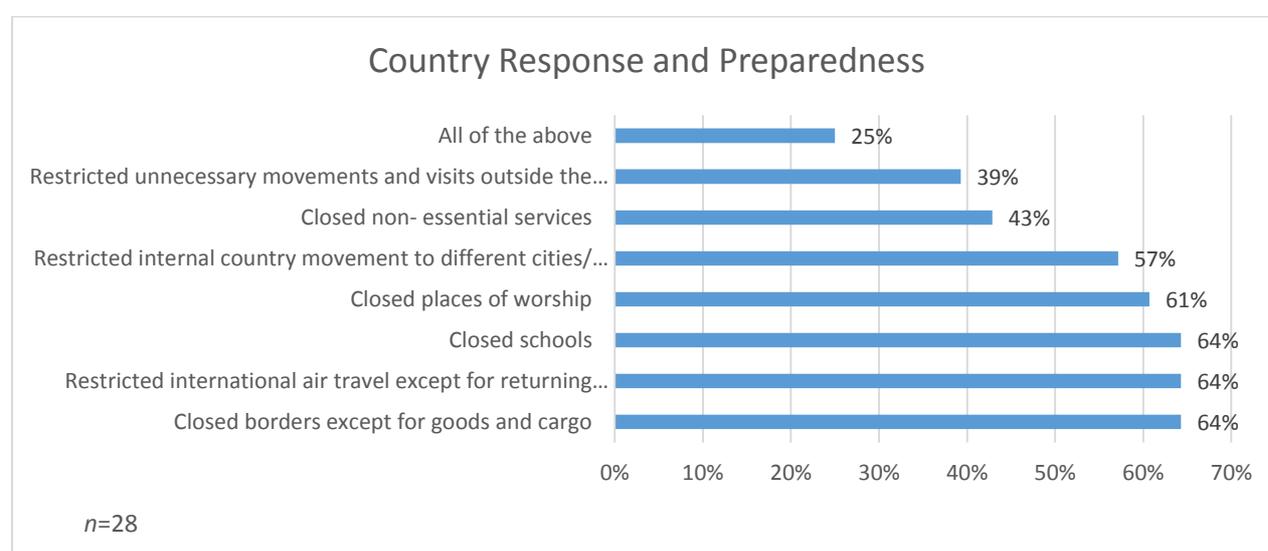[9] Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak, African Union. 2020
[10] Density of Medical Doctors per 10,000 population. Global Health Observatory Data (GHO). 2020.

"The biggest concern is to ensure that we do not lose the gains made towards HIV epidemic control. Countries need to continue ARV distribution, VL [viral load] monitoring, adherence monitoring, and virtual follow up via phone." Panelist

Positive measures were noted in early engagement with the communities, utilization of established infrastructures for infectious disease prevention for screening, isolation and case management, coordination with local and regional stakeholders, the utilization of local expertise/task forces and embracing cultural and traditional practices.

Most survey respondents reported their countries or region had put in place national preparedness and response measures as outlined by the WHO. The results are as follows:

Table 2: Country Response and Preparedness Survey Results

Country Response and Preparedness

Category	Percentage
All of the above	25%
Restricted unnecessary movements and visits outside the…	39%
Closed non- essential services	43%
Restricted internal country movement to different cities/…	57%
Closed places of worship	61%
Closed schools	64%
Restricted international air travel except for returning…	64%
Closed borders except for goods and cargo	64%

n=28

Social Measures - Food Security, Education, Livelihoods and Economic Impact

While COVID-19 primarily presents a public health crisis, the far-reaching socioeconomic ramifications are already disrupting millions of Africans' livelihoods and disproportionately impacting poor households and the informal workforce. With the global collapse of the price of oil, oil-rich countries have not been spared the spill-over effects. An initial analysis of COVID-19's economic impact finds that Africa's GDP growth in 2020 could be cut by three to eight percent, requiring governments, the private sector and development institutions to significantly expand or adapt existing safeguarding measures to support economies and livelihoods across Africa.[11]

"I believe a fiscal shock will affect major oil producing countries (Nigeria, Angola etc.). This may have implications on the social and political stability. Therefore, painful adjustments in recurrent and capital expenditure are more likely to be seen over the next 6 to 12 months. Economic growth will also slow down." Panelist

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[11] Tackling COVID-19 in Africa, McKinsey & Company, Kartik Jayaram, Acha Leke, Amandla Ooko-Ombaka, and Ying Sunny Sun. April 2020.

The greatest threat has been to food security, due to critical food shortages. The South African region has not only been subject to the pandemic but also to drought in a time where NGOs have been tackling the COVID-19 crisis and are less focused on food relief. In Zimbabwe alone, famine was affecting 5 million people before the outbreak and with the COVID-19 pandemic triggering an alarming increase in the prices of basic commodities, mass demonstrations soon ensued.

Some African governments have social measures in place to support vulnerable groups during lockdown and have implemented preventative measures, yet much is still required to sufficiently support these communities on an ongoing basis. Most panellists agreed that not enough has been done to support vulnerable groups and over half of survey respondents indicated that no special measures had been put in place and that any measures in place are not sustainable or adequate for those facing undue hardship.

"The Ugandan government is providing beans for those that [are poor] and there are many donations also coming from rich Ugandans, providing relief items to the needy. While these are good actions, it is not well coordinated, moving slowly and does not reach those in the most remote villages. The government claims that these people have gardens and can support themselves." Survey respondent

Other social challenges relate to food insecurity and households which depend on casual income to meet their daily needs. These households are at risk of malnutrition if lockdowns continue and the demand for food exceeds the government's capacity to feed them. Panellists cited both Rwanda and Zimbabwe as examples. In Rwanda, food rationing in the first two months of lockdown seemed manageable but demand soon exceeded supply and lockdown measures had to be lifted. In Zimbabwe, the government reduced the mandatory quarantine days in isolation centres from the recommended 14 days to 7 days due to the inability to provide food and other necessities.

"One of the biggest threats to security in Africa is access to food. People cannot respect these [prevention] measures. Hunger annihilates man and no measure can stop him when he seeks or wants to seek food." Audience member

In some countries, farmers are unable to produce or access agricultural inputs and extension services. Perishables are rotting as markets are closed, and incomes have been lost by those connected to the agriculture industry including; traders, constructors, motorists, hoteliers and tour operators. In contrast, while Uganda and Rwanda have placed movement restrictions on the populace, they have left the agriculture sector largely open, with farmers allowed to plant and tend to their crops and input supply shops remain open.

"Currently farmers are experiencing all stockouts of most agriculture planting materials due to the ban of public transport. Those that are selling, are very expensive and most farmers cannot afford. This has direct effect on the food security in the near future yet there are no efforts so far to curb the situation." Audience member

An increase in unemployment was sparked by closures in air/road transport, tourism, hospitality and non-essential trade. Additional job cuts are expected in other private sectors as well as in government, non-governmental organizations and civil society if the pandemic persists.

The closure of public and private schools, including vocational training centres and professional schools, remains of high concern for educators, especially in countries where there are limited options for online learning.

"In South Sudan, the education system will perish because we don't have internet and hence no online education system." Panelist

Burkina Faso has resorted to digital technology to close the communication gap between administration and local farmers. The technology allows for online training and tutorials, pest control, and information regarding weather, farming season and financial opportunities. Call centres have also been a practical way to assist farmers remotely. The initiative has proven to be excellent for agricultural goods with the exception of perishable products such as fruits and vegetables.

Despite the locust season, food security in Kenya and Uganda has remained relatively stable and the weather has been favourable for harvest.

Human Rights Violations

Human Rights laws recognize that in the context of serious public health threats, restrictions on some rights can be justified if they have a legal basis and are strictly necessary, based on scientific evidence, neither arbitrary nor discriminatory in application, of limited duration, respectful of human dignity, subject to review and proportionate to achieve the objective.[12] Most citizens agree with this and understand that some infringement on human rights is necessary for the good of the whole population. However, governments must ensure that, while certain restrictions are put in place to protect citizens from the spread of the coronavirus, these restrictions must not create opportunities for censorship, discrimination, abuse of power or put citizens at risk of violence.

"The foreseeable fundamental impact is in citizen privacy, especially in the digital space. Currently, a lot of curtailment of rights and freedoms has happened within the context of public health-imposed restrictions and guidelines." Audience member

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. It knows no social, economic or national boundaries. As evidenced by increasing reports globally, COVID-19 has exacerbated the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) with violence and conflict stemming from frustration and depression during imposed lockdown and curfews. In Cameroon, women who are displaced and living in conflict-affected areas are particularly vulnerable. According to an expert panellist, the number of domestic violence cases reported during this period has tripled since February 2020 compared to the previous year. Sexual violence cases have been reported in Rwanda where vulnerable women in Kigali suburbs reported rape cases by military personnel.[13] The police, local defence forces and army personnel in Uganda and Kenya have been accused of abusing their power to brutalize women street

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[12] UN Commission on Human Rights. *The Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. September 1984. [website] https://www.refworld.org/docid/4672bc122.html (Accessed 12 May 2020)

[13] https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/rdf-condemns-criminal-misconduct-its-personnel-kangondo-assault-case (published April 04, 2020)

vendors while enforcing curfew measures. Governments are looking to the UN, civil society and non-government organizations to effectively respond to the rising GBV concerns.

"As part of the nation's COVID-19 response efforts, UNFPA Zimbabwe is working closely with civil society organizations and the Ministry of Women's Affairs Community and Small to Medium Enterprises Development (MOWACSME) to ensure the continuation of GBV services." Audience Member

Conflict and Political Instability

Political instability and conflict will hinder efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and trace active cases. Boko Haram has not ceased their attacks on military and civilian targets and the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab in Somalia is not implementing any disease control measures. Autocratic governments may take advantage of the global preoccupation with the pandemic to delay elections or arrest the opposition. Countries are also turning to military forces to assist in the crisis to enforce curfews, quarantines and lockdowns, as well as to distribute food or supplies. While these efforts are put in place to protect populations, it may have the opposite effect and be a catalyst of fear, social resentment, resistance and violence.

West Africa is subject to terrorist attacks, which are rampant in Mali, Chad, Cameroon and Cote D'Ivoire, to name a few. In a region where the vast deployment of army forces is vital to counter violent extremists groups, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant mobilizing a significant part of those forces in order to implement COVID-19 security measures and regulations. This has left the area open to security vacuums and vulnerable to crime. Furthermore, people in urban areas are now unable to flee attacks or reach health facilities due to movement restrictions. Although rural lands are more affected by these security gaps, instability is foreseen in more urbanized areas as well. Food security in West Africa might also be at risk due to the weakening of the agricultural industry.

Over half of the survey respondents reported the use of armed forces to support local police in enforcing curfew, quarantine and preventative measures. Armed forces have been enlisted to support medical personnel, control borders and support food and voucher distribution in communities. However, reports of unease have surfaced as police are accused of abusing their authority.

East Africa suffers conflicts which have persisted despite the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. It is foreseen that additional local conflicts will occur in urban areas where the poor have suffered serious economic damage due to restrictions and the disruption of markets and industry. Locust invasion will add to the critical vulnerability of the agricultural sector and needs to be addressed.

"Cases of police violence have occurred nationwide targeting people in the informal settlements and other landless people in rural areas. In some cases, people are forced to wear masks, and if they do not (even if they don't have access or didn't have information), they are beaten by the police." Survey respondent

The majority of the concerns which were raised were in regards to political instability in countries with upcoming elections and the potential for governments to delay the democratic process, utilizing the state of emergency to enforce authoritarian government rule and in the restriction of movement of citizens, thereby infringing human rights.

The government is using the crisis to cripple the opposition and started by forbidding the opposition distributing food to the needy. There is also a sense that the government is using some groups to push for postponing 2021 elections without justifiable reasons." Survey respondent

With all efforts geared towards tackling COVID-19, the pandemic may exacerbate instability in countries and regions which were already fragile such as Libya, Niger, Chad, Somalia, Sudan, DRC and more generally the Middle East and Northern Africa. There is fear that this could trigger widespread unrest and test crisis management systems on the continent. Lack of food, increased gender-based and sexual violence, restricted economic opportunities and lost livelihoods have been reported to be more severe in countries with ongoing conflict[14].

Restrictions of movement and the closing of borders have deterred crime along the borders and cut off smuggling between Mali and Algeria. In southern Libya, the Tebu militia has begun patrolling the border with Niger, apprehending and expelling irregular migrants and smugglers. A similar dynamic is occurring on Libya's border with Sudan and Chad, where a Zwey militia has begun to expel irregular migrants apprehended locally and in Benghazi. Many security forces which had been deployed along the borders became infected by the Corona virus. Also, with the coast guard afflicted, an irregular flow of migrants towards Europe soon ensued. This is an issue which could worsen with time and must be closely monitored. Organized crime is predicted to rebound and move into operational vacuums. A surge in drug smuggling is also expected as smuggling activities have already started to re-emerge.

"The war itself has significantly impacted responses. Hospitals designated for COVID patients in Tripoli have been targeted, and the high numbers of Russian, Syrian, Sudanese, and Chadian mercenaries at the frontlines increase the risk of both contagion coming into Libya and exiting with these forces." Panelist

There is potential for a similar trend in Southern Africa where the greatest threat to food security could lead to a rise of xenophobic attacks with the potential of creating political instability, rioting and destruction of property. A rise in homophobia has also been reported in some nations where the virus has been falsely associated with the gay community. Such prejudice might lead to violence and discrimination against this minority group.

Security mechanisms in Southern Africa have proven in the past to be able to deal with this type of instability. However, there have been reports of increased conflict and tension leading to the violation of human rights. In DRC, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) militia utilized country lockdowns to attack and kill 12 park rangers and 4 civilians in the DRC side of the volcanoes massif that stretches across DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda[15].

Communication Strategies and Control of Misinformation

Misinformation, conspiracy theories, the blaming of foreigners for the spread of the virus and an increasing number of "cures" touted to prevent the coronavirus will not only compound these issues, but also impact leaders' ability to convince citizens to take preventative measures seriously. Social cohesion and collective gatherings are a high priority and of importance in African cultures. Government strategies to employ preventative measures which impose social distancing have proven challenging in some countries. Violent protests broke out on 20 March

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[14] Silencing the Guns. Insights from webinar convened by the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Peace and Security Council. 11 May 2020.

[15] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/25/world/africa/congo-virunga-national-park-attack.html

2020 in Senegal after bans on public gatherings and mosque closures were put into place following the rise of COVID-19 cases. In Tanzania, President John Magufuli vowed to never close down places of worship, while taking the same measures as other African nations in closing schools, foreign arrival quarantine and banning of other public events. These varied responses have the potential risk of citizens not taking other precautions seriously.

Most survey respondents reported that their government had implemented a clear communication strategy for engaging with communities and disseminating regular and reliable information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regular addresses from presidents have helped to build and maintain trust of the government in countries such as South Africa and Uganda. Africa's success in managing COVID-19 also lies in early community engagement in the organization of a strong response to the pandemic. Well-informed citizens who feel included have the potential to efficiently spread messages and other information regarding practical measures to protect themselves and their communities from the virus. Community engagement further supports trust and confidence in government efforts.

> *"Community engagement through radio, TV, and social media platforms, and distribution of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials is ongoing. Parliamentarians have also been engaged to facilitate and promote community awareness in their constituencies." Panellist*

While communication strategies and engagement of communities are in place to relay key preventative measures, few countries have specific strategies to monitor and address fake news and the spread of misinformation.

In some countries, youth engagement has been seen as a plausible channel for curbing the spread of miscommunication among communities. Young people are key actors in social media spaces. Coordination of youth to actively take part in the discussions using various social media platforms helps to spread accurate messages. Some African countries, such as Zimbabwe, Uganda, Nigeria and Burkina Faso are including youth in their communication plans and strategies. Youth collaboration should be seen as a critical contributor to tackling misinformation. In addition, in several African countries, popular youth personalities, such as footballers, movie stars and celebrities, have led messaging and communications campaigns for the provision and supply of food relief to the most vulnerable as well as infection prevention messaging.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Stable governance is crucial to slowing down transmission and preventing loss of life, while protecting all citizens, especially the most vulnerable populations. Strengthening coordination between international bodies, regionally, nationally and locally is important to mitigate potentially devastating impacts on health, economic and political stability. Community involvement and engagement practices are important learnings to be taken from Africa's Ebola response and have been utilized widely throughout the continent to elicit behaviour change under very difficult circumstances, as well as to build trust in government leadership. The use of military forces has been necessary in many countries to provide assistance through managing logistics for food and water access during lockdown and quarantine periods as they are skilled in emergency preparedness. Ensuring this power is not misused and maintaining trust during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery will be essential.

Panellists discussed ways in which NATO could support Africa during the pandemic and post pandemic recovery. Key recommendations for NATO's consideration which emerged from the webinar are outlined below.

Post-Recovery Recommendations

Information collected during the webinar and from survey respondents outlined recommendations relating to government focused priority areas post COVID-19. The consensus was that African nations need to look inward for solutions, utilizing regional and local expertise, to build resilience and identify sustainable solutions. These solutions include:

- o Formalizing of job markets and employment
- o Providing recovery support/grants to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- o Investing in social protection measures
- o Investing in food security and agriculture
- o Improving health systems and water and electricity infrastructure
- o Investing in local and regional markets to reduce reliance on imports for personal protective equipment (PPE), hand-sanitizers and ventilators
- o The Media plays a key role in stopping or aiding conflict, especially tribal conflict and xenophobia. It is a critical tool in promoting peace, diversity and inclusivity as well as curbing the spread of misinformation.

Recommendations for Collaboration and Coordination for NATO and NATO Allies

- Strengthen collaboration with the African Union and allies to share best practices for pandemic response and post pandemic recovery strategies bringing together multisector expertise including health, economy and security. Coordinated efforts are important in tackling pandemics or epidemics where politicians, development stakeholders, military, police, local governance, education and agriculture are critical for the prevention of the further spread of infection.
- Engage in talks with regional blocks and the AU to bridge collaboration gaps by leveraging early warning systems and cross-country responses to tackle epidemics, floods, locusts and other climate change threats.
- Actively engage AU and Partners in Africa in supporting cybersecurity efforts as well as tools to avoid the spread of disinformation.
- Prevention of ostracism issues related to irregular immigration in the North; immigrants have been subject to hunger and violence within detention centers and are vulnerable to Covid-19 contagion.
- Support in setting up cross-ministerial fusion centers and including stake holders in the security, public health and economy sectors. Fusion centers improve strategic measures and ensure stability on a long term basis.

Advocate for African Expertise

- Support collaboration between scientific centers in Europe and Africa. The pandemic has put a strain on international research centres and Africa has untapped potential to establish such research centres.

Advocate for Peace

- Provide continuity of operations training and support to security forces and ministries, including those which are vital in countering the pandemic.
- Advocate for a holistic approach to combat conflict and urge government to use non-military methods to enforce preventative measures such as engaging Civil Society actors.

Logistical and Capacity Support

- Support the AU with airlifts for delivery of medicines, health resources and equipment, as well as assist in international aid delivery from Allies and others to Africa.
- Support capacity building for health workers and stakeholders.
- Training in early warning systems and coordinated responses.

ANNEX 1: Additional Resources

- Shannon Smith, *"Managing Health and Economic Priorities as the COVID-19 Pandemic Spreads through Africa,"* *Spotlight*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, March 30, 2020.
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *"Five Myths about Coronavirus in Africa,"* *Spotlight*, March 27, 2020.
- Wendy Williams, *"COVID-19 and Africa's Displacement Crisis,"* *Spotlight*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, March 25, 2020.
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *"Coronavirus Spreads through Africa,"* Infographic, March 19, 2020 (updated daily).
- Shannon Smith, *"What the Coronavirus Means for Africa,"* *Spotlight*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, February 4, 2020.
- Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering COVID-19 Global Cases
- World Health Organization Coronavirus Information
- Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

ANNEX 2: COVID-19 Progression in Africa