2024 Social Policy in Africa Conference

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Theme: Social Policy in post-COVID Africa: In Search of an Inclusive and Equitable Architecture

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

A Flagship Activity of the South African Research (SARChI) Chair in Social Policy
Dr Shafi Ibrahim Abdullahi
(Bayyora University Kano, Nigeria)

Consumption and Households Welfare in Post Covid-19 Nigeria: Are Consumption Loans and Social Security Arrangements of help to Households in Kano Metropolis?

The research finds out how households fared at the peak of the socioeconomic shift that Covid-19 pandemic has caused on people lives in Kano metropolis. What are the major economic costs that households faced as a result? What are the factors and major variables that added households in coping with the situation? The research aims to shed light on factors that explains households spending pattern in one of the largest metropolises in Nigeria immediately after the easing of Covid-19 restrictions and reduction of fear about the virus. Kano metropolis presents its unique socio-economic and cultural context, which ultimately have a role to play in shaping consumption behaviour. The study utilizes data collected through questionnaire surveys conducted among representative sample of household in Kano metropolis.

Some of the findings show that consumer loans and social security arrangements have positive effects on household consumption. Food consumption takes larger share of income with about 65% of consumption income. About 75% of households in Kano belong to lower income groups. About 81% of respondents say that change in food price affected their consumption. Consequently, by understanding factors that influence consumption and household’s welfare after the pandemic, policymakers, researchers and stakeholders can gain insights into the dynamics of households’ consumption and develop effective strategies for dealing with similar scenario. The research findings shall serve as basis for policy formulation, enabling policymakers to design targeted interventions that promote sustainable living and enhancement of well being of inhabitant of major metropolises in Nigeria and elsewhere.

Mr Waidi Adebayo
(Universität Witten/Herdecke, Germany)

Resilience in the Face of Ecological Challenges: Strategies for Integrating Environmental Considerations into Social Policy Planning in Africa

African countries face severe ecological crises, including climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss. These crises are driving poverty and hunger and threaten communities. Climate action requires adaptive social policies that build resilience. Integrating environmental considerations into social policy planning can help build community resilience in African countries facing ecological crises. Through policy analysis and stakeholder engagement, this research identifies key ecological challenges. It explores strategies for developing sustainable, adaptive social policies that mitigate these crises. The study found a significant lack of integration of environmental concerns across areas like disaster management, agriculture, urban planning, healthcare access, and infrastructure development policies. Community stakeholders emphasised the need for more locally-driven planning, ecological monitoring, land restoration, diversified livelihoods, and climate change adaptation support through social policies. Policymakers should develop cross-sectoral national and local policies that use participatory processes to prioritise environmental sustainability, adaptation, and community empowerment. These policies must also be responsive to continuously changing environmental uncertainty and change.

Dr Adefolake Ademuson
(University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

Covid-19 Pandemic and Gender-Based Violence in the Lagos Metropolis

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a violent abuse against both men and women. Female children and women are the most vulnerable in the study. According to the World Bank, over 15% of females globally have been sexually or physically abused by their partners and non-partners. Over 7% of females have been sexually assaulted by individuals that are not their partners. Furthermore, more than 38% of women were murdered as a result of assaults from their partners. Between the months of March and May 2020 that most nations had to lock down due to Covid 19 pandemic, it was discovered that calls to domestic abuse hotlines rose up by 49 percent in the United Kingdom. Similarly, there have been an increase in the reported cases of domestic violence since March 2019 to May 2020. At least 170 cases reported on the average every month at Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT). Based on the foregoing, this study examined Covid 19 pandemic and gender based violence in the Lagos Metropolis. A total of 50 households were interviewed in the Lagos Metropolis and the findings revealed that the Covid 19 pandemic fueled GBV which included intimate partner violence, battery, sexual assault, physical, emotional and psychological abuse, particularly among women and girls. The study concludes that despite the advocacy and punitive laws to curb this menace, GBV particularly towards the women and female children is still on the increase. A revist of the policies is therefore recommended to address the scourge in our society.

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Professor Jimi Adesina
(SARCHI Chair in Social Policy, University of South Africa, South Africa)

Rethinking Social Policy in post-Covid-19 Africa: the nexus of social policy and development

Much of the evaluation of the Covid-19 pandemic’s impact on well-being in Africa has been concerned with the level of social support to mitigate the livelihood impact of the pandemic, public health responses, and access to testing and vaccination. At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the predictions for Africa were dire; these predictions turned out to be grossly exaggerated. Against a global population share of 16.72% in April 2023, Africa’s infection share was 0.7%, and the share of the death rate was 2.04%.

Yet a commonly ignored aspect of the pandemic is the extent to which it demonstrates Africa’s deep-seated development deficit. From the complete dependence on import for testing equipment to the absence of any vaccine project, the pandemic laid bare the adverse impact of four decades of retrenching Africa’s developmental projects, investment in national innovation systems, and manufacturing capacity.

In this paper, we explore the legacy of the hollowing out of the developmental role of the state, the imposition of a straitlaced, segmented, and segregated social policy architecture, and the defunding of social development broadly for the social policy responses to the pandemic. Using the Transformative Social Policy framework inspired by Mkwandwe, we explore the feasibility of an expansive understanding of social policy for transforming economies, social institutions, and relations. We raise anew the fundamental issue of the questions that a society concerned by the developmental role of the state, the imposition of a straitlaced, segmented, and segregated social policy architecture, and the defunding of social development broadly for the social policy responses to the pandemic. Using the Transformative Social Policy framework inspired by Mkwandwe, we explore the feasibility of an expansive understanding of social policy for transforming economies, social institutions, and relations. We raise anew the fundamental issue of the questions that a society concerned

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Dr Idris Ahmed Jamo
( Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State Nigeria)

Effect of E-Learning in the post-Covid-19 era on Students’ Academic Performance of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State Nigeria

What are the impacts of e-learning system on the students’ academic performance in the post-Covid-19 era in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria? What are the impacts of e-learning system on the quality of education in the post-Covid-19 era in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria? What are the students and teachers’ attitudes toward e-learning system in the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria? What are the challenges of e-learning system in the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and how can these challenges be ameliorated? These questions will be the focus of my research. Though there are studies on Covid-19, yet there are inadequate and comprehensive studies on the impact of e-learning in the post-Covid-19 era in the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. This research is empirical and will utilize both primary and secondary sources. Findings of the study will provide e-learning stakeholders with vital implications that ensure effective, useful success of e-learning that will positively improve students’ learning in the post-Covid-19 era

Dr Jihad Ait Soussane
(Ibn Tofail University, Morocco)


This paper explores the determinants of African countries’ preparedness for future epidemics/pandemics, utilizing the Global Health Security Index (GHSI). The GHSI evaluates prevention, detection, reporting, rapid response, health systems, compliance with international norms, and the risk environment, with determinants including governance, innovation, and gross revenue. The primary objective is to assess whether African nations have enhanced their preparedness post-Covid-19 comparing GHSI data from pre-pandemic (2019) to post-pandemic (2021).

The outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 had profound global economic impacts, particularly affecting African countries with recession and a surge in unemployment. Nations that were better prepared experienced less severe negative impacts compared to those less prepared. Consequently,
preparation for future pandemics/epidemics is crucial for maintaining economic and social stability. The GHS Index, developed by the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, serves as a comprehensive benchmark for health security across 195 countries. It informs decision-makers about necessary measures to fortify systems against future health crises, guiding prioritization and long-term investments.

This study is pivotal in gauging the post-Covid-19 impact on African nations’ readiness and contributes to the global understanding of pandemic preparedness. By influencing national health security policies, the GHS Index aims to induce tangible improvements, enhancing international capabilities in addressing infectious disease outbreaks and mitigating the risk of epidemics and pandemics, thereby safeguarding economic and social stability. Hence, recognizing the pivotal role of effective governance and targeted public interventions is crucial for fostering societal resilience and ensuring comprehensive preparedness for future health challenges.

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Dr Olajinka Akande (University of Ibadan, Nigeria)


Social policy seeks to ensure and promote more resilient and inclusive social systems for sustainable development of people. Social Policy is particularly more important today in search of effective Post-Covid-19 recovery as the pandemic has led to many problems including; prevalent violence, unemployment, mental health problems, family disorganization, increased poverty, misinformation and clashes of worldviews. It is, however, impossible for Social Policy in Africa to effectively manage the fallout of Covid-19 pandemic without sufficient understanding of issues that occurred during the pandemic. Many lessons must be learnt from the pandemic as Africa attempts to move forward in addressing the aftermaths of the pandemic. It is against this background that this research-based paper presents original insights into misinformation and the implications for Covid-19 vaccine/vaccination through the case study of a leading African metropolis — Lagos, Nigeria. Covid-19 remains an existential threat across the world. Even when there appears to have been respite globally, vaccine uptake remains important, but poor, in developing countries, especially of Africa and misinformation, largely rooted in superstitions and rumors, is rampant. Nigeria had huge Covid-19 burden and Lagos state remains the epicenter of Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the country also has poor Covid-19 vaccination thresholds. More worryingly, however, is the role of misinformation in short-circuiting vaccine uptake in Lagos. Even though logistical and technical/health glitches can be easily solved, the misinformation behavioral challenges remain deep rooted and adamant. It is against this backdrop that this empirical paper, based on qualitative and quantitative data, examined the roles of misinformation in determining Covid-19 vaccination in Lagos for lesson learning for Post-Covid-19 Social Policy interventions in Africa.

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University social responsibility through community engagement: Lessons from corporate social responsibility policy and practice

While learning/teaching and research have, for ages, been the primary mission of universities during the pandemic, this analysis has become increasingly portrayed as an imperative that will significantly enhance the impact of today’s universities as bastions of social transformation. Community engagement metaphysically began to feature prominently in the South African higher education lexicon in the late 1990s, when the government mandated universities to be “socially responsible” by elevating university-community engagement to the status of a “core business”, alongside learning/teaching and research. This paper places university social responsibility (USR) through university-community engagement in a community development context vis-à-vis the concept and practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although the two operate in epistemologically different contexts — the one in a non-profit-seeking context, the other in a profit-seeking one — the two share important similarities. For one thing, USR is a conceptual derivative of CSR. Also, like CSR, it is rooted in the social justice and sustainable development paradigms. Because of these similarities, the paper contends that the promises, paradoxes and pitfalls associated with CSR policy and practice could yield important lessons for USR, especially against the backdrop of the ‘scramble’ among universities, in Africa and elsewhere, to embrace social responsibility as a core value and deploy community engagement as a tool for the actualisation and mainstreaming of social responsibility. The paper’s analytical thrust is further justified by the fact that both CSR and USR entail the building of developmental partnerships at the grassroots, a process that ordinarily evokes discourses of resources, reciprocity, social provisioning and power.

Ms Brenda Alee si (National Social Security Fund, Uganda)

Social Security and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Uganda

This study examines social security responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic and how it shaped landscape of social security in Uganda. National Social Security Fund (NSSF) of Uganda is mandated by the government through the NSSF Act, as amended to provide social security services to all eligible employees.

The COVID 19 pandemic triggered the social security responses in Uganda. Some of these responses were deferment of social security contributions for employers, COVID 19 invalidity benefit, provision of more e-services to members and the amendment of the 1985 NSSF Act among others.

NSSF as a social security scheme was tested as safety net for vulnerable members during the pandemic. As workforce members demanded to be paid part of their saving or contributions. However there was no legal basis for the NSSF to release partial payments to enable members cope with the burden of the covid 19 pandemic.

It’s imperative to study social security in light of the covid 19 pandemic because it propelled the amendment of the 1985 NSSF Act and the enactment of the NSSF Act 2022 that changed the face of social security in Uganda. Social security responses to the pandemic shaped social security through mandatory contributions of all workers regardless of the size of the enterprise, voluntary contributions, and midterm access for qualifying members among others.

Furthermore the amendment gave rise to internal changes enforcing rules and regulations. Limited social protection interventions from governments, state officials and non-governmental organisations, such as cash transfers, food aids, and Covid-19 protective items (e.g., nose masks, alcohol-based hand sanitisers, soaps, etc.) to assist residents of informal settlements cope and thrive through the pandemic, were met with administrative and non-administrative challenges in the delivery and distribution of the schemes.

In many countries, these support initiatives did not reach the intended beneficiaries. Furthermore, no study reports on the provision of psychological and/or mental health support, indicating that the emotional needs of the inhabitants have been overlooked. We, therefore, recommend an in-depth exploration and understanding of the contextual realities and needs of informal settlement dwellers in emergencies - through integrative participatory and innovative technological approaches – could help in the holistic understanding and implementation of effective policy strategies to ensure effective pandemic response planning, improve sustainable livelihoods and resilience among informal settlements in SSA and beyond.

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Digital Divide and its Implications for Education Equity in the Post-Covid-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa

The global shift towards online education during the pandemic has accelerated existing disparities in digital access, particularly impacting students in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). As countries grapple with the aftermath, understanding the implications of the digital divide on education equity becomes paramount. In this light, the present study aims to analyze the digital divide in SSA post-Covid-19, focusing on its implications for educational
The second and third sections, respectively, examine the philosophy that undergirds post-apartheid education policy in the country and analyze some of the key challenges that confront the government in achieving its education policy goals. The fourth part considers the complimentary and challenging roles both public and private education play in the development of South Africa since the collapse of apartheid and the democratisation of the country in 1994 and suggests future policy directions that the government may consider in achieving developmental goals in the context of a diversifying educational landscape.

Dr Mary Baremire Bekoreire
(Kabale University, Uganda)

The politics of Social Protection Policy: Unleashing the barriers of inclusive social protection strategies for informal sector workers in Uganda

Uganda like many developing countries globally lacks a specific social protection policy that targets informal sector workers. The economic recovery strategies employed by the government to promote post COVID recovery as well as to ensure protection of businesses from future risks and shock are not effective and continue to exclude the most vulnerable and disadvantaged categories of workers. This study aimed at examining the role of power and politics in influencing the social protection policy process and the implications on access to social protection for informal sector workers. We employed exploratory research design that comprised of qualitative methods. The study population included informal sector workers from registered Community Based Organisations, representatives from NGOs that advocate for social protection, and relevant government departments and ministries.

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Dr Temitope Bello
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Shadow Palliatives: Informal Social Welfare Provisioning in Nigeria’s Era of Pandemic

Recent occurrences of natural disasters and epidemics have revealed the extent of social administration fragility in African countries. The Covid-19 Pandemic, the subsequent statutory lockdowns and paralysed social and economic activities have substantiated the lingering but significant social welfare administration challenges in Nigeria. While different analytical perspectives have covered the dynamics of the government’s response mechanisms and welfare policy strategies of Covid-19 palliatives, the place of informal social welfare during the Covid-19 crisis has not received similar attention. It is expedient to examine how less organized, non-state social welfare practices among families, friends and neighbours define the course of relationships and ‘palliatives’ in the absence of or inadequate formal social welfare of the government during the Covid-19 crisis. This paper employs the Moral Economics Theory to explain the developmental, productive and regulatory essence of social welfare informality during the lockdowns in Lagos state by identifying informal social welfare forms and examining their socio-economic significance in the social development administration. The paper is a case study, descriptive research that interrogates informal welfare in Lagos state, Africa’s most populous city and the state with the highest reported Covid-19 cases. Primary data are collected from participant observation and In-depth Interviews of residents in Agege, Mushin, Ikorodu, Surulere and Epe areas. Secondary information is sourced from books, periodicals and the internet. These data are content-analysed, using a thematic style. The paper concludes by recommending more conducive social welfare environments, developing policies of inclusion and incorporating social administrative policy instruments of justice, fairness and orderliness.

Professor Sofiane Bouhdia
(University of Tunis, Tunisia)

Covid-19 and Xenophobia in Africa: did anything change since Black death?

Since December 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic has created xenophobia and racism against the Chinese people, and by extension all people of African origin. The situation reminds what happened centuries ago, when Jews were accused to spread Black death in Europe. In the Paris metro, many Africans and Asians complained that people were avoiding sitting next to them, and even...
Asian children were laughed and called ‘virus’ by their classmates in schools. The study examines also the strategy of both governments and civil society to struggle against the phenomena. For example, the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus has spread on social networks to respond to the wave of xenophobia in France.

Xenophobia was not just a spontaneous reaction of a panicked crowd, it has been sometimes fiercely institutionalized. US President Donald Trump, for example, has publicly mentioned the “Chinese virus”. In Moscow and Yekaterinburg, Chinese citizens have been harassed by the police, which will lead NGOs to use the term “racial profiling” in other words, state xenophobia.

The research is organised into 3 chapters. I will first remind, with a historical perspective, that xenophobia and racism are systematically embedded with epidemics. I will take the example of the harrasment of Jews during Black death in France. I will then show to what extent nothing has changed today, as Covid-19 has encouraged racism in all parts of the world. In the last part of the study, I will examine the reactions of governments, the civil society and even ordinary people to struggle against racist behaviors.

Mr Mohamed Boussetta
(University Internationale de Rabat, Maroc.)

La politique sociale au Maroc post COVID-19: Enjeux et contraintes

Depuis des décennies, les stratégies de développement adoptées au Maroc se centrent sur le maintien des équilibres macroéconomiques et la négliènce de la dimension sociale, ce qui a induit une accumulation des déficits sociaux qui a été mis à nu par la crise pandémique. Depuis le COVID-19, une nouvelle stratégie sociale a été mise en place comprenant plusieurs chantiers, avec notamment la généralisation de l’Assurance Maladie Obligatoire (AMO) fondée sur l’introduction de mécanismes d’assurance et d’assistance sociale. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has accentuated the social unease inherent to their extent and their exacerbations. The Covid-19 pandemic, combined with a scenario of profound and constant changes in the world of work, continues, as the ILO emphasizes, to “highlight the importance of investing in social protection systems to meet the challenges resulting from these crises and mitigate their effects”.

All countries are faced with this problem, African countries undoubtedly more than elsewhere, given the extent of the informal sector and the number of people without social security coverage. What about in Algeria where social policy and social transfers are currently the subject of numerous contradictory debates on their efficiencies and the problem of the sustainability of the means of their financing?

This is what we tried to decipher by adopting a methodology of hypothetico-deductive analysis which led us to address the doctrinal foundations of social policy in Algeria, the content and the weight of social transfers, before questioning the problem of the sustainability of financing this after having succinctly defined the concept of social policy and social transfers to remove the ambiguities which surround them and to show very succinctly the organic and inseparable link between economic policy and social policy.

Dr Chance Chagunda
(Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative, South Africa)


This paper argues that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Africa played a pivotal role in meeting the needs of marginalized and poor Africans, during the SARS-Cov-2 virus (Covid-19) pandemic. Moving from the proposition advanced by scholars such as Nayou (2018, 2021) that states that whenever Africans are faced with an existential crisis, such as the one that was precipitated by the World Bank’s and International Monetary Fund's (IMF’s) Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Africans easily revert to their indigenous social security and other systems, to cushion the adverse impacts of economic collapse and humiliating socio-political conditions. Following on the works of Adesina (2007; 2010, 2021) and Mkandawire (2001; 2004;) this discussion argues that people relied on IKS to counteract the negative effects of Covid-19 by harnessing and building on strong bonds of solidarity in poverty and marginalized communities, exemplifying a more transformative agenda for food security, employment, and social inclusion in societies, IKS enabled Africans to foster social cohesion and to build social capital during this health crisis.

This was done through various indigenous interventions for instance, informal banking systems (chilimba - Zambia, susu - Ghana, stokvels – South Africa) I argue that these indigenous systems and others are not just part of residual social welfare, but they are transformative and that is why Africans were able to stave off the harsh effects of Covid-19.

Dr Bianca Chigbu
(University of Fort Hare, South Africa)

Navigating Crises: Technology and Innovation in Supporting Informal Workers and Businesses During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic precipitated unprecedented challenges for informal workers and businesses, exacerbating vulnerabilities within this sector. This research investigated the role of technology and innovation in mitigating these challenges, focusing on how digital solutions have provided essential support and resources. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study explores diverse initiatives encompassing digital financial services, e-commerce platforms, telemedicine, government apps, and collaborative efforts by NGOs and the private sector. The study assesses these interventions’ economic and social impact, detailing on income stability, market access, healthcare accessibility and educational opportunities for informal workers and their communities.

The study identifies critical success factors and challenges in adopting technology, shedding light on digital literacy, accessibility, and policy implications. Additionally, the analysis highlights lessons learned, best practices, and policy recommendations, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike. By unraveling the nuanced dynamics of technology-based support within the informal sector, this research contributes to the discourse on crisis response strategies, digital inclusion, and socio-economic resilience, providing a foundation for informed decision-making and future research endeavors.

Dr Paliani Chingwuo
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Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic: aggravated workplace crises in health care: The case of clinical officers at public hospitals in Malawi

In Malawi, there is a cadre of mid-level health professionals called clinical officers (COs) who undertake duties conventionally performed by medical doctors in the wake of an acute shortage of the latter. This paper seeks to explain how the Covid-19 responses exacerbated occupational stress (OS) and burnout among COs at public hospitals in Malawi. The study adopted a qualitative research design with a case study as a research strategy. The study was conducted at 4 district hospitals and 1 central hospital in Malawi which are state-owned. This paper argues that responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, are psychosocial hazards at public hospitals. This paper demonstrates that implementing the Covid-19 responses in the absence of occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems at public hospitals, exacerbated OS and burnout among health workers.

The paper found out that OS and burnout exacerbated by Covid-19 responses, ultimately aggravated the crisis of the workforce in health care. This paper concludes that in the absence of OSH management systems (as is the case at public hospitals in Malawi), there cannot be efforts to assess the impact of the Covid-19 responses on the mental well-being of health workers and
then devise necessary measures for mitigation. Among others, the negative effects of the Covid-19 responses on the mental well-being of health workers can be avoided or minimised by setting up and implementing OSH management systems at public hospitals.

**Dr Clement Chipenda**

(SARChI Chair in Social Policy, University of South Africa, South Africa)

**The Shifting Role of Small-Scale Farms in Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation in a Post-Covid-19 Context: Critical Lessons from Zimbabwe**

The worst of the Covid-19 pandemic is over, but as the world slowly recovers in a post-pandemic context it is clear that its enduring legacy will haunt humanity. The agricultural sector was negatively impacted with disruptions in production, food systems, value chains and livelihoods. This exacerbated existing inequalities and perpetuated vulnerability, marginalisation and poverty putting human welfare and wellbeing at risk. The post-pandemic context has come with its own challenges including an interlocking baggage of systemic and idiosyncratic crises. This has raised serious questions on African agrarian futures and the prospects of building equal, just and sustainable societies. The post-pandemic context has provided an opportunity to introspect on the pre-pandemic policy design and architecture. Focusing on Zimbabwe’s agrarian sector, this paper reflects on lessons learnt from Covid-19 and the roles which small-scale farms can play in agriculture and food systems transformation. It is premised on an interpretive research paradigm and utilises field based empirical evidence which is complemented by secondary sources. Utilising the conceptual and evaluative lenses of the transformative social policy approach, it presents the argument that the pandemic revealed the important contribution which small-scale farms can play in agricultural transformation to enhance livelihoods, build resilience, and enhance human welfare and wellbeing. It posits that going forward, the farms have an important role to play in contributing to a post-Covid-19 transformative policy agenda where emphasis is to be placed on structural transformation, pro-poor growth, enhanced livelihoods and foreseeing thinking aimed at developing agency and social capital.

**Dr Hlengiwe Portia Dlamini**

(University of Eswatini, Eswatini)

**COVID and Social Policy in Eswatini: From fry pan to fire**

Eswatini is a lower-middle-income country with a population of 1.2 million. Ranking 138th of 189 countries in the 2019 Human Development Index, the country has the 10th highest income inequality in the world, at 49 percent. The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the fragility and gaps in Eswatini’s critical social protection systems. This paper sets out to do two things: first it highlights Eswatini’s extraordinary ranking as the most affected country by Covid-19 with disastrous socio-economic outcomes. Second and most importantly, it attempts to examine the exacerbation of Eswatini’s already economic meltdown. Resulting in the abrupt and unannounced salary reduction of 25% with specific reference to the staff of the University of Eswatini, the persistent failure to make staff contributions to various insurance schemes by deductions at source, and the hiring of rents and university facilities on campus. If social policy refers to any government action aimed at addressing social needs, such as issues of employment, education, healthcare, housing, and sustenance, it can safely be stated that Eswatini is off the mark in the post-COVID era. This paper therefore sets out to develop this unprecedented collapsing social security system in Eswatini with the University of Eswatini as a case study. Recommendations to address this dire situation include among other measures restructuring the economy and Resorting to multilateral assistance.

**Dr Stanley Ehiane**

(University of Botswana, Botswana)

**Voluntary Welfare Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Mobilising Compassion, Community Resilience, and Lessons for the Future**

This abstract explores the theme of voluntary welfare responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, examining the pivotal role played by volunteer-driven initiatives in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the global health crisis. As the pandemic unfolded, voluntary organizations emerged as crucial contributors to community well-being, providing essential services, support, and fostering a sense of solidarity. The analysis begins by looking into the diverse range of voluntary welfare responses initiated by organizations and individuals. These responses encompassed a spectrum of activities, including food distribution, healthcare support, mental health services, and community outreach programs. The abstract examines the motivations that drove volunteers to actively engage in pandemic response efforts, emphasizing the selflessness commitment to community welfare. Challenges faced by voluntary welfare initiatives are also addressed, including resource limitations, coordination complexities, and adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. Despite these challenges, the abstract highlights the agility and innovation demonstrated by voluntary organizations and their ability to mobilize quickly in response to emerging needs. Moreover, the abstract explores the lessons learned from these voluntary welfare responses and their implications for future crisis preparedness. It considers the role of technology in enhancing volunteer coordination, the importance of collaboration between voluntary organizations and public institutions, and the lasting impact of community-driven initiatives on social cohesion. In conclusion, this abstract contributes to understanding the dynamic role of voluntary welfare responses during the Covid-19 pandemic. By examining motivations, challenges, and lessons learned, it aims to inform future strategies for leveraging volunteer-driven initiatives in crisis situations and building resilient communities.

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**Dr Ariel Herbert Fambeu**

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**Are innovation and E-commerce effective firm recovery responses during the Covid-19 pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa?**

SMES play a crucial role in job creation and economic growth, indicating an imperative need for policy interventions. This study examines the effectiveness of innovation and e-commerce as firm strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Specifically, it assesses whether these strategic responses allow them to quickly recover their normal activity after the negative shock of Covid-19. We use the World Bank’s Covid-19 Follow-up Enterprise Survey along with the Enterprise Survey conducted before Covid-19. The use of an ordered probit model show that innovation and e-commerce have opposite effects on firm recovery. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the innovation strategy is much more effective than e-commerce in helping firms regain their pre-crisis performance level. The effects of these firm strategies on their recovery are virtually the same regardless of the level of development of the countries (SSA, other developing countries and developed countries), but with different magnitudes. However, these global results in SSA hide disparities according to firm size. This study is essential for sub-Saharan Africa economies to bounce back from the pandemic, and build the foundations for future resilience.

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**Dr Constance Gunhizirai**

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**Governance of Social Protection Programmes for Poverty Alleviation in Middle-Income Economies**

Middle income economies in Africa experience various governance including monitoring and evaluation challenges in the quest to implement social protection programmes. Such institutional inefficiencies have triggered various adverse social and economic implications among the vulnerable groups especially during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. This study is an explorative qualitative case study design that draws from a document analysis to examine the various monitoring and evaluation strategies implemented by the Department of Social Protection in Botswana to assess the viability of the various social protection programmes that have been implemented to alleviate poverty, vulnerability and inequalities among the disadvantaged groups during the Covid-19 Outbreak. The findings stated that Botswana social protection programmes frequently struggle with inadequate coordination because social protection programmes are being implemented under different government administrative structures such as education and health. Furthermore, the government is facing accountability and implementation capacity as the social workers are over burden with addressing various social development challenges because of social change. Drawing from the assertion above, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of social protection programmes because they are no recent statistics which shows how much was invested by the government and the recipient’s level of satisfaction are not documented.

**Dr Numvi Gwaibi**

(The University of Bamenda, Cameroon)

**Implementation of E-Learning at Higher Education Institutions During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Cameroon**

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Cameroon in line with WHO prescriptives, implemented policies designed to mitigate the spread of the virus throughout the country. The preventive measures included restrictions on public gatherings, compulsory wearing of facemasks, restrictions on inter-urban transportation, closing of borders, schools, universities and...
other higher education institutions. Other preventative measures included regular hand washing with soap, avoiding close personal contacts notably hand shaking and hugging, as well as covering the mouth when sneezing. These restrictive measures were successful in slowing the spread of the virus, however it also had significant impacts on the economy and society. Meanwhile, schools were forced to close for months and learning transferred online. Prior to the pandemic, the Ministry of Higher Education was pushing for hybrid education via online and onsite lessons. However, this process was largely in its gestation phases when the pandemic struck, prompting the full blown but premature shift to online learning. Consequently, educators and learners were thrust into the world of e-learning that was marred by multiple challenges notably the lack of infrastructure, unreliable internet connectivity, lack of computers, laptops as well as poor mastery of ICT in general and e-learning tools in particular. The proposed research seeks to document the implementation of e-learning in higher education institutions in Cameroon during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study will principally be conducted via desktop review involving policy documents on e-learning in higher education, as well as archival materials, journal articles, scientific reviews and web sources.

Dr Kadidiatou Kadio (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique (CNRSRT), Birouk Faso)

Comparative historical analysis of social policies in 3 francophone countries from the postcolonial period to the advent of Covid-19: the case of Côte d’Ivoire, Benin and Burkina Faso

Since independence, francophone African countries have adopted social policies according to the political and economic circumstances they faced. With the advent of Covid-19, the use or reinforcement of social policies became a necessity for governments. We analyze the emergence and evolution of social policies in the fields of education, employment, health and housing in the three states of Benin, Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. The aim is to understand the historical trajectories of social policy through a retrospective analysis and critical examination of social policy in these three countries. The results show that social policies have generally intervened to deal with the consequences of failed economic policies. It has not often been conceived as a concern for social development or as a key instrument working in tandem with economic policy to ensure equitable and socially sustainable development. In some cases, the three countries have been able to propose social protection structures and introduce social welfare schemes for private sector workers, civil servants and certain vulnerable social groups. However the lack of a radical break in social policy practices by the post-independence governments explains to some extent the similarity of social policy systems in the different countries, with persistent gender inequalities, unequal treatment according to social classes and socio-occupational categories, disparities between regions, and an urban-rural imbalance. In all three countries, social protection systems are failing due to shortcomings in planning and operationalization, inadequate financing, and a lack of adaptation to social and economic realities.

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Dr Stan Kaunda (Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Malawi)

The Informal Urban Sector and Social Policy in Africa

Thinking on, conceptualisation and implementation of social policy in Africa has, historically, displayed a rural-urban dichotomy, with generally, urban areas being perceived to have an in-built resources advantage subsequent entailing, encouraging social policy capture with rural areas. Aggregately, the Covid-19 pandemic correlated with levels of industrialisation, urbanisation, nationally, the most industrialised country on the continent had the highest rates of infection and deaths; in the vast majority of the continent Covid-19 had a more detrimental effect on the urban setting than the rural. Critically, within the urban setting it is the informal, shantytown settlements that were most negatively affected by Covid-19. Hence, it is necessary to critique, reflect on the ingrained spatial bias in social policy including through refocusing attention, effort on the informal urban setting, determining embedded causes potentially spearheading the spread of Covid-19 and aggravating its socioeconomic consequences - in the informal urban setting, determine the uniqueness of the informal urban setting as regards intrinsic potential for coping with, mitigating the Covid-19 and related- challenges. Among findings of the paper include: from a political perspective, informal urban settings are volatile, dynamic hence not offering the security/stability of support to political actors (entailing, essentially, political marginalisation in social policy), the intergenerational, chronological existence of people in informal urban settings is having a marked influence on perception of ‘home’ with inhabitants increasingly intrinsically viewing their multi-cosmopolitan settlements as representing their extended family and ‘tribe’ (as opposed to the more traditional home village). This emerging perception of ‘home’, ‘extended family’, ‘tribe’ has potential to influence mutual aid and cooperation.

Mr Isaac Ketu

(Centre for Studies and Research in Economics and Management (CERME), University of Dschang, Cameroon, Cameroon)

Government action and survival strategies of informal businesses and households in Cameroon during and after the Covid-19

Most developing regions, especially Africa tend to suffer greater impacts of the Coronavirus despite reporting fewer fatal cases. Since 85% of jobs in sub-Saharan Africa are in the informal sector, the majority of households rely heavily on daily income intakes, which were volatile and severely affected by public health mitigation measures like movement restrictions. The Cameroon government went further restricting gatherings together with closed borders which led to rising levels of inflation, cost of living, distress, and famine. A nuanced dichotomy emerged between safety/social policies and maintaining a healthy livelihood. This study thus, aims to (1) Evaluate how the Covid-19 epidemic has affected Cameroonian households and informal businesses, (2) identify their survival strategies and (3) analyze the existing social safety net to support their livelihood. To achieve these objectives, the paper will make use of statistical and econometric techniques and data from the Fifth Cameroon Household Survey (ECAMIS) and the Worldometer Coronavirus database. Results from this study potentially display important policy implications. For instance, it could help the government to identify key measures to put in place to achieve more inclusive development by mitigating the adverse impacts of the pandemic on informal businesses and households.

Dr Peter Kipng’eno Kirui

(University of Eldoret, Kenya)

Securitization of Covid-19 in Kenya and South Africa: implications and lessons for emergency preparedness in Africa

The Covid-19 pandemic and the grim predictions about its likely impact on Africa got many actors unprepared, with governments expected to lead the charge in protecting its citizens from the “invisible enemy”. As a consequence of the threat that the pandemic posed on populations, many African countries moved to secure the pandemic, activating its security machinery in an attempt to tame the spread of the virus that was viewed as an existential threat to the state. In Kenya and South Africa, a lockdown was imposed, with police deployment for enforcement in Kenya and even military involvement in South Africa. This paper interrogates the implication of securitization of Covid-19 in Kenya and South Africa so as to draw lessons for future preparedness in Africa. Reviewing existing literature and speeches of serious actors in South Africa and South Africa, the paper documents how the pandemic was securitized and interrogates the mixed results of such framing. Theoretically, the paper is anchored on Buzan’s securitization theory, which justifies the use of extra-ordinary measures to contain an existential threat to a state. The paper argues that while security agencies are not well trained and equipped to handle emergencies like Covid-19, they contributed positively in helping governments enforce Covid-19 protocols that helped slow the virus. It concludes that civilian oversight of security agencies, especially during emergencies; is critical and draws lessons for better emergency preparedness in Africa.

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Dr Isaac Kyere

(University of Ghana, Ghana)

Social Policy in Post-Covid-19 era in Africa: Social security scheme drawn from Ghana’s Experience: A Doorknob or a Coffin?

While there is literature on Ghana’s social security programme, it focuses on the evaluation of the social system after independence and social security during colonialism. Updates to the policy have been made infrequently since the Covid-19 epidemic. Ghana was severely affected economically after Covid-19, and the pandemic rocked the foundations of relevant social institutions like the national social security policy. For this reason, it is crucial to look into how segmented and stratified the system was in relation to Covid-19. The purpose of the study is to examine the structure and modifications made to Ghana’s social security programme following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as justification and nature of new concrete social security measures adopted during Covid-19 era and the effects of the measures on Ghanaian workers. The study argues that measures taken to restructure social security policy after the Covid-19 rather had devastating effects on Ghanaian workers. This study used a qualitative approach and utilizes data from the archives together with original sources, including government and annual reports. Additionally,
Dr Abou-Bakar Mamah
(Rhodes College, Memphis, TN, USA, United States)

Like many nations globally, Togo faced significant challenges due to the pandemic outbreak. The widespread devastation of Covid-19 across various societal groups took both citizens and governing bodies aback with the overwhelming and distressing nature of the crisis. Its broad-reaching consequences affected all sectors, including education. This study presents a collaborative effort, providing an overview of educational policies within Togo. It examines various facets of the educational system, contrasting the pre-COVID era—marked by limited use of technology—with the post-COVID period, characterized by a surge of innovations integrated throughout the system. The emergence of online platforms due to Covid-19 has provided teachers with invaluable resources to involve students in learning and actively monitor their advancement. However, examining the government’s response to the Covid-19 outbreak—comprising policies and implemented measures—reveals a critical aspect. Additionally, assessing the pandemic’s overarching impact on the education system, encompassing both short-term and potential long-term effects, is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of its consequences. The study particularly emphasizes elementary, secondary, and higher education realms. It aims to delve into several aspects, including but not limited to gender disparities, the digital gap among students, and the social policies facilitating access to education for economically challenged students in an evolving landscape that increasingly adapts online or distance learning approaches. The study highlights the government’s actions and potential missed opportunities in addressing social justice within Togo’s educational system involving elements related to inequality, discrimination, or access to education among different socio-economic or gender-based groups.

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Dr Youssoupha Mane
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The Senegalese Education System at the Wane Crests and Troubles of Covid-19 Pandemic: What Response and Perspectives for a Sustainable Learning?

The growing figure of confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Senegal compelled the country to take dire measures to curtail the spread of the epidemic. The sudden closure of all schools and universities on March 16, 2020 brought new challenges to the education sector. The cutting-in of in-person learning and the prohibition of schoolwork at home has been very hard for 3.5 million pre-primary to high school students who were previously attending the 16,235 schools. Without specific measures put in place quickly, the suspension of related services like health services and meals. To ensure continuity of learning the government of Senegal launched a planning and response effort that was not only geared toward health but also toward social and economic needs. Partnerships were then formed with the media, in particular, the National Television and Radio Company of Senegal (RTS) to develop solutions to make it possible to transition to a widely accessible communications media. Channel 20 of Senegal Digital Terrestrial Television, has been bestowed to the Ministry of Education. Covid-19 has not only brought about the closure of physical schools and academic institutions but also has brought the standard education, jerry-built undergraduates, insofar as many chapters from the yearly curriculum have been pruned. Relying on both empirical and documentary research approaches, this research paper aims to deal with the resilience of the Senegalese education system with distance learning, the perverse and non-desirable effects of the pandemic on education, and the diagnosis of the perspectives for a sustainable education system.

Ms Minenhle Matela
(Southern African Policy and Development Nexus (SAPDN), South Africa)

Fostering Resilient Futures: An Exploration of the Nexus Between Social Policy, Development Planning, and Education in Post-Covid-19 South Africa

This paper seeks to examine the intricate interplay between social policy and development planning in post-Covid-19 South Africa. It investigates the impact of the pandemic on these areas, with a particular focus on vulnerabilities within the country. The study seeks to highlight the importance of development planning in adapting to changing socio-economic conditions, specifically in the educational sector. It endeavours to evaluate the current National Development Plan (NDP) and its educational objectives while advocating for adaptive measures that align with the present landscape to foster inclusivity. Additionally, the research will explore the potential of technology and data-driven approaches in shaping education-related social policies, to assess how these tools can improve the efficiency and inclusiveness of development planning, particularly in the field of education. By connecting social policy and development planning, this paper aims to contribute to a more equitable future for South Africa after the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings and insights aim to inform government policies, institutional strategies, and stakeholder actions in educational development. This study is significant in post-Covid-19 South Africa as it addresses the need to understand and adapt to the pandemic’s impact on social policy and development planning. It underscores the vital role of development planning in responding to evolving socio-economic realities, especially in the educational sector, which is essential for the nation’s well-being and progress. Furthermore, by assessing the current objectives of the NDP for education and advocating for adaptive measures, this study aims to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and resilient future for South Africa.

Dr Benjamin John Mbaluka
(South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya)

Beyond Crises - Sustaining Voluntary and Informal Welfare in Post-Covid-19 Africa

This study seeks to investigate the enduring impact and sustained role of voluntary and informal welfare mechanisms in Africa in the post-Covid-19 era. The study is motivated by the recognition that, beyond immediate crisis response, these grassroots welfare networks play a pivotal role in fostering community resilience and addressing socio-economic challenges. The study is based on the theory of social welfare to understand the historical significance of voluntary and informal welfare structures in African societies, emphasizing their community-driven nature and ability to adapt to diverse challenges. The specific objectives of the study include; to assess the sustained impact of informal welfare networks in mitigating socio-economic hardships post-crisis, and to identify key factors influencing the longevity and effectiveness of voluntary and informal welfare in the evolving socio-economic landscape. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study will utilize qualitative interviews, surveys, and case studies across diverse African communities. Through in-depth engagement with community leaders, volunteers, and beneficiaries, the research aims to capture nuanced insights into the functioning and impact of voluntary and informal welfare structures. The methodology recognizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of these networks' dynamics and will involve both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. This research is crucial for informing policymakers, practitioners, and communities about the sustainable potential of voluntary and informal welfare systems beyond crisis moments, contributing to the broader discourse on building resilient social support structures in the post-pandemic African context.

Ms Youssra Mellouki
(Mohammed V University of Rabat, Morocco)


The objective of this study is to assess the spatial influence of socio-economic variables in Morocco using spatial econometric techniques to detect autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity phenomena, in order to highlight the influence of population density, social inequalities in terms of income, employed population and hospital services on the rate of deaths related to the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco. We start from a territorial approach to these issues through data published by the Ministry of Health at the level of each Moroccan region. We then use exploratory spatial econometrics techniques to detect autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity phenomena, in order to highlight the influence of population density, social inequalities in terms of income, employed population and hospital services on the rate of deaths related to the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco. We start from a territorial approach to these issues through data published by the Ministry of Health at the level of each Moroccan region. We then use exploratory spatial econometrics techniques to detect autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity phenomena, in order to highlight the influence of population density, social inequalities in terms of income, employed population and hospital services on the rate of deaths related to the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco. We start from a territorial approach to these issues through data published by the Ministry of Health at the level of each Moroccan region. We then use exploratory spatial econometrics techniques to detect autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity phenomena, in order to highlight the influence of population density, social inequalities in terms of income, employed population and hospital services on the rate of deaths related to the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco. We start from a territorial approach to these issues through data published by the Ministry of Health at the level of each Moroccan region. We then use exploratory spatial econometrics techniques to detect autocorrelation and spatial heterogeneity phenomena, in order to highlight the influence of population density, social inequalities in terms of income, employed population and hospital services on the rate of deaths related to the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco.
Mr Talent Moyo (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe)

On informal social protection: An introspection of post-covid 19 in Zimbabwe

The paper presents how Covid-19 pandemic and the fragile economic context of Zimbabwe have ultimately facilitated the increased reliance on informal social protection measures in Zimbabwe. The Covid-19 pandemic accentuated the inefficiencies of existing formal social protection measures. The social and economic environment have disenfranchised ordinary citizens who are meant to be beneficiaries of the state welfare provisioning. The paper is based on qualitative research methodology, particularly in-depth interviews and critical discourse analysis. The paper contends that the ostensible absence of viable welfare provision compounded by Covid-19 has led to informalisation of welfare provisioning. Ordinary citizens and communities have devised ad hoc social protection measures to curb social ills. Some of these informal social protection measures include crowdsourcing in times of need, working in post-retirement, keeping family support systems, establishment of community associations, and reliance on diaspora remittances. As such, these informal social protection measures must be framed within the discourse of social protection as they play a vital role in hostile socio-economic contexts. Finally, the paper recommends that informal social protection measures need to be understood within the broader discourse of transformative social policy.

Professor Douglas Mpondi (University of Venda and the University of Mpumalanga)

Navigating Dual Responsibilities. Coping strategies of female academics with young children during the Covid-19 Pandemic: – A Comparative Study of the University of Venda and University of Mpuamulanga

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for individuals across various sectors, impacting the work-life balance of professionals worldwide. Female academics, particularly those with young children, face unique challenges in balancing their dual responsibilities of academic pursuits and caregiving during these challenging times. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges faced by female academics with young children, leading to increased stress and potential setbacks in their academic pursuits. This study aims to explore the coping strategies adopted by female academics at the University of Venda and the University of Mpuamulanga in navigating the complexities brought about by the pandemic. This comparative study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The research participants include female academics with young children from the University of Venda and the University of Mpuamulanga. While interviews will give a deeper knowledge of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants, the survey will provide quantitative insight into the prevalence of various coping strategies. The findings are anticipated to contribute valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of female academics, including flexible work arrangements, social support networks, and technological adaptations. Furthermore, the comparative analysis between the two universities will highlight contextual nuances and variations in coping mechanisms, shedding light on potential institutional differences in support structures. The study findings have significant implications for the development of targeted interventions and policies to support female academics with young children, fostering a more inclusive and resilient academic environment.

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Ms Grace Murigo (African Policy Centre, Nairobi, Kenya)

Covid-19 pandemic as a catalyst for healthcare innovations: A blessing in disguise for the healthcare sector

The Covid-19 pandemic unveiled huge flaws inefficiencies, high rates of chronic illness, health discrepancies, and rigidity in most facility-centric healthcare systems. The pandemic interrupted the planning of routine care, pushing healthcare providers and patients to suspend most healthcare services and implement electronic and non-contact approaches. These variations brought a unique prospect to re-evaluate the need for services the healthcare system offers, hence, adopting and strengthening the ones that stipulate more value-based care and finally reducing those that provide little or no value. The Covid-19 crisis brought a unique opportunity for the healthcare sector to be fully transformed, reimagined, and co-created with the hospitals to rely on a more decentralized paradigm, anchored to technology and advanced logistics. It has also been a spark for numerous innovations in many healthcare centers and the pharmaceutical business. In this abstract, the involvement of the digital revolution during the pandemic is evaluated from the viewpoint of healthcare experts and the pharmaceutical industry. While Covid-19 has exposed critical gaps in the healthcare system, it also created significant new opportunities, providing reason to hope for a better tomorrow. It also reflects the perceptions and best practices gained during the pandemic to achieve effective population health and a healthcare system that is sturdy, synchronized, equitable, and viable. Most of the capabilities gained included hands-on and coordinated care within a community and inclusive policy approaches and delivery models to improve the population’s health.

Dr Bright Muronda (North-West University, South Africa)

The South African government’s social security responses to the Covid-19 pandemic

The paper evaluates the South African government’s utilization of public sector tools, policies and resources to respond to the citizens’ social security needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic affected most facets of the local society, particularly in business and service delivery provisioning, since it restricted individuals’ mobility. Social policies are the bedrock of the government’s public policies since they enable the state bureaucracy to design delivery provisioning, since it restricted individuals’ mobility.
Exploration of psychological effects of Covid-19 among students in a rural based university in Limpopo Province

The presence of Covid-19 in the world has come with major impacts on various aspects including psychological impacts on people. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people might experience psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, and stress, and they can even worsen. The study was conducted at the University of Venda in Thohoyandou, Limpopo in Thulamela municipality. Researchers used a qualitative research approach and exploratory design, and thematic data analysis will be utilized. The target study will be from primary and secondary sources. Various purposive sampled stakeholders shall be interviewed. Policy documents, speeches by national leaders, media reports, information from Ministry of Health website and those of county governments on Covid-19 pandemic will be investigated to establish how social scientists were involved. The data collection shall be analysed and presented by using descriptive method. Results of this study shall be used to identity policy gaps, if any, and recommend the best way to ensure inclusivity in management of social crisis.

Searching for the nexus between Spatiality and Social Policy in South Africa

At the height of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and before any vaccine was developed, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and national governments, only relied on preventative measures such as social distancing, and the sanitising and washing of hands to keep the deadly virus at bay. In South Africa, the country’s human settlements laid bare the deep inequalities that were inherited from the colonial-apartheid era as social distancing or even washing of hands, became luxuries for the well-to-do. In the cramped townships and burgeoning informal settlements, populated by mostly black Africans, many citizens had no choice but to continue living in such packed spaces. Arguably, one issue that has not been seriously interrogated in post-apartheid South Africa, is the nexus between spatiality and social policy. This paper calls for spatiality to be linked to social policy in South Africa, for the country to erase the inherited colonial-apartheid spatial injustices. This paper is based on an earlier empirical study that had called for the incorporation of spatiality into the traditional Human Development Index (HDI), to transform the inherited colonial-apartheid spatial patterns in the City of Cape Town.

The evidence from Kenya suggests that data procedures in these registries tend to dominate the rules, processes, and norms for determining eligibility and access to social protection, thereby undermining the rights-based processes of entitlement claims making and contestation that are crucial to the evolution of social policy regimes. The highly centralised approach of the registries also shapes the territorial reach of social policy, which means capacity and infrastructure is built at the central level and local offices are given a peripheral role in registration and allocation procedures. However, incoherence and contradictions in the conception, design and implementation of these data systems also simultaneously undermines their effectiveness, such as through the separation of the government unit building and running the social registry from the units designing and allocating substantive social protection programmes. They therefore run into institutional stasis and resistance, even whilst international donors have been pushing hard for their permanence within social policy systems even through legislative provisions. These implementation issues are often framed as context specific challenges, however, it is increasingly clear that many countries that embark on the process of building these registries encounter the same obstacles, suggesting the model itself is highly flawed.

In this research highlights how social registries have been presented as a technocratic implementation tool, however the model of social policy that social registries enable, shows that they may be lacking countries into particular neoliberalised social policy path dependencies, and quietly be shaping the way claims can be made on the state.

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Mr Victor Ogharanduku (Save the Children International, Nigeria)

Social Protection Adoption and Institutionalisation in Kaduna State, Nigeria: The Politics and Political Economy

Social protection adoption and institutionalization, particularly social assistance programmes have been expanding across Africa. Underpinning this trend is the role that several years of tiny, donor-funded and operated pilot programmes have been playing in securing government policy and programmatic interests in expanding social protection coverage. Why and what factors are driving this trend is an important issue for social policy scholars, practitioners and donors. In Nigeria, Kaduna State in 2021 adopted social
Kakamega County; and examined how elderly people are control of infection from Covid-19 by elderly people in
values and norms practiced during the Covid-19 threat, interpretation of Covid-19 by elderly people in Kakamega
in the Covid-19 response. The study examined the local environmental, and institutional barriers that are reproduced
Kenya. In 2019 the world began experiencing a viral protection support they provide governments of the
Findings will inform recommendations on how international development partners/donors can approach the social
principles of social justice
Co-authors: Dr Patricia Kanaga & Dr Maemila N. Wanzala
Dr Olusegun Oladeinde
(Bells University of Technology, Ota, Nigeria, Nigeria)
In response to coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) Pandemic, the first primary, and immediate response of
countries all over the world, including Nigeria, was to introduce series of protocol, including lockdown, with its
people were disproportionately impacted due to attitudinal, environmental, and institutional barriers that are reproduced
in the Covid-19 response. The study examined the local interpretation of Covid-19 by elderly people in Kakamega County, assessed gendered cultural preventive beliefs, values and norms practiced during the Covid-19 threat, within the breadth of gender and age among elderly people in Kakamega County, analyzed barriers to prevention and control of infection from Covid-19 by elderly people in Kakamega County, and examined how elderly people (mis)using social media messages to prevent Covid-19 in Kakamega County. The study employed a cross-sectional research design. Using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination, samples of 364 respondents aged 60 years and above were enlisted and studied from a base of more than 20,000. Fifty (50) participants from the County were then recruited and enlisted in the qualitative rapid data collection process. Data were analyzed both quantitative (through descriptive analysis) and qualitative (through narratives and quotes). The study found that the elderly people are most vulnerable to Covid-19 due to their age which compromises their health conditions. Over 46% of the respondents suffered from hard conditions such as cardiovascular diseases(8.5%). It was also revealed that stay-at-home restrictions did not consider their special needs and created disruptions and new risks to their autonomy, and health. It was also evident that socially culturally sensitive information was not packaged and communicated in a language that is understood and accepted by the elderly in the study area. We conclude that social-cultural innovations can be used in achieving healthier communities and preventing Covid-19, but they require a collective and inclusive response. The study recommends that there is a need to involve elderly people in social protection interventions to enable them to participate in designing effective and age-sensitive socio-cultural communication strategies for implementation in line with principles of social justice
Co-authors: Dr Patrici Kanaga & Dr Maemila N. Wanzala
Dr Olusegun Oladeinde
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Post Covid-19 Pandemic and Social Fractures in Nigeria: Challenges to Building Gender Inclusive Social Policy. In response to coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) Pandemic, the first primary, and immediate response of countries all over the world, including Nigeria, was to introduce series of protocol, including lockdown, with its subsequent relaxation, and other public health guidelines on the large section of the population and human activities, as attempts to reduce the spread of the pandemic. However, implicated in the lockdown protocols has also been ‘irreparable damage’ on the people, and their socio-economic activities, unleashing twin problems of deprivation and anxiety for people in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). While many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, have recovered from the pandemic, there appears to be no difference, and any improvement in the livelihood
Dr Dr Stephen Okumu Omberu
(University of Pretoria and Maseno University, Kenya)
Healthcare in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Era in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities, and Innovations
The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on African healthcare systems, exacerbating existing challenges and creating new ones. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of healthcare systems in Africa, posing significant challenges to the delivery of essential services, including maternal and child health, infectious disease control, mental health care, and access to essential medicines. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a global surge of healthcare innovations aimed at curbing the pandemic. Some of the innovations were newly developed whereas others were modifications of existing technologies to suit the Covid-19 response. Such innovative responses catalyzed changes in healthcare delivery, such as the adoption of telemedicine and digital health solutions, some of these innovations are still being used currently and are redefining healthcare system its future. This panel seeks to explore the multifaceted impact of Covid-19 on healthcare in Africa and to identify strategies and innovations to build more resilient and sustainable healthcare systems. This panel aims to bring together experts and stakeholders to
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discuss the evolving healthcare landscape in Africa post-Covid-19, highlighting the challenges, opportunities, and innovations in the sector. It endeavors to provide valuable insights into the current status of healthcare in Africa in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the identification of key challenges and opportunities. The panel targets a diverse audience, including policymakers, government officials, healthcare professionals, researchers, public health experts, development partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector with an interest in healthcare and public health in Africa.

Mr Oluwadamilare Omotosho
(National Open University of Nigeria, Nigeria)

Sustainable Learning Beyond Pandemic: ICT, Nigeria Education, and Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted educational systems worldwide, challenging the traditional modes of teaching and learning. The effect compels a rapid shift towards remote learning and highlights the critical role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in sustaining education continuity. This study explores the Nigerian education landscape amidst the pandemic, emphasizing the pivotal significance of ICT in fostering sustainable learning beyond the crisis. The pandemic exposed existing fault lines within Nigeria’s educational infrastructure, exacerbating disparities in access to quality education. With schools shuttered and traditional teaching methods compromised, adopting ICT became imperative for ensuring uninterrupted learning. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, internet, and socioeconomic disparities posed significant hurdles in effectively leveraging technology for education. In post-pandemic period, several Nigerian institutions of learning which have switched to digital learning returned to the traditional process of teaching. The study assesses Nigerian educational institutions and ICT integration into learning methodologies during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. Using qualitative research methodology, which relies on primary and secondary sources of data, the study examines the role of digital platforms, online resources, and innovative teaching methodologies in bridging the gap created by physical restrictions and the new normal created by Covid-19. It delves into the question of institutional adaptability and sustainability in Nigeria. Drawing insights from various sources, the study contributes to the discourse on sustainable learning beyond the pandemic in the context of Nigeria’s education. It underscores the urgency of harnessing ICT as a catalyst for inclusive and resilient educational systems, ensuring equitable access and enhancing learning outcomes for all Nigerian students.

Dr Marion Ouma
(University of South Africa, Kenya)

Analysing social policy in Kenya post-Covid-19: Missed opportunities at critical junctures

Following the global outbreak of the pandemic, Kenya’s parliament passed several economic and social laws. Amendments to tax laws aimed to cushion citizens and businesses from the negative impacts of the lockdown by increasing household income for basic needs and enabling businesses to remain in operation. Of these, the most significant measures, in scale, were social protection interventions in the form of cash transfers and public works programmes targeted to poor and vulnerable households. Despite the financial difficulties brought by the pandemic, government response followed a continuity path of minimal state provisioning. The government’s overreliance on cash transfers as the major form of social policy intervention resulted in an inadequate, exclusionary and ill-suited response. Whereas the pandemic presented opportunity to remedy social and economic policy shortcomings, the window of opportunity did not lead to policy turnaround towards broader welfare provisions. Rather, following institutional tradition, government reverted to the same response. Whereas the pandemic presented opportunity to remedy social and economic policy shortcomings, the window of opportunity did not lead to policy turnaround towards broader welfare provisions. Rather, following institutional tradition, government reverted to the same response. Whereas the pandemic presented opportunity to remedy social and economic policy shortcomings, the window of opportunity did not lead to policy turnaround towards broader welfare provisions. Rather, following institutional tradition, government reverted to the same response.

Dr Romanus Osabohien
(Energy University, Malaysia)

Socioeconomic Shocks, Social Protection and Household Food Security amidst Covid-19 Pandemic in Africa’s Largest Economy

Africa has been known to experience series of problems among which are poverty, food insecurity, lack of access to energy, lack of infrastructure among others. These problems were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had a severe impact on the socioeconomic status of households in Africa. This paper examines the relationship between socioeconomic shocks, social protection, and household food security during the pandemic in Nigeria, the Africa’s largest economy. Using the World Bank’s Covid-19 national longitudinal baseline phone survey (2020) for the analysis and applied the multinomial logit regression, the study finds that socioeconomic shocks resulting from the pandemic have led to an increase in food insecurity. Social protection programmes have played a crucial role in mitigating the impact of these shocks on households. However, the study also highlights the need for more targeted and effective social protection policies to ensure that vulnerable households are adequately protected from the adverse effects of the pandemic. The findings of this study have important implications for policymakers and stakeholders in Africa’s largest economy, as they seek to address the challenges posed by the pandemic and promote household food security for the actualisation the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of food and nutrition security (SDG2). The study therefore, recommends that efforts be made to preserve food supply chains by mitigating the pandemic’s effect on food systems, increasing food production, and looking forward beyond the pandemic by building resilient food systems with the use of social protection interventions.

Dr Davina Osei
(Leiden University, The Netherlands)

Covid-19, catastrophic health expenditures and multidimensional poverty in Ghana.

The study examines the effects of Covid-19 on catastrophic health expenditures among Ghanaian households. We use two main related data sets - Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7, and the third wave of the Ghana Covid-19 Households and Jobs Tracker data sets - to compute the incidence and intensities of Covid-19-related catastrophic health expenditure payments during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data for catastrophic payment incidence (HCat) reveals that, on average, 5.2% of households spent 5% of their total household expenditures on Covid-19-related health expenditures during the Covid-19 pandemic period (2020-2021). The results from our structural econometric modelling show significant effects of income, energy, and other household-related characteristics, location, and regional factors as key explainers for the catastrophic Covid-19 health expenditure payments during the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, our analyses show that the burden of catastrophic healthcare payments is concentrated among the poor. However, insurance, remittances, and government assistance serve as financing mechanisms through which the poor mitigated the catastrophic health expenditure shock during the Covid-19 pandemic. We discuss the policy implications of these findings.

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Co-authors: Dr M. Ayanore and Dr E. Avenyo

Dr Kolawole Omomowo
(University of Namibia, Namibia)

The Practice of Collective Consumption of Housing in a Fragmented Social Policy Context, Windhoek, Namibia

Article 95 of the Namibian constitution guarantees the social welfare of Namibian citizens, facilitated through non-discriminatory wage income and targeted social wage benefits dispensed through various social protection instruments. However, the right to adequate housing is not expressly protected by the constitution. Rather, access to adequate housing in Namibia has been captured through the social justice literature, drawing on the Article 144 of the constitution, which stipulates the incorporation of the International agreements/convention, ratified by the country into Namibian laws. The section of the constitution gives indirect right to human rights conventions such as Article 25 of the universal Declaration of Human Rights. The provision and distribution of housing is therefore dominantly controlled by market forces, with the government assisting through policy, institutions, and finances for affordable housing for the low-income population. The national housing programmes, the Build Together Programme, National Housing Enterprise, and Mass Housing Development Programme, underscore the National Housing Policy to provide affordable housing. The last taboo of housing provision is the community driven housing programmes, with the prominence of the Shack-Dwellers Federation of Namibia. This paper is focused on the collective consumption of housing by studying an organic communal association, which used their monthly contributions to jointly acquire a block of land; they initially organized as a communal association, which used their monthly contributions to jointly acquire a block of land; they initially occupied illegally from the municipality. The dynamics of sharing the land into individual plots, getting municipal services and individual title deeds to the land provide an insight into the praxis of collective consumption. Their collective interaction with the municipality demonstrated the power of the collective in negotiating access to land. It is argued that the practice of collective consumption could be the route to accessing basic needs and amenities to improve social wellbeing in a fragmented social policy context.
remains within existing path dependence despite two critical junctures; Covid-19, and change in government in the past year. Moreover, we argue that the current government’s plan, encompassed in ‘bottom-up’ and ‘Huftar narrative’ further entrenches neo-liberal policies of a minimal state and social policy.

Dr Phoene Oware
(University of the Western Cape, South Africa)

Adaptive Responses of Informal Social Protection Systems of the elderly in sub-Saharan Africa to the Covid-19 pandemic

Informal Social Protection (ISP) systems in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) which are rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu that emphasizes norms of reciprocity, open sharing, and inclusivity, have been experiencing a decline over the decades. This can be attributed to various factors such as colonialism, neoliberalism, shifting cultural norms, values, and migration. The Covid-19 pandemic posed an additional threat to ISP systems, potentially exacerbating their fragility. Various studies in SSA have examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on ISP systems of the elderly. Few however explore the adaptive shifts within these systems during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study explores the shifts experienced by ISP systems of the elderly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It draws on qualitative data on ISP systems of the elderly in Kenya that was collected prior to the pandemic, as well as insights from existing literature on the impact of Covid-19 on ISP systems of the elderly across various SSA countries. Preliminary analysis indicates that Covid-19 lockdown measures created an even more challenging context for the enactment of norms of reciprocity, open sharing and inclusivity - exposing vulnerabilities of ISP systems. Surprisingly, ISP networks were also strengthened during this period. Because of slower economic activity, a firming of social relationships and a restoration of the social roles of the elderly was experienced at all levels since 1976, including at tertiary level in public universities. The welfare state has in fact enabled men and women from lower income groups to benefit from quality education, obtain good jobs and move up the social ladder in parallel with the rest of the world. Mauritius was struck by the Covid-19 virus in 2020, leading to the closure of borders and two lockdowns in the country. The pandemic had severe impacts on the economy, especially the tourism sector in order to cushion the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the population, the government adopted a series of legislative and policy measures. The paper will analyse the social policy measures in place before the onset of the pandemic and the new social policy measures adopted to cushion the severe effects. The paper argues that the robust welfare state of the country and the consolidation of the social policy measures during the pandemic played a major role in mitigating the negative effects of Covid-19 on the population. The Mauritian case study provides key insights on successful social policy measures for Africa.

Ms Faniry RANAIVO RAHAMEFY
(University of Antananarivo, Madagascar)

Towards more encompassing and transformative social protection: assessing the “Tsokoa Fanemana” cash transfer programme in Madagascar during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns economically weakened already vulnerable households in Madagascar to confront the negative impact on the most affected populations, the Malagasy government deployed two emergency relief programmes, including the “Tsokoa Fanemana” cash transfer programme, which is the object of the present paper. Despite the swiftness and relative efficacy in the deployment of such an effort, it exposed the vulnerabilities of Madagascar’s social protection system, and its overall social policy. As such, the aim of this paper is to discuss social protection in Madagascar during the Covid-19 pandemic, zooming on the cash transfer programme called “Tsokoa Fanemana” to vulnerable households. It is contended here that social policy should not only be protective, but preventive and transformative, and as such, should be driven on being based on transparency, up-to-date and harmonised data, and on the other hand benefit from larger resource allocation. The analysis will draw on a reading of the institutional landscape on social protection in Madagascar as well as on qualitative interviews that the researcher will conduct with households that benefited from the “Tsokoa Fanemana” programme. Consequently, the paper will be articulated in three parts. First, the institutional landscape of social protection in Madagascar including legislation, budget allocation, and coverage will be explored. Then, the lived experiences of the cash transfer beneficiaries will be shared and mined for patterns. Finally, based on those two previous parts, policy recommendations towards a more encompassing and transformative social policy will be offered.

Dr Ramola Ramtohul
(University of Mauritius, Mauritius)

Social Policy in post-pandemic Mauritius: Lessons for Africa

The Indian Ocean Island of Mauritius stands out as an African success story in terms of economic growth, democracy and development. By 1996, Mauritius had moved into the ‘high human development’ category of the UNDP’s Human Development Index, a category generally monopolised by developed countries. Mauritius has a comprehensive welfare state that provides free education, health and universal pensions. Free education is offered at all levels since 1976, including at tertiary level in public universities. The welfare state has in fact enabled men and women from lower income groups to benefit from quality education, obtain good jobs and move up the social ladder in parallel with the rest of the world. Mauritius was struck by the Covid-19 virus in 2020, leading to the closure of borders and two lockdowns in the country. The pandemic had severe impacts on the economy, especially the tourism sector in order to cushion the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the population, the government adopted a series of legislative and policy measures. The paper will analyse the social policy measures in place before the onset of the pandemic and the new social policy measures adopted to cushion the severe effects. The paper argues that the robust welfare state of the country and the consolidation of the social policy measures during the pandemic played a major role in mitigating the negative effects of Covid-19 on the population. The Mauritian case study provides key insights on successful social policy measures for Africa.

Dr Oluranti Samuel
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The official reactions to forestall the spread of the coronavirus in Nigeria varied. Enlightenment programs, proclamations, suggestions, partial closures of public places and businesses followed by total lockdown were introduced. The lockdown and the various restrictions brought serious challenges for the informal economy operators (IEOs) and disrupted their businesses. Qualitative data collection (that included day-to-day reports, in-depth interviews (IDI), focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KII) and participant observations) was adopted to assess the effects of Covid-19 and the social policy responses for the IEOs in the selected Local Government Areas in Lagos State, Nigeria. The effects from the result includes stoppage of businesses, lack of income, hunger, socio-cultural dislocation, high-handedness of the security agents on compliance, increased unemployment, increase in spending, increase in cost of goods and services, destruction of consumable goods for those that recently stocked their stores, and the uncertainty of the past coronavirus period. The expected social policy responses to IEOs in terms of security, adequate health facilities, education, affordable social policy packages, unemployment, reduction in taxation and levies, palliative, subsidy on costs of goods and services, meant to alleviate the various challenges were either inadequate or non-existing. The paper suggests adequate investments by government on social facilities, education, effective mobilization of the citizenry, affordable health services, constant education on health issues, effective insurance policies, commitment to social protection, adequate welfare packages, people-centred policies as ways of alleviating the health challenges of the IEOs and reduction of negative effects in case of future occurrence.

Ms Ndeye Faty Sarr
(Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Canada)

Gendered social policies? Lessons learned from research on the histories and trajectories of social policies in Mat, Mountavou and Senegal

This communication presents the results of our research on transformative and gendered social policies in post-Covid Africa. The research also aimed to analyze the
interconnection between social policies and economic policies as well as the impacts of the two on gender, social classes and spatial inequalities.

The methodological approach is based on a literature review and an analysis of secondary data (national reports, policy notes, decrees, scientific publications, etc.). Interviews were carried out with people who were beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of social policies. The researchers proceeded to present the historical trajectories of these policies, their current situations, their postulates as well as their perspectives.

On a theoretical level, the concept of Empowerment was used as part of this research. Empowerment, which Nnamdi (1995) describes as a “process” that gradually allows individuals, communities or organizations to “acquire the capacity to act” and become autonomous. Intersectional feminist analysis and the theory of social change were also mobilized. Intersectional feminist policy analysis “asks the question: how do public policies, services and programs take into account the perspectives, knowledge and experiences of a diverse range of people and communities?” The results reveal that the social policies of the four selected sectors are linked to the different socio-political and economic circumstances of the three countries. This made it possible to highlight the dynamics in the processes of design and application of social policies.

The adoption of the framework law 09-21 outlined four key objectives: the generalization of compulsory health insurance, the generalization of family allowances, the expansion of the membership base for retirement schemes, and the generalization of unemployment benefits. While pensions, family allowances, and job loss benefits improve well-being, illness has the potential to threaten lives. Access to healthcare and treatment can save lives, making the generalization of compulsory health insurance (AMO) crucial.

The study specifically focuses on the transition from the Ramadis et system to the AMO TADAMOUI and its impact on improving access to care. By analyzing the generalization of AMO for individuals who cannot afford contributions, the research highlights the potential of social protection reforms to reduce health inequalities and enhance healthcare accessibility.

This paper contributes to the discourse on healthcare in the post-Covid-19 era by presenting insights from the Moroccan context. It emphasizes the importance of social protection generalization in ensuring accessible healthcare and calls for further research and evidence-based policies to address the challenges faced in the aftermath of the pandemic.

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Mr Adam Sawadogo

(Thomas SANKARA University, Burkina Faso)

Effect of Covid-19 on food security in Sub-Saharan Africa

Covid-19 has considerably impacted negatively on employment and plunged many vulnerable populations into food insecurity. The aim of this research is to analyse the effect of Covid-19 on food security in Sub-Saharan Africa over the period 2020-2021. Using food security indices from FAOSTAT and the number of people testing positive for Covid-19 from the World Health Organisation, and estimating a random effects panel model, this research shows that Covid-19 has a negative effect on food security in Sub-Saharan African countries. The research shows that Covid-19, by amplifying food price inflation, leads to a reduction in people’s purchasing power, which in turn, worsens food security. The research also shows that an increase in per capita income has a positive impact on food security. The results of this research suggest that in the event of a health crisis such as Covid-19, policy-makers must take steps to combat the spread of the disease. They must also combat food price inflation and, as far as possible, make direct income transfers to vulnerable groups so that they can feed themselves properly.

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Mr Kwazinkosi Sibanda

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Between the hammer and the anvil: A case of Zimbabwean Migrant Women in Botswana during the post-Covid era

The paper examines the social policy response of the government of Botswana to the effects of the pandemic. The Corona Virus resulted in a severe crisis that engulfed the entire world in the 21st century. In Southern Africa, countries like Botswana and South Africa have been dealing with influx of migrants from Zimbabwe, which had been governed as a crisis. The nationalistic driven policy response of the host-countries like Botswana amplified the vulnerability of pre-existing susceptible groups like the migrant women (Mukumbang, 2021). The study deploys Martina Tazzoli’s concept of choking without killing to analyse how the social policy constrained the opportunities and livelihoods of Zimbabwean migrant women entrepreneurs in Botswana (Tazzoli, 2021). While scholarship and the media mainly delve on the overt containment measures by the states, covert strategies targeting migrants have received less attention. The study adopts Scheel and Tazzoli (2022) problematisation of state bordering practices as a migrant making tool. This helps to denaturalise the ‘national order of things’, where people on the move are viewed as a problem to the state. Studying the migration governance of Botswana helps to decentre the Northern epistemology in Migration studies, which focus on mobility from the global South to Northern countries in Europe, North America and Australia. The qualitative research utilises ethnography and archival sources as data collection tools. The paper concludes that colonial practices of restricting the mobility and economic opportunities of women persists up to the present postcolonial epoch. The Pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing containment strategies.

Dr Newman Tekwa

(University of South Africa, South Africa)

Covid-19: Gender and Labour Market-Based Social Policy Responses. Experiences from Zambia, Mauritius and South Africa

The activation of statutory unemployment insurance benefits constituted one key Covid-19 labour market-based social policy response acting as an income replacement and cushioning households from the socio-economic effects of the pandemic. However, their efficacy, implementation gaps, challenges and proposed solutions within the Southern African regions including their gendered implications are yet to be fully documented. Available statistics indicate only 3 out of the 16 members of the Southern African Development Community had unemployment insurance in place at the time of the pandemic, namely South Africa, Mauritius and Seychelles. In addition to huge informal economies, particularly in countries without unemployment insurance schemes, indications are that many formal workers in countries with unemployment insurance were not covered. Based on the experiences in South Africa, Mauritius and Zambia, what were the strengths and relevancy of publicly managed national social insurance schemes in protecting jobs and livelihoods including those for women? Imagining a social policy architecture in post-pandemic future, what could have been the difference had the schemes designed around market-based insurance models? While South Africa and Mauritius introduced innovative labour market-based social policy responses, particularly the Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Schemes (Covid-19 TERS and the Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS) respectively, were they the gender and potential implications of these Covid-19 social policy responses going into the future? While social policy responses to the pandemic ignited discussions around a Basic Income Grant (BIG) in South Africa, its design remains locked in a neoliberal policy framework, with little prospects for gender equity and social transformation.

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Dr Newman Tekwa

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Land Reform, Family Farming and Short Food Supply Chains: Covid-19 Practical and Policy Lessons

One of the direct livelihood impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was its disruption of food supply systems which highlighted the vulnerability of global long and complex supply chains.
food supply chains, their associated industrial food production models and imperatives for alternative food systems based on short food supply chains (SFSCs). Local food systems, defined as systems consisting of structures in which food is produced, processed and marketed within defined geographical areas, is increasingly being pressed as an alternative to the conventional food production models. Framed within the Transformative Social Policy (TSP) framework which seeks to enhance the welfare and productive capacities of individuals, families and communities with land and agrarian reform being one of its key social policy instruments, what practical and policy lessons can be drawn from the Covid-19 experiences in crafting more resilient food systems in a post-pandemic future? Confronted with a poly-crisis environment where the Covid-19 pandemic does not represent the last hazard we are to encounter, how can redistributive land and agrarian reforms provide a context for the promotion of local food systems, short food supply chains based on family farming rather than the current mass food production models? Emerging evidence from Zimbabwe, where family farms constitute over 90 percent of the agricultural landholdings, suggests that short food supply chains emerging from a context of land reform provides not only social and economic benefits, but they may also associated be with health and environmental positive externalities.

Dr Salimah Vallani
(University of Pretoria, South Africa)

Financialisation and Social Policy in 21st Century Africa

The desperation and devastation witnessed in the early waves of the Covid-19 pandemic mobilised new energy around social protection as a framework for policy advocacy. In South Africa, progressive economists, people’s movements and nongovernmental organisations presented an unprecedented push for a minimal Basic Income Grant largely modelled after the Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant. More recently, a report by the Children’s Institute argues that if the monthly Child Grant were raised from R500 to R624 (the official food poverty line), food poverty could be reduced from 33 to 25 percent of children in South Africa. How has policy advocacy, and the social imaginary more broadly, been reduced to extremely modest reforms in an era of pandemics, growing inequality, and social strife in Africa? How is it that austerity has been a recurring, intensifying fiscal policy since the early 2000s, despite African Union commitments like the 2001 Abuja Declaration on government healthcare spending, and the 2003 Maputo declaration on public support for agriculture? What is the larger political economy in which ‘social protection’ features as a dominant policy framework? In this paper I will argue that social protection and austerity are part of the policy tendencies of 21st century comprador bourgeois capitalism in Africa. Tracing the shift away from national bourgeois countries that are typically afflicted by these impacts, and for some countries, the challenges are enduring. In this context and in relation to the agrarian sector broadly, a vital corpus of literature that characterizes the impacts of the pandemic and the agency and ingenuity of the farmers is available. Yet in relation to African smallholder farmers, there is lean focus on the lessons of transformative social policy that can be drawn from the empirical realities arising from Covid-19, and how, in relation to (possible) future pandemics, the lessons can be used to improve the situation of smallholder farmers.

Based on Zimbabwe, falling within the abode of this paper are four questions: a) What were the impacts of Covid-19 among smallholder farmers? b) In their diversity, how did the smallholder farmers respond to the pandemic? c) What lessons of transformative social policy can be drawn from their experiences and innovative responses? d) How can future social policy (for the agrarian sector) be informed by the lessons of Covid-19? Overall, the paper envisages agentive, innovative and empowered smallholder farmers that are resilient to pandemics and other shocks through transformative social policy.

Dr Tom Tom
(OSI/NRP SARChI Chair in Social Policy, University of South Africa, South Africa)


Globally, scholars and practitioners are rear-viewing the multiple facets of Covid-19, and envisioning a post-pandemic future. The pandemic, which resulted in widespread disruption and decimation in all sectors, had differentiated, complex and dynamic impacts. Covid-19 fed into and entrenched existing socio-structural problems along with creating new challenges. Despite diversity, all countries felt the impacts of the pandemic, and for some countries, the challenges are enduring. In this context and in relation to the agrarian sector broadly, a vital corpus of literature that characterizes the impacts of the pandemic and the agency and ingenuity of the farmers is available. Yet in relation to African smallholder farmers, there is lean focus on the lessons of transformative social policy that can be drawn from the empirical realities arising from Covid-19, and how, in relation to (possible) future pandemics, the lessons can be used to improve the situation of smallholder farmers.

The impact of social policy responses to Covid-19 in Zimbabwean urban areas. The City of Harare in perspective

The national lockdown measures implemented by various countries across the world when Covid-19 was declared as a public health emergency of international concern and global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 20 January 2020 and 11 March 2020 respectively, saw most governments implementing a raft of social policy responses as part of collective interventions to address the welfare of vulnerable citizens and reduce social risks worsened by Covid-19 in the face of the pandemic. Zimbabwe - which recorded over 6 000 daily cases of confirmed Covid-19 infections at its peak in December 2021, and over 100 Covid-19 related deaths per day around July 2021 – adopted a plethora of social policy responses mostly in urban areas to alleviate the social and economic impact of the pandemic. Whilst there has been a general sentiment that these various social policy responses played a significant role to provide social relief to several citizens who had lost their livelihoods and sources of income, there has not been much detailed and empirical studies to evaluate the impact of such social policy responses. Using data gathered through interviews with residents of selected areas in Harare, this paper reflects on the impact social policy responses to Covid-19 in Zimbabwe’s urban areas. The concepts of social policy and social protection provide conceptual frames of analysis. The study findings bring to the fore the intricacies, weaknesses and strengths of pre-pandemic social policy design and implementation which are all essential in post-pandemic social policy reflections and conversations.

Mr Olawale Yemisi
(University of Ilorin, Nigeria, Nigeria)


One of the intricate dimensions of Covid-19 effects has been the vulnerability of humans globally. Although the question of vulnerability existed among the African population before the advent of Covid-19, given widespread poverty and the government’s unresponsive attitude toward addressing this perennial crisis. The emergence of Covid-19 further compounded the scope of the African population’s vulnerability and poverty geography. African state governments promptly implemented social policies, with social protection being the top priority in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Social protection policies and programmes are designed to assist the poor and vulnerable in times of crises and uncertainties like Covid-19. The Nigerian government’s social protection policies, a key focus on poverty and vulnerability, lacked sustained commitment during the pre-Covid-19 era. Hence, the Nigerian government’s social protection programs amid the severe Covid-19 pandemic were hindered by political, administrative, and economic crises, making sustainability unattainable. The crisis of unsustainable social protection programs during the post-Covid-19 period when the Covid-19 lasting effects consumed the Nigerian government’s social protection policies, which culminated in the post-Covid-19 period. The article interrogates Nigeria’s social protection policies during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The article relies on primary (interviews) and secondary data from peer-reviewed articles and book chapters based on the research questions.

Dr Clayton Hazvinei Vhumbunu
(University of Free State, UFS, South Africa)


The national lockdown measures implemented by various countries across the world when Covid-19 was declared as a public health emergency of international concern and global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 20 January 2020 and 11 March 2020 respectively, saw most governments implementing a raft of social policy responses as part of collective interventions to address the welfare of vulnerable citizens and reduce social risks worsened by Covid-19 in the face of the pandemic. Zimbabwe - which recorded over 6 000 daily cases of confirmed Covid-19 infections at its peak in December 2021, and over 100 Covid-19 related deaths per day around July 2021 – adopted a plethora of social policy responses mostly in urban areas to alleviate the social and economic impact of the pandemic. Whilst there has been a general sentiment that these various social policy responses played a significant role to provide social relief to several citizens who had lost their livelihoods and sources of income, there has not been much detailed and empirical studies to evaluate the impact of such social policy responses. Using data gathered through interviews with residents of selected areas in Harare, this paper reflects on the impact social policy responses to Covid-19 in Zimbabwe’s urban areas. The concepts of social policy and social protection provide conceptual frames of analysis. The study findings bring to the fore the intricacies, weaknesses and strengths of pre-pandemic social policy design and implementation which are all essential in post-pandemic social policy reflections and conversations.

Dr Faith Zengeni
(Midlands State University, Zimbabwe)

Precarious Work and Social Policy Interventions to Create Decent Work in Post-Covid-19 Zimbabwe

With widespread calls to eliminate gaps in decent work, this paper explores the nexus between precarious work and social policy in Post-Covid-19 Zimbabwe. The literature review reveals that Zimbabwe adopted neoliberal social policies in 1991 when the government changed its strategy from an interventionist to a neoliberal approach. Since then, the provision of social services has declined substantially. This study argues that formal workers have long been overlooked by government, and there have not been meaningful social policy interventions to support formal workers, particularly after the pandemic. Studies suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic intensified precarious work for both formal and informal workers. Through systematic literature review, this paper interrogates the extent to which social policy responses benefited formal workers who were adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This study argues that the Covid-19 pandemic evolved in a context of inconsistent neoliberal social policies which made formal workers intensely vulnerable to the adverse effects of the pandemic. Furthermore, the National Social Protection Framework expired in 2016, making it difficult to assess governments’ commitment towards meaningful social protection for a dwindling labour force in formal work. This paper recommends the need for social policy to be used as a tool to create decent work for formal workers.
The rise and fall of urban developmentalism: The shift from state-led to private-sector-led growth is clearly observed in the job creation sector, where a paradigm shift from state-led to private-sector-led growth is clearly outlined in the current Ten-Year Plan of Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda (HERA). However, a proper assessment of the implications of this shift in terms of effects on socioeconomic inequality is missing.

Dr Ezana Haddis Weldegebrael
(University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK)

This paper adopts a relational perspective of the state and argues that the post-2018 Ethiopian ruling party aligns its urban development policy imagines with the interests of upscale developers and aligned business interests while strategising to secure acquiescence from the urban majority through narrating its urban flagship projects with its nationalist rhetoric. The literature on urban developmentalism, the aggressive production of urban space, is highly preoccupied with East Asian developmental states’ rapid urbanisation. On the contrary, the literature on African urbanisation is highly skewed to the apocalyptic analysis of African urbanisation, the paper highlights how and under what conditions African urban development policy could be pro-poor and enhance productivity.

Dr Ezana Am dework Atsbeha
(Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Basic Services Policies, Planning, and Delivery: Continuity and Change

This paper focuses on how policy formulation and planning for basic services have evolved regarding addressing issues of socioeconomic inequalities, vulnerability and inclusion in Ethiopia since 2018. It draws on a desk review and interviews. The main interest is to assess how socioeconomic inequalities, vulnerability and inclusion are addressed in the current Ten-Year Development Plan, Productive Safety Net Programmes (PSNP5) and Employment compared to previous similar national and sectoral plans.

Continuity and change are evident in planning and implementing selected basic services. The health strategies such as the Health Extension Programme Optimization (HEPO), the Motivated, Competent and Compassionate (MCC) and Woreda Transformation, as well as the Safety Net and the Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI) schemes provide continuity with some modifications to previous designs. However, the effectiveness of these interventions in addressing vulnerability and inequality has been consistently hampered by insufficient funding.

Concerning health, the three strategies and the insurance scheme aim to reach the government’s objective of universal access to basic health care services. However, it will be very challenging to correct the massive gap in average between peripheral and more central areas regarding the number and staffing of health facilities and the outreach of the insurance scheme.

A significant shift has been noted concerning the balance between rural and urban safety net spending, favouring the urban side mainly since 2016. The initiation of the Urban Productive Safety Net Programme (UPSNP) was a political move by the EPRDF government. However, whether the continued funding pattern is intentional or the result of a compartmentalised planning approach is unclear. The other significant change in policy direction and implementation: is observed in the job creation sector, where a paradigm shift from state-led to private-sector-led growth is clearly outlined in the current Ten-Year Plan of Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda (HERA). However, a proper assessment of the implications of this shift in terms of effects on socioeconomic inequality is missing.

Dr Eyob Balcha Gebremariam
(Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Infatuation with Neoliberalism: Critical Review of Abiy Ahmed’s Speeches and Their Implications on the Socio-Policy Architecture of Post-2018 Ethiopia

Neoliberal social engineering seeks to shape the dominant practices and habits of socioeconomic and political governance by emphasising efficiency and transparency and promoting individuals’ entrepreneurial skills. There is also a strong tone of favouring the private sector as an “engine of economic growth” whilst depicting the state as a source of “corruption” and “malpractices”, hence a source of evils. One way of driving neoliberal social engineering, particularly in political change, is through political speeches that set policy directions and ideological orientations.

This paper focuses on Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s selected speeches over the past five years and critically reflects on their implications on the overall socio-policy architecture of post-2018 Ethiopia. Political speeches during a transition period, in particular, serve the purpose of articulating the change agenda, setting new policy directives and identifying the power base with which the new political elite will be associated. The three selected speeches the paper focuses on are the first parliamentary speech where the prime minister outlined the policy direction of his government for the first time (May 2018), the speech at the World Economic Forum (January 2019) and the response the prime minister gave to parliament after establishing his cabinet as a newly elected government (October 2021).

Three key preliminary findings can be drawn from the analysis. First, the prime minister’s speech revealed that his government wanted to dissociate itself from the EPRDF era period of state-led developmentalism. This was initially depicted in the attempt to sell the big five publically owned companies (Telecom, Shipping Lines, Commercial Bank, National Insurance and Ethiopian Airlines). The adoption of decade-long policy recommendations by the WB and IMF, such as the liberalisation of the telecom and finance sector and the removal of subsidies, are also important indicators. Second, the prime minister seems to lack a basic understanding of how Western, (“developed”) countries operate. In one of his parliamentary statements, Prime Minister Abiy said, “… developed countries do not have a minister for health, education, the private sector takes care of these sectors”. Third, the 10-year development plan designed by the new government also shows a clear retreat of the state from actively shaping socio-economic development policies and the entrenching of market-confirming policies as key principles.

Panel Title: Precarious Financialization: Informativity, Financialization and Social Policy Transformations
Convenor: Prof Kate Meagher (London School of Economics, London, UK)

Dr Ruth Castel-Branco
(University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa)

Fast-Tracking Financialization: Mozambique’s Social Protection System in the Afterlife of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic thrust the question of social protection into the limelight as governments scramble to respond to its socioeconomic fallout. In Mozambique, the government introduced an unprecedented emergency cash transfer for over a million households, including able-bodied adults of working age. The Direct Social Action Programme-Post Emergency (PASD–PE) was unprecedented in its design, scope, and scale. Yet, six months later, it was allowed to quietly expire without much ado. This paper explores the politics of the PASD–PE and its ramifications for working people in the afterlife of the pandemic. Drawing on statistical analysis and semi-structured interviews, the paper argues that the PASD–PE represented one step forward and two steps back for Mozambique’s social protection system. While it served as an anchor for the embattled state to mobilize resources in a time of crisis, it strengthened the hand of international financial institutions, who were uniquely placed to provide concessional financing. Ultimately, the World
Bank leveraged the PASD–PE to advance its longstanding policy agenda based on the reduction of social protection to short-term, highly targeted and residual safety-nets, and the outsourcing of public provisioning to financial service providers, buttressed by government backed loans. The World Bank’s focus on transforming basic public services into investable assets, by protecting the profits of private investors, has been disastrous for the efficacy and efficiency of social protection systems, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill.

Dr Radha Upadhyaya
(University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya)

Making Digital Credit More Responsible: Case study of evolving regulation in Kenya

This paper charts the rise of digital credit in Kenya. Microlending has become a key prong of social welfare support in Kenya, with a particular emphasis on digital access to credit. The paper shows that digital credit adoption grew due to the Covid-19 crises. It highlights evidence on the problems of digital credit, including unfair blacklisting, the high cost of credit, and over-indebtedness. It then charts the history of digital credit regulation in Kenya, which culminated in the passing of the CBK (Amendment) Bill (2021) and the introduction of regulations for digital lenders in 2022. The paper argues that, while these regulations are a step in the right direction, several concerns remain. We argue that, by drawing a false dichotomy between different players in the digital credit space, the regulations do not address some of the key challenges in the sector, as key players like banks and telcos are not affected significantly by the new legislation. Additionally, due to an extremely broad definition of digital credit, the regulations create a landscape where there is a lack of capacity to monitor all players and a problem of overlapping mandates between different regulators. Furthermore, while these regulations may reign in egregious loan collection practices, they do not resolve some key issues of cost and consumer protection. Recognizing the demand by Kenyan consumers for access to novel forms of credit, we call for greater negotiation between digital credit borrowers and lenders and the strengthening of consumer protection and market conduct mandates for regulators. This case study provides lessons for other countries and emerging markets, where digital credit in particular and fintechs in general are on the rise.

Co-Author: Dr Keren Weitberg and Dr Linda Bonyo

Ms Aisha Modibo
(London School of Economics, London, UK)

Micro-Pensions and the Calculus of Informativity in Nigeria: Disrupting Precarious Financialization from Below

Social services for the informal economy are not just an exercise in social inclusion; they have become a new frontier of accumulation, given huge potential markets, expanding need, and the prospect of state-backed contributions. Yet corporate engagement with the ‘bottom of the pyramid’ faces inherent contradictions that can undermine the viability of privatized inclusive social policy initiatives. Some scholars highlight tensions between the requirement of the private sector for steady, predictable income streams, and the unsteady, precarious incomes of informal workers. Less widely appreciated are the tensions between the instabilities of the crisis-ridden formal economy and the informal financial ecosystems that are both more legible and more responsive to informal economic needs. The result is a tendency for financialized social policy arrangements for the BoP to run up against the financial ‘calculus of the poor’, in which unstable incomes and access to informal financial arrangements create alternative logics and spaces of informal financial decision making, generating persistent disruptions in the financialization of precarity.

This paper will examine the inherent disruptions undermining an initiative of precarious social policy financialization in Nigeria, focusing on the issue of micro-pensions. The Nigerian government launched a micro-pensions scheme for informal workers in 2019 and promoted it as a means of poverty alleviation, with a view to addressing a looming crisis in social support for elderly informal workers. While Nigerian demographics remain heavily weighted toward youth, the country’s huge population has 94 million people aged 65 and over, and 9.3% of the population earn their living informally. High levels of informality and unemployment, and mounting economic instability are bodily eroding traditional systems for supporting elderly informal workers. Struggles between the state and the private sector to design a system that turns the risks and cost of pension provision for informal workers into a source of profit have largely ignored the calculus of informal pensioners who expose the institutional poverty of financialization undermining the financialization of poverty.

Drawing on four vignettes of different types of informal financial inclusion among elderly informal workers, this paper explores the contradictions between the informal calculus of elderly informal actors at varied income levels, and the rigid calculus of formal micro-pension providers. The paper examines tensions between assumptions of the financial literacy needed to make the micro-pension system work, and the informal financial calculus essential to sustain precarious livelihoods in unstable times. The analysis traces the distinctive calculus of different categories of informal workers. In making financial decisions to ensure smooth consumption in the future, informal workers must consider short-term financial pressures of vulnerable, unstable incomes, as well as longer term financial pressures including rapid inflation/devaluation, and unpredictable crises of health, income loss, housing, pandemics and sudden policy changes. For many, immediate resource demands for education, healthcare, or housing that they have to provide for with their often meagre incomes are more significant investments in the future than micro-pension schemes. Listening to the needs of informal workers is key to the design of transformative rather than merely palliative social protection initiatives.

Co-Author: Prof Kate Meagher

Dr Vincent Guermond
(Queen Mary University, London, UK)

Whose money? Digital remittances, mobile money and fintech in Ghana

This talk explores the intertwining of the digitalization of remittances with the behavioural turn in development and, more specifically, the advancement of digital financial inclusion in Ghana. It sheds light on two intertwined ways in which state, civil society and private sector actors seek to leverage digital remittances as a way to expand financial inclusion. Drawing upon qualitative field research undertaken in Ghana, this paper traces the emergence and take-up of digital financial services – including digital remittances – and argues that the advancement of digital financial inclusion runs the risk of increasing the capacity of commercial and financial institutions to curtail migrants’ and remittance recipients’ essential strategies of social reproduction. By providing a grounded account of the concerted efforts that must be made in order for the ‘behavioural turn’ in international development to materialise, this article contributes to the development of a geography of marketisation framework that is attuned to this behavioural shift. It also advances a burgeoning literature that critically unpacks the often celebrated turn to fintech and digital financial inclusion in international development.


Convenor: Ms Susan Mlewa (SASPEN, Lusaka, Zambia)

Ms Susan Mlewa
(SASPEN, Lusaka, Zambia)

Advancing Evidence for Social Protection reforms Post-COVID in Southern Africa

Since the onset of Covid-19 SASPEN has had a strong focus on social protection research and leveraged its convening role in the social protection space to ensuring that evidence and good practice is promoted and shared for policy, legal and institutional reforms in the region. The wake of the global COVID 19 pandemic disrupted the way communities are structured and how things work. Assumptions that worked before had to be reworked and the need to be resourceful, proactive and self-sufficient became even more pressing. For reaching policy responses, with deliberate mechanisms that reach the poor and excluded populations in the region, become vital, to turn the poverty trajectory around SASPEN has positioned itself as a critical player in evidence building and research features prominently in the scope of our strategic plan 2021 -2025 in response to the need for real-world and context-sensitive evidence to respond to and address bottlenecks in the revision of social protection faced by policy-makers, technocrats and communities. We are in the critical early days that demand authentic yet far-reaching policy responses, with deliberate mechanisms that reach the poor and excluded populations in the region, become vital, to turn the poverty trajectory around. Our strategic plan 2021 -2025 in response to the need for real-world and context-sensitive evidence to respond to and address bottlenecks in the revision of social protection faced by policy-makers, technocrats and communities. We are in the critical early days that demand authentic yet far-reaching policy responses, with deliberate mechanisms that reach the poor and excluded populations in the region, become vital, to turn the poverty trajectory around.
Prof Gift Dafulya
(University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa)

Social Protection Overview before and during Covid-19 in SADC

Social protection instruments in Southern Africa, as was in the rest of the world, were used to respond to the impact of Covid-19. Much of the impetus in countries with strong social protection systems came from social accountability through civil society organisations that pressured governments to increase social protection coverage and cash transfers. In countries with moderate or weak social protection, the contagious effect from the region and beyond seemingly shaped the responses that were announced and/or implemented by the states. Based on a selective review of state responses in South Africa (with strong social protection system), Botswana (with moderate social protection system) and Zimbabwe (with weak social protection system), we argue that initiatives that emerged to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 are a mirror reflection of the status that prevailed before the pandemic. The need for social accountability to improve social protection in the region is undisputed.

Dr Mildred T. Mushunje
(Institute of Women Social Workers, Harare, Zimbabwe)

Pay Attention! Social Protection is a gender issue. Time to prioritise women and girls in social policy formulation

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals is concerned with gender equality. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the provision of social protection for women and girls during times of crises. The Commission on the Status of Women 63rd session Agreed Conclusions affirmed the importance of supporting women and girls to ensure they have access to basic services, and a comprehensive social policy framework can achieve this if duty bearers exercise the political will to allocate adequate financial resources. The “agreed conclusions” adopted by the Commission at its sixty-third session (E/2019/27) set out steps necessary to safeguard and improve all women’s and girls’ access to social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure, ensuring that their design and delivery is transformed to prevent discrimination and create a “level playing field” for all women and girls. The Covid-19 put to test the social protection framework for policy provisions measured against implementation, especially for women. Without COVID19, the fulfilment of women and girls’ rights was already a challenge. As in other regional blocs, SADC states called for nationwide shut down due to the Covid-19. Lockdowns were generally designed to help governments to do several things including: 1. to prepare health services for a spike in Covid-19 infections; 2. to flatten the curve to a point where the health sector would not be overwhelmed with patients requiring hospital care; 3. to educate and prepare the nation on COVID19 and how to protect oneself. The lock down periods were coupled with messaging around how the virus is spread, social distancing and information on conditions under which one could travel out of their homes. Travel out of homes was limited to those providing essential services (e.g. health personnel, supermarkets, uniformed personnel among others). For women and girls, the consequences were unprecedented. There were reports of girls missing out on school for reasons such as no access to educational gadgets used for virtual learning, unplanned pregnancies among others. Women, who are mostly in the informal sector, lost on economic opportunities as they could not open their markets. There were also unprecedented cases of gender-based violence. With this background, there is urgent need for increased research on the impacts of crises on women to inform policy formulation and refresh social protection interventions. The presentation will elaborate on some of the work. SASPEN has undertaken to inform social protection interventions in the SADC region.

Dr Isaac Kabelenga
(University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia)

Influence of Civil Society Organizations (CSOS) and Trade Unions in reforming social policy in South Africa during Covid-19: A focus on non-contributory social protection reforms during Covid-19 – Lessons for other SADC Countries.

Background and purpose: The Covid-19 pandemic that besieged the world in late 2019 did not spare any country from its devastating impacts. South Africa was one of the waste affected countries in Southern Africa by Covid-19. The Government of South Africa mitigated the effects of the pandemic using non-contributory social protection reforms. This paper explores the roles that CSOS and trade unions in South Africa played in reforming non-contributory social protection during Covid-19 and post-Covid-19, with the view to draw lessons from experience for other countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Methods and materials: The study involved a literature review and a qualitative study with key informants about Covid-19 non-contributory social protection reforms and the roles that CSOS and trade unions played in the reforms in South Africa.

Results: The study established that in South Africa, three (3) social protection reforms that were used during Covid-19 had continued and were scheduled to be extended up to 2024 and might be transitioned into the long term. The reforms are (1) the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant, (2) the Presidential Employment Stimulus and (3) the Covid-19 Temporary Employer / Employee Relief Scheme (TERS). From the study, it was evident that the continuation of these three reforms was attributable to the influence of CSOS and Trade Unions in South Africa. It was established that CSOS and Trade Unions in South Africa had been involved in vigorous engagements with the Government of South Africa so that they should continue with the three (3) reforms. As a result of pressure from CSOS and Trade Unions, the government decided to continue with the reforms.

Conclusions and Lessons for other countries in SADC: The result signifies the importance of having strong CSOS and Trade Unions that support the extension of social protection to the poor and vulnerable people. This implies that another strategy that could be used in order to lobby Heads of States in SADC that are struggling to extend coverage of social protection is to mobilize local CSOS and Trade Unions in all the countries so that they can stand up and mount pressure on their Heads of States to transition some of the best Covid-19 social protection approaches into medium- and long-term measures.
Design and Meanings

Ideas reverberating through Africa.

Ideas as windows to the world.

Knowledge as egg to be protected.

Social Policy in Africa

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