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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 Shafiu Ibrahim Abdullahi (Bayero 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 aided 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 own 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 (Universitat 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 nations 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 continuing 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 35% 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 revisit of the policies is therefore recommended to address the scourge in our society. Co-author(s): Dr J.J. JAWANDO

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. If, 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 stratified, 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 Mkandawire, 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 with the structural transformation of its economy and society must ask of its social policy. We argue that the post-pandemic period calls for rethinking the nexus of social policy and development in Africa and a robust re-imagination of a comprehensive social policy architecture founded on a new gender-sensitive social compact and inclusive development.

Dr Idris Ahmed Jamo (Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State Nigeria, 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 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, successful use of e-learning that will positively improve students' learning in the post-Covid-19 era.

Dr Jihad Ait Soussane (Ibn Tofail University, Morocco)

The determinants of African countries' preparedness for future epidemics/pandemics: an empirical analysis using the Global Health Security Index in the light of post-Covid-19 era

This paper explores the determinants of African countries' preparedness for future epidemics and pandemics, utilizing the Global Health Security Index (GHS). The GHS Index 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 GHS Index 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,

preparedness 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 bolstering societal resilience and ensuring comprehensive preparedness for future health challenges.

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Dr Olayinka Akanle

(University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Nigeria)

Misinformation and Covid-19 Vaccination in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria: Lessons for Post-Covid-19 Social Policy in Africa

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 fallouts of Covid-19 Post-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 megacity – 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 complicit. 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 worrisome, however, is the role of misinformation in shortcircuiting vaccine uptake in Lagos. Even though logistical and technical/health glitches can be easily solved, the misinformation behavioural 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. Co-author(s): Mis. O.O. Oderinde

Professor Wilson Akpan

(Walter Sisulu University, South Africa)

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, community engagement has become increasingly portrayed as an imperative that will significantly enhance the impact of today's universities as bastions of social transformation. Community engagement officially 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 Aleesi

(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 deferral 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 by its members during the pandemic. As workers or 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 assent 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 with the organization that were aimed at developing more products and services for its members. A number of these changes were in the pipeline and the pandemic exerted force on all social security actors to push for changes that saw the assent of NSSF 2022 amendment.

Mr Richmond Amponsah

(Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment, Ulster University, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)

Addressing Covid-19 Lockdown and Its Related Impacts

on Informal Settlements in sub-Saharan Africa: A Scoping Review

Compared to other world regions, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) recorded some of the lowest cases of Covid-19. Yet its effects in the sub-region have been enormous. In this paper, we systematically review scientific evidence on the impact of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and social protection schemes provided to informal settlement dwellers amidst the pandemic, focusing on SSA. Most studies found that numerous residents were food insecure due to the loss of jobs/closure of businesses, and reduced incomes. Other issues include human rights violations due to extortions and the use of brutality by authorities in 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. Co-author(s): Dr. Marie Vaganay Miller

Dr Kelly Arsene Mouongue

(University of Dschang, Cameroon)

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 accentuated 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

equity. The study seeks to quantify and qualify the extent of the digital divide, identify key contributing factors, and propose targeted interventions for a more equitable educational landscape. Utilizing secondary quantitative data, the study employs a rigorous analytical approach with statistical methods to assess the distribution of digital resources, connectivity, and device accessibility across SSA. Preliminary findings indicate a significant digital gap in SSA, with disparities in internet penetration, device availability, and technological infrastructure. Students in rural areas and marginalized communities face heightened challenges, exacerbating existing educational inequalities. The study illuminates the digital divide, providing a foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations. Practically, this research informs policymakers on strategic interventions, emphasizing infrastructure development, digital literacy programs, and inclusive policies. Socially, the study underscores the potential perpetuation of educational inequalities in the digital age and advocates for collective efforts to bridge the divide. The originality of this study lies in the detailed examination of the regional context, contributing valuable insights for informed policy decisions and interventions. The study's value extends to its potential to shape equitable educational practices in the evolving digital landscape of SSA.

Dr Alex Asakitikpi (The Independent Institute of Education, South Africa)

Education Policies in South Africa: Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions

The educational policy landscape of South Africa has undergone significant transformation since the dawn of democratic rule in 1994. Key to this transformation include the promotion of access to quality education, ensuring democratic governance in the schooling system, and making schooling compulsory for all South African children aged between seven and fifteen. In addition, at the post-secondary level, all first-year students from households with a total income that is less than 350,000 Rands are assured of full funding of their studies either at universities or Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. However, despite government-laudable efforts, challenges persist. This paper aims to examine the fundamental shift in education policy in the country by historicizing its development, identifying major challenges in achieving policy goals, and pointing to new directions in the face of new development in the country. The first section of the paper presents the historical context of education in South Africa and how it has evolved.

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 democratization of the country in 1994 and suggests future policy directions the government may consider in achieving developmental goals in the context of a diversifying educational landscape.

Dr Kofi Asante (University of Ghana, Ghana)

Between Ambition and Retrenchment: Social Policymaking during and after the Pandemic

This paper explores the incongruity between the growing scale of contemporary crises and the shrinking scope for state action. Decades of austerity and retrenchment have weakened or hollowed out public sectors in the developing world and undermined their ability to effectively respond to crises. In Ghana, the effectiveness of social policies introduced in response to the pandemic was limited by the weakness of the administrative and infrastructural vehicles through which they were to be delivered. Drawing on interviews, policy documents, and news report, this paper examines the contradictions of pursuing 'ambitious' social policies by Ghana's 'retrenched' public sector. For example, subsidised electricity and water only reached those who were already connected to these services and the distribution of meals to destitute urban dwellers was disorganised because of the threadbare state support system. We argue that the disorderly implementation of pandemic social policies undermined the prospects for future social interventions by reinforcing negative public perceptions of state action while also providing justification for elite preferences for market solutions. Moreover, the absence of a 'strong' advocacy coalition pursuing a broad social policy reform agenda allowed the 'window of opportunity' created by the Covid-era policies to slip by. Against this background, the problems encountered in the implementation of these policies were interpreted not as grounds for reforming the social policy architecture to build a more robust system but rather as further justification to limit the scope for state action.

Co-author(s): Dr. R. Foli

Dr Mary Baremirwe 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 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. Study respondents were selected using quota and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using Focus Group Discussions, interviews and documentary review. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The policy process of social protection is dominated by the technocrats, elites and politicians that determine the targeting, priorities and financial allocations. The informal sector workers are hardly consulted and are excluded through the entire policy process. Exclusion of informal sector workers in the policy process further leads lack of prioritization of risks and shocks and inadequate targeting. Moreover, the precarious nature of the informal economy coupled with the heterogeneity of the sector deters organisation of the workers- an essential element in promoting social cohesion and power of voice to advocate for social protection rights. The post-COVID social protection interventions should address the structural and institutional factors that hinder non-institutionalisation or formalisation of business as well as promote effective participation of the informal sector workers in the agenda setting process. This promotes inclusion and prioritisation of the specific social protection needs of informal sector workers across the sectors as well as reduction of leakages due to corruption during targeting.

Co-author(s): Dr. Oketch Chrisostom, Mr. Wasike Sam Mankind

Dr Temitope Bello (KolaDaisi University, Ibadan Nigeria, Nigeria)

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, 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 lockdown 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 Bouhdiba (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 origins. The situation reminds what happened centuries ago, when Jewish people 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 “viruses!” 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 sinophobia in France.

Xenophobia was not just a spontaneous reaction of a panicked crowd, it has been sometimes literally 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 harassment 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 (Université 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 sont centrées sur le maintien des équilibres macroéconomiques et la négligence 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) fondé sur l'introduction de mécanismes effectifs de solidarité nationale. Un autre volet de cette politique novatrice concerne l'extension à tout le monde des allocations familiales durant les années 2023 et 2024. De même, à l'horizon 2025, l'assiette des adhérents aux régimes de retraite sera élargie pour inclure toutes les catégories des non-salariés : indépendants professionnels...

Plusieurs importantes contraintes se dressent devant ces chantiers avec notamment la problématique du

financement puisqu'ils nécessiteront des ressources financières permanentes considérables dans un contexte de grandes difficultés budgétaires.

De même, la pluralité des organismes gestionnaires (CNSS, la CNOPS...) constitue un obstacle majeur à l'efficacité de toute la réforme. Ce qui représente un véritable obstacle dans l'unification et la bonne gouvernance de tout le système de protection sociale...

Cette profonde et globale réforme constitue le défi majeur de toute la politique sociale du Maroc post COVID 19, qui pourrait contribuer à combler les grands retards existants en matière d'indicateurs sociaux et une expérience très intéressante à reproduire notamment en Afrique.

Mr Kouider Boutaleb (University of Tlemcen, Algeria)

Social policies and social transfers in Africa: the case of Algeria

The purpose of this contribution is to analyze social policy and social transfers in Algeria, where, as in all African countries, the pandemic (Covid-19) has had a severe impact, almost everywhere, in several dimensions and in several sectors: health, work, education, agriculture, transport etc. In Africa, as elsewhere, the Covid-19 has aggravated the situation of poverty and employment, already endemic, by amplifying unemployment and the drop in subsistence income, which has a particular importance by the accentuation of 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) *Informal Welfare responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa: Reflecting on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)*

This paper argues that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Africa played a pivotal role in meeting the needs of marginalised and poor Africans, during the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Covid-19) pandemic. Moving from the proposition advanced by scholars such as Noyoo (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 harmful 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 poor and marginalised communities, exemplifying a more transformative agenda and not a residual one. In this way, just as transformative social policy helps to reduce inequalities, poverty and social exclusion 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 investigates 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 research assesses these interventions' economic and social impact, delving into 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 Chinguwo (School of Public Health, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa)

Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic aggravated workforce crisis 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 crisis. 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 foresight 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 headlong 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 hiking 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: Mobilizing 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 selfless 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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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 Gunhidzirai

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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 documents findings reported although the vulnerable groups have benefited from the social protection programmes and services, however the wealthy of the country is still unequally distributed hence some groups are still marginalized in terms of their social and economic status. Furthermore, 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 prescriptions, 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 (CNRST), Burkina 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-professional 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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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 been perceived to have an in-built resources advantage subsequently entailing, encouraging social policy captivation 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 settlements 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 (ECAM5) 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 securitize 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 lock-down 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 disaster preparedness in Africa. Reviewing existing literature and speeches of senior government officials in Kenya 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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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 evolution 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,

focus groups and one-on-one interviews with social security professionals and experts both structured and unstructured were employed. A review was conducted of relevant scholarly works found in books, magazines, journals, and online sources.

Dr Abou-Bakar Mamah (Rhodes College, Memphis, TN, USA, United States)

Covid-19, Gender, and Social Policy Responses in Education: The Case Study of Togo

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 adopts 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 (Assane Seck University, Senegal)

The Senegalese Education System at the Wave Crests and Troughs 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 protraction of schoolwork at home has been pretty 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 bequeathed a substandard 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 Crisis - 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 Yousra Mellouki (Mohammed V university of Rabat, Morocco)

Analysis of the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on regional socio-economic variables in Morocco using spatial econometric modelling.

The objective of this study is to assess the spatial influence of socioeconomic determinants of regional death rates 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 pandemic and to highlight spillover effects between regions located in close proximity to each other. The results of the fixed-effects model with the SDM spatial specification show the direct positive effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on socioeconomic factors in the Moroccan regions. Its indirect effects are insignificant and are generally explained by the central characteristic of the Moroccan Center-Periphery model.

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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 eclectic social protection measures to curb social ills. Some of these informal social protection measures include crowdfunding 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

(Metropolitan State University of Denver, United States of America)

The socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the informal economic sectors in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, as in other countries in Africa and the world, it is very evident that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected every sphere of life including travel, education, business, the informal sector, religion, health, sports, and entertainment. Zimbabwe's economy is mainly informal as more than half of its fifteen million citizens rely on informal work for survival. These include mainly street vendors and cross-border traders to South Africa and neighboring countries. The paper will interrogate the challenges and possibilities that emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe. The study employs a socio-historical framework in examining the impacts and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the informal economic sectors in Zimbabwe. Examining the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the informal economic

sectors in Zimbabwe through a socio-historical lens allows us to understand the interplay and intersection of economics and politics in a country that is politically polarized and undergoing social transformation. My research sites include Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, and Gweru, the administrative capital city of the Midlands Province. These two sites are home to a large informal sector economy that houses street vendors and cross-border traders mainly to South Africa but also to neighboring countries in Southern Africa. In terms of data collection, we intend to employ fieldwork research and autoethnography (interviews, observations, participant-observation) that will allow me to listen to the research participants' stories. We will also employ triangulation and documentary analysis especially earlier published work on Covid-19 in Zimbabwe and archival material.

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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 Mpumalanga

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 Mpumalanga 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 Mpumalanga. 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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Dr Jeremiah Muneeni

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In Pursuit of a Future Healthy Nation: Post-Covid-19 Kenyan Healthcare Social Policy Review and Re-alignment

The need for functional social policies to combat health emergencies cannot be gainsaid. The negative effects of Covid-19 on health sector exposed the (in)capability of African governments' existing social policies to act promptly on unforeseen health emergencies. This paper will interrogate how African governments have/are reviewing their social policies to align them with her citizens' needs during unforeseen health emergencies. The paper will aim at answering the question: did Covid-19 expose weaknesses and, therefore, trigger a need for social policy review within the health sector? To answer this question, the paper will hinge itself within theoretical lens of social constructionism, particularly healthcare policy's three pillars, namely; regulative, restrictive and facilitating. This theory will aid in the analysis of social policy structures within the health sector that have been in place before its emergency and how they have been/are being revised to ensure the governments' effectiveness in dealing with future health threats. The paper will lean on interpretivist paradigm utilizing mixed methods. Data will be collected from purposely sampled written sources, especially from social policy Acts in Kenya. An online questionnaire specially tailored to get information relating to the government's pre and post-Covid-19 health social policies will also be used. Data obtained will be coded and thematically analyzed. The findings of the paper are projected to reveal that Covid-19 triggered African governments to review and re-align their social policies in preparation for future emergencies.

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 system 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 sturdier, 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 and implement interventions that address citizens' needs

and welfare. This is imperative in disaster response and national socio-economic development because a country's citizens are an irreplaceable asset and indispensable constituency in public governance. In this regard, the country's social security infrastructure, comprising policies, systems, resources and plans, can be leveraged to efficiently address the citizens' needs, particularly during ecological crises and pandemics that limit individuals and households' capacity to satisfy their needs. In light of the pandemic's devastation and impact, the South African government responded to the citizens' social security through a raft of interventions and policies to ensure that communities across the country had the means to sustain their existence despite the limitations imposed on them by the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the state's bureaucracy administered one of the continent's most effective social security systems. In light of this background, the paper evaluates how measures such as food parcels, moratoriums on evictions and rental fee increases, social grants, unemployment benefits and relief assistance responded to citizens' social vulnerabilities and needs.

Dr Mercy Dotty Mushwana (University of Venda, South Africa)

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 population were rural University students who enrolled in 2020 under the school of health sciences, 12 participants were purposively selected, the sampling number will be determined by data saturation. The study found out that most students were affected psychologically by Covid-19. It found out that students were not certain about their future whether they will still be here today or tomorrow. It was recommended that students be provided with psychological counselling to deal with their trauma.

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Dr Justus Muusya (Kirinyaga University, Kenya)

Health Policy Gaps in Mitigating Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya

Covid-19 pandemic affected social life of people globally. This means that in response to this crisis, all aspects of social life had to be involved. These aspects include health workers and social scientists. Besides health workers, social scientists had a critical role to play in respect to the response against Covid-19. It is in this background that this paper seeks to establish the extend to which social scientists were involved, and if there were any policy gaps in their mobilization. The study will employ social functional theory. This theory is based on the premise that all aspects of any society serve a purpose and that all are indispensable for the wellbeing of the society. In this study, aspects are experts in various professions. The data of this 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 descriptive method. Results of this study shall used to identify policy gaps, If any, and recommend the best way to ensure inclusivity in management of social crisis.

Professor Ndangwa Noyoo (Southern African Policy and Development Nexus (SAPDN), South Africa)

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.

Co-author: Dr Primrose Dube

Ms Kate O'Donnell

(International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands)

Institutionalising Poverty Targeting: An examination of the institutional and political implications of social registries. Despite various criticisms and chronic operational problems, the World Bank has been promoting an agenda of establishing and using social registries for poverty targeting in not only cash transfer programmes, but also in an increasing array of other policy areas, with the intention of making these registries into the backbone of social policy provisioning in the Global South. Social registries in this sense are large scale data systems that collect socio-economic data on households – in almost all cases, based on proxy means testing – for the purpose of poverty targeting. They are much larger than surveys and include large proportions of national populations, but with a focus on poorer regions. Since 2010, forty-one countries across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have or previously had either one or several World Bank loans to develop a social registry, with the number notably increasing after the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the implications of how these large-scale data systems are shaping social policy systems and, in particular, peoples' eligibility and access to social entitlements has received scant attention.

Drawing on fieldwork in Kenya and a more general assessment of this agenda across the Global South, this paper explores the implications of social registries on social policy systems, we argue that these social registries have been having a profound influence on the shaping of social policy architectures, albeit in discrete and even covert ways, in particular through institutionalising segregationist and disempowering modalities of targeting in social protection. By shaping the policy, institutions and provisioning implementation, social registries appear to build modalities that are ill-equipped for transitioning towards more universalistic modalities of social policy.

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.

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 locking 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 played 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

protection and commenced its institutionalization through the development of a policy, and recently enacted a law. This happened without any pilot social assistance programme implemented in the state. Thus, the state provides an opportunity to understand the incentives that drive political elites to adopt and institutionalise social protection without the benefit of the demonstration effect offered by international donor funded pilot programme. Rather the state was afforded the opportunity of an international donor funded programme that provided advocacy, capacity-building, systems strengthening and evidence generation and dissemination. This paper is a qualitative study aimed at understanding the factor(s) that incentivised the state government to develop social protection legal frameworks (i.e. policy and law) as part of the process of adopting and institutionalising social protection. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions (FGD) from state and non-state stakeholders and project staffs and analysed to tease out the political and power dynamics involved in enacting the legal frameworks. Findings will inform recommendations on how international development partners/donors can approach the social protection support they provide governments of the continent.

Co-authors: Mr. George Quintus Akor; Mrs. Dolika Nkhoma

Dr Peter Gutwa Oino

(Kisii University, Kenya)

Socio-Cultural Innovations in Public Health Care for Covid-19 Response among Elderly People in Kakamega County

This study sought to analyze the socio-cultural, health, and behavioral responses of elderly people to prevent Covid-19, within the framework of health service agents, Ministry of Health Kenya, and WHO guidelines, in Western Kenya. In 2019 the world began experiencing a viral disease threat from the coronavirus. While the Covid-19 pandemic threatened all members of society, elderly 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 are

(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 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 31 (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 social-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 Patricia Kariaga & Dr Maximila N. Wanzala

Dr Olusegun Oladeinde

(Bells University of Technology, Ota, Nigeria, Nigeria)

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

of the people, which continue to create challenges to the dimensions of social protection programs being implemented by the African countries. Indeed, the post-pandemic experiences of majority of the people appear to be deeply worse by the rising cost of living and inflation, in particular in the context of peculiar socio-economic circumstances of women in the informal sector, and the vulnerable. The pervasive austerity measures and fiscal constraints being experienced by the people further raise concerns about the sustainability of the various social protection programs of the public authorities, for example, in Nigeria. The paper takes on a gender lens to analyze and provide a critical understanding of the dimensions and implications of Covid-19 pandemic, and indeed post-pandemic; referred to as "shadow pandemic", as it exacerbated existing poverty and inequalities, on the lived-experiences and livelihood of a particular category of Nigerian population; women and the vulnerable. It evaluates the current policy response, encapsulated in social protections and other policy intervention programs of public authorities in Nigeria, in mitigating the impact of the pandemic and its "shadow underbelly" of poverty and deprivation. Evidence continue to show the 'residual' dimensions of social protection programs, even in the context of post Covid-19 pandemic, not only as it demonstrates a 'gender tip' to quality of life and livelihood for women, but more significantly, as it once again illustrates the minimalist scopes of neo-liberal framing of social protection architecture in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the emerging context of responses of public authorities to the challenges of post-pandemic socio-economic conditions on the well-being of the citizens, it is argued in this paper that only a comprehensive and systematic social policy framing; well integrated into productive tenet of development, could sufficiently and sustainable respond to gender dimensions of social inequality.

Dr Grace Olufunke-Peters

(University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

Healthcare Provisioning Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Africa: An Analysis of Strategies and Challenges

This paper provides a focused examination of healthcare provisioning responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa. As the continent faced unprecedented challenges, national governments and health authorities implemented diverse strategies to strengthen healthcare systems and mitigate the impact of the virus. The analysis begins by assessing the rapid mobilization of resources for healthcare infrastructure.

This involves an overview of the construction and re-purposing of medical facilities, including the establishment of Covid-19 treatment centers, isolation units, and the scaling up of testing and diagnostic capabilities. Furthermore, the abstract investigates the efforts to enhance healthcare personnel and resources. It scrutinizes strategies employed to recruit and train additional healthcare workers, ensure the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), and secure a stable supply chain for essential medical supplies, medications, and equipment. The role of technology in healthcare provisioning during the pandemic is investigated, with a focus on the adoption of telemedicine and digital health solutions. The abstract explores how African nations leveraged technology to facilitate remote consultations, track the spread of the virus, and disseminate critical health information. Challenges encountered during the implementation of healthcare responses are also discussed. This includes an examination of issues such as limited healthcare infrastructure, disparities in access to healthcare services, and the economic constraints impacting the ability of governments to sustain robust healthcare provisioning measures. In conclusion, the abstract offers insight into multifaceted healthcare provisioning responses to the Covid-19.

Dr Stephen Okumu Ombere

(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

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.

Co-author: Ms. Ida Faith Aganyo.

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 guaranty 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 tripod 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 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.

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 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, 52.2% 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 multidimensional poverty and other household-related characteristics, location, and regional factors as key explanators 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.

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

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 effects of the disease 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 policy interventions before Covid-19, with the crisis failing to lead to a potential path-changing disruption to the existing minimalistic social provision. By examining the social policy response during the pandemic and the current government's plans on social policy, we argue that the ideational approach framing social policy in Kenya

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 'hustler 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 in some contexts. These instances show the resilience and adaptability of ISP systems. Implications for social policy in a post-pandemic context are discussed.

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.

Ms Faniry RANAIVO RAHAMEFY (University of Antananarivo, Madagascar)

Towards more encompassing and transformative social protection: assessing the "Tosika Fameno" 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 contain the negative impact on the most affected populations, the Malagasy government deployed two emergency relief programmes, including the "Tosika Fameno" 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, zeroing on the cash transfer programme called "Tosika Fameno" to vulnerable households. It is contended here that social policy should not only be protective, but preventive and transformative; and as such, should on the one hand be based on transparent, 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 "Tosika Fameno" 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 Mamie Nuccia Albertine Ratsaramiafara (Université d'Antananarivo, Madagascar)

Social Policy in Post-Covid-19 Africa: between cultural and informal welfare responses, case of Madagascar. What lesson learned?

The aim of this paper is to reveal knowledge, understanding and lessons acquired by the pandemic experiences in developing countries namely in Madagascar. Documentation, fieldwork and interview constitute the main undertaken approach to collect empirical data about social and health policies in general and cultural and informal welfare responses to Covid-19 in particular. The content analysis is crucial to entail and unpacking perceptions and representations, actions and behaviour related to informal welfare, before, during and after the pandemic crisis. By the dynamic and systematic analysis, the study reveals two results. The first result shows that, developing countries, have a chronic weak social policy and a vulnerable health care system. However its people dispose a strong cultural responses through their habits, traditions and ancestors knowledge on medicinal plants. The second result demonstrates the lesson learned from the pandemic crisis, that is the cultural model of resilience based on traditional knowledge and perceptions of welfare, health and disease. However, this cultural tackle had its limitations, implies a systemic responses rely on cultural consideration, strong economic and clear social policies.

Dr Oluranti Samuel (Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria)

Covid-19 Pandemic and the Deficits of Effective Social Policy Responses on the Informal Economy Operators in Lagos State, Nigeria

The official reactions to forestall the spread of the coronavirus in Nigeria varied. Enlightenment programs, propositions, 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 (KIIs) 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 post coronavirus period. The expected social policy responses to IEOs in terms of security, adequate health facilities, education, financial assistance, unemployment benefits, reduction in taxation and levies, palliatives, 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 Mali, Mauritania 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 Ninacs (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 to us 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.

Co-authors: Marie Fall, Ousmane Wagué, Almamy Sylla, Adama Sadio

Dr Hana Sarsar (Ibn Tofail University, Morocco)

Advancing Healthcare Access in the Post-Covid-19 Era: The Impact of Social Protection Generalization in Morocco

This paper focuses on the impact of social protection generalization on healthcare in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era, specifically examining the case of Morocco. The Covid-19 crisis exposed the weaknesses in social protection networks, particularly for vulnerable populations. In 2019, the medical coverage rate for the Moroccan population was only 68.8%. To address this issue, the Moroccan government launched a monumental project to extend social protection, placing the health of citizens at the forefront of their concerns.

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 Ramédistes system to the AMO TADAMOUN 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. Co-author: Professor H.O. Ouakil

Mr Adama 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 (University of South Africa, South Africa)

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 Tazzioli’s concept of choking without killing to analyse how the social policy constrained the opportunities and livelihoods of Zimbabwean migrant women entrepreneurs in Botswana (Tazzioli, 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 Tazzioli (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, what were 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.

Co-authors: Dr. R. Ramtohul; Dr. N. Nalwimba

Dr Newman Tekwa (University of South Africa, South Africa)

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

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 proffered 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 Tom Tom

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

Smallholder Farmers and Covid-19: Lessons of Transformative Social Policy in Zimbabwe

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 are still grappling with its 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 interrogates 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 Salimah Valiani

(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, peoples' 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 project 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 capitalism historically, from the 1970s, I will further argue that comprador bourgeois capitalism, with a new twist, is the expression of financialisation in Africa. A world historical methodology will be used, drawing from Samir Amin's 1995 article, "50 Years is Enough!", and Giovanni Arrighi's monograph, *The Long Twentieth Century*.

Dr Clayton Hazvinei Vhumbunu

(University of Free State (UFS), South Africa)

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 security 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)

Social Policies in Times of Crises: Navigating Social Protection Policies and Politics in Nigeria under Covid-19

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 efforts to implement social protection programs amid the severe Covid-19 pandemic were hindered by political, administrative, and economic crises, making sustainability unattainable. The crisis of unsustainability was further evident in the post-Covid-19 period when the Covid-19 lasting effects consumed the Nigerian economy, problem of inflation and change in government, which led to the stoppage of all 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 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. 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 systemic 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.

Panels

Panel Title: Examining changes in the orientation and practices of the social policy architecture in Post-2018 Ethiopia: progress or regress?

Convenor: Dr Eyob Balcha Gebremariam (University of Bristol, Bristol, UK)

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

The rise and fall of urban developmentalism: The shift from pro-poor and productive to upscale urban development policy imaginaries in post-2018 Ethiopia.

This paper adopts a relational perspective of the state and argues that the post-2018 Ethiopian ruling party aligns its urban development policy imaginaries 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 perspective of urban informalities and infrastructural dysfunction. Nevertheless, between 2005 and 2018, Ethiopian urbanisation, particularly the capital, Addis Ababa, has briefly experienced an aggressive, productive urban developmentalism inspired by the East Asian developmental states, aiming to appease overwhelmingly opposition-leaning urban majority through redistributing material concessions. Influenced by the developmental state ideology, an interventionist state determined to bring structural transformation, the previous ruling coalition (1991-2018) promoted urban development policy to reduce poverty, facilitate entrepreneurship, and promote investment in manufacturing sectors. The incumbent ruling party, which came to power through youth protests in response to the previous ruling coalition's contradicting policies of centralised aggressive state developmentalism and the constitutionally recognised regional autonomous self-governance collective rights, pursued an upscale and vanity urban developmentalism, financed by a public-private partnership and off-budget public finance at the

discretion of the premier while scaling back on pro-poor and urban productivity-enhancing interventions. The regime also promoted speculative real estate developments as a key urban transformation strategy by deregulating previous restrictions.

Such a shift benefited big businesses and state officials aligned with the ruling government while alienating and reinforcing the exclusion of most urban residents. Going beyond 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 Amdework 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 (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 coverage 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 (University of Bristol, Bristol, UK)

Infatuation with Neoliberalism: Critical Review of Abiy Ahmed's Speeches and their implications on the social 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 all 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 social 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 disassociate itself from the EPRDF era period of state-led developmentalism. This was initially depicted in the attempt to sell the big five publicly 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: Informality, 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 scrambled 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. Microfinance 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 negotiability 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-Authors: Dr Keren Weitzberg and Dr Linda Bonyo.

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

Micro-Pensions and the Calculus of Informality 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 9.4 million people aged 60 and over, and 93% of the population earn their living informally. High levels of informality and unemployment, and mounting economic instability are badly 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 underpinning the financialization of poverty.

Drawing on four vignettes of different types of informal financial calculus 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, instable 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 digitalisation of remittances with the behavioural turn in development and, more specifically, the advancement of digital financial inclusion. It sheds light on the intricate 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.

Panel: Post-Covid-19 Social Protection Reforms: A refocus of Social Policy in SADC?

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. 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. 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 workable and researched solutions to facilitate new thinking and reforms through researched solutions to tackle poverty and adopt appropriate shock-responsive and sustainable financing for social protection. In our quest to accumulate evidence in favour of social protection, our recent research findings on the State of Social Protection in the context of Covid-19, furthered by a follow up study on the analysis of contributory and non-contributory Social Protection Reforms in the Wake of Covid-19 in Southern Africa shall facilitate discourse on appropriate shock-responsive social protection and facilitate thinking that enable actors in the region to identify new ways of reaching the most disadvantaged populations, in the most sustainable, effective and efficient ways using both a mix of convention and non-conventional approaches.

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.

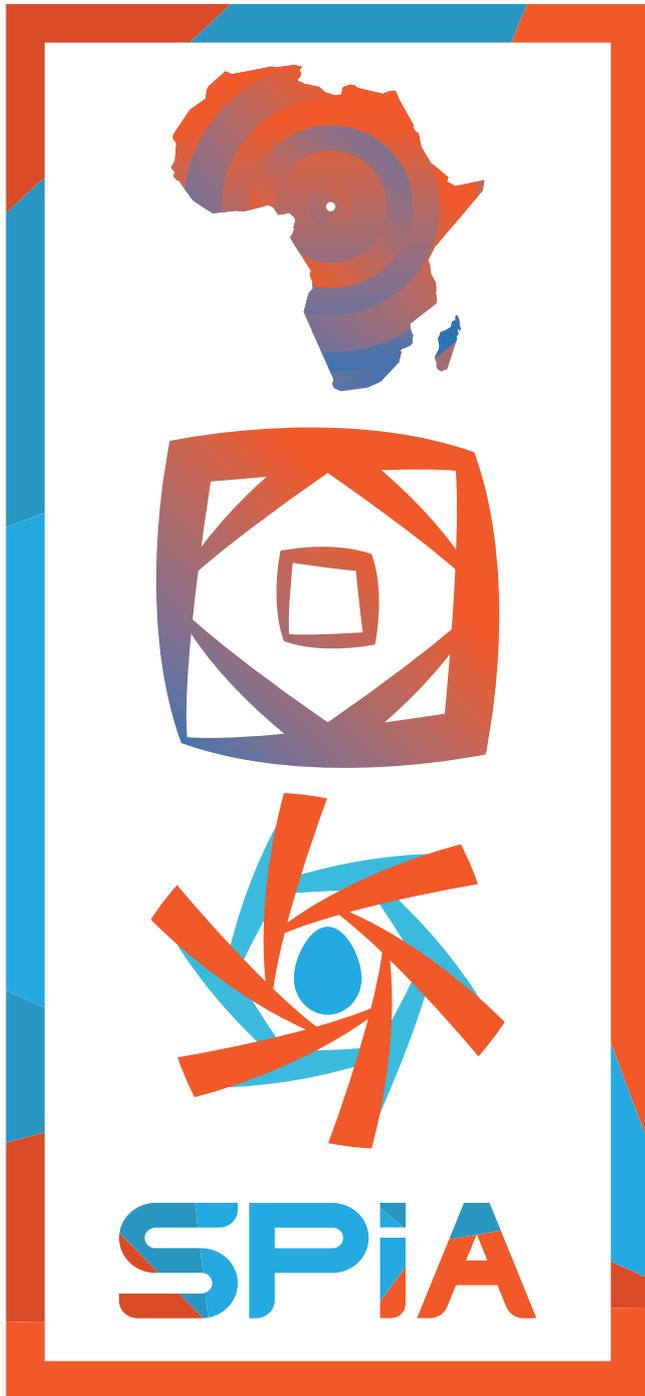
Background and purpose: The Covid-19 pandemic that besieged the world in late 2019 did not spare any country from its devastating impacts. South Africa was one of the worst affected countries in Southern Africa by Covid-19. The Government of South Africa mitigated the effects of the pandemic using non-contributory 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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