



Mukuru Promotion Centre

Empowerment Step by Step

Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy

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Information X

1st November 2020 – 24th December 2020

An Update to our Supporters, Friends and Partners regarding the works of Mukuru Promotion Centre and the CoVid19 Pandemic.

As at 24th December 2020, Kenya had a total number of **94,614** CoVid19 confirmed cases, **1,647** deaths and **76,998** recoveries since March 13th, 2020. The fatality rate has decreased to 1.74% and the recovery rate has increased to 81.3%. Men seem to be more prone to the virus than women, rating at 71% compared to 29% for women. The age range of cases is between a 4 month old baby to an 83 year senior. (Source: Ministry of Health Kenya and WHO).

The last 8 weeks has been a roller coaster ride for many in Kenya. In early November there was panic as the daily confirmed cases reached 1,400. Towards Christmas the cases decreased substantially.

A known super spreader is the political rallies that draw out tens of thousands of people to hear what the politicians have to say. From 5th November all political rallies were suspended for 60 days to stem the spread of the virus. It is clear that the political rallies held in September contributed to the spike in October. County Governors are now given more powers to battle the virus in their own Counties. President Kenyatta was pressured to make travel restrictions to Counties from highly affected cities. However, the cost to the economy and the increase in poverty by the previous lock down was so great he did not mandate another lock down. As a lockdown is not possible, we are all encouraged to take personal responsibility to obey health regulations and avoid spreading contagion.

In order to try and stem the spread anyone breaking the public health regulations will be fined 20,000 KHS (\$200US). Pedestrians who had no masks on Kimathi Street were handcuffed by a group of police officers in plain clothes and forced to pay 20,000 each before being released. It is feared that this regulation will lead to further police corruption and torture, even killings. The laxity among the public in keeping the regulations and the impossibility of social distancing in densely populated areas are seen as some of the factors spreading the virus. Early November over 2,400 were arrested for flouting regulations, including breaching the 10pm to 4 am curfew. Bars had to close by 9pm but many were flouting the rules. Many of the bars are owned by members of the police force.

The two major issues over the last couple of months have been the healthcare professionals and school age children. It is proposed that all children will return to school in January. The Standard 8 pupils and Form 4 students should have exited in 2020 but they will still be in school next year in 2021. It is not clear how the extra classes will be managed. The infrastructure is simply not there for hundreds of schools to take on extra classes. To accommodate more students, when social distancing is required, will be an impossible task for schools. Another disturbing factor with the pandemic, according to the East Africa Child Rights Network, is the increase of Child Trafficking

and sexual exploitation. It appears that without the supervision that schools provide many children will lose their innocence and a generation will be lost to exploitation and greed. The Government has grown oblivious of the issues arising during the pandemic so far, while focusing only on politics and the new Constitution initiative.

The other casualty group from the pandemic is healthcare professionals. The media raised concern on the rising number of healthcare workers who have died of CoVid-19. Sadly, they have inadequate personal protective equipment (PPE) at work and no health insurance for treatment for themselves when sick. A number of countries, including some wealthy individuals, provided Kenya with PPEs. Now there is something like 6.2 billion KHS (US\$62mil) worth of PPE gear grounded due to the ongoing prosecution of corruption cases. To make matters worse the healthcare workers have complained that in many hospitals there is no segregation of CoVid-19 infected patients with other patients leading to 'other' patients catching the disease.

The greed for money is hampering efforts to lessen CoVid-19 contagion. The CoVid-19 funds have been stolen in huge amounts leaving healthcare workers and patients short of needed protection, medications, and treatment. There is a call for more convictions to win the war on corruption. The elderly are at risk as the virus ravages rural areas unaffected by the first wave.

Companies in Kenya are forced to work with lean teams to fight the spread of the virus cutting back on salaries and laying off workers in the process to save their business. Consumers will have to dig deeper in their pockets this festive season if they are to continue the season without any lifestyle changes due to the crashing economy.

A study by Info Track was released and showed while Nairobi continues to fare badly compared to Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Counties in the number of CoVid-19 cases more than half of Nairobi residents do not have access to clean and reliable flowing water. The situation is worse in slums which form more than half of Nairobi's population (4 million).

According to a survey on December 15th, Kenyans have suffered the most due to Covid-19 distress, financial and emotional stress compared to any other African country. The survey sought to find out the emotional and financial well-being of Africans across six nations. Kenya report the most widespread income cuts and distress of any of the nations polled in the survey.

The Cost of a Life

If you have money you can expect to be treated in Kenya. Many Kenyans believe that the Government's National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) should provide for the bulk of medical bills. NHIF is not covering those who are infected with CoVid-19. This is a dreadful blow to ordinary workers and to companies who all have to pay obligatory dues. It means each person has to cope with their own bills. Many sick people do not go to hospital because of the costs resulting in high fatality rates and further spread of the virus. Doctors feel the pinch as they fundraise for sick and dying colleagues.

The cost per patient for CoVid19 treatment in Public Hospitals and Mission Hospitals is about 12,570khs (US\$12.50) per day with those who suffer severe and critical CoVid-19. For those with mild and moderate symptoms it is around 2,000khs per day (US\$2). For those who are asymptomatic who are treated at home, it costs about 2,400 Ksh (US\$2.40) to treat with simple remedies. In private hospitals the costs are extremely high, going into millions of shillings (US\$40,000 - \$80,000) for those who need to be treated in ICU. Kenyans could pay 327khs (US\$3) to get AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine while clinical trials are being conducted on US, Japan, Russia, and South Africa with a 70% success rate.

The Kenya Medical Supplies Agency (KEMSA) had also begun publishing a list of its suppliers on the Official State tender website and the faces of “CoVid-19 millionaires” start to emerge. It is hoped that the people behind the extortive practices will be brought to justice.

There have been a few positive dimensions as a result of the pandemic. The CoVid-19 pandemic protocols have helped reduce cholera outbreaks. A number of Counties who usually have cholera, this year have had no cases. The increase of isolation wards and ICU beds in some Counties is another positive development. The Kiambu Governor opened a 25 million Ksh (US\$2.5m) isolation ward in Limuru recently.

Impact on Education

Although a report on December 12th explained why fewer children were contracting the coronavirus, due to their pre-existing antibodies, the reopening of schools has been a protracted argument based on safety. There are many facets regarding the safety of children not attending school.

Infrastructure will be the biggest hurdle facing the resumption of schools. The crisis will make learners study under trees in order to comply with health regulations in Kenya. Head teachers revealed that nearly all the available spaces are already occupied by pupils in Grade 4, Standard 8 and Form 4 where the average size is 50 students per class. There is a fear of massive drop-outs when schools reopen in January with the full enrolments. At least 20,000 learners in Grade 4, Standard 8 and Form 4 did not resume school in September as directed by the Ministry of Education. This prelude signals that things can only get worse when all classes reopen in January 2021. Some parents kept their children away from school for fear of contracting the virus. The alarming numbers of teenage pregnancies is also a factor or involvement in crime, drug abuse, sex orgies and wild parties whereas, most disappear from their homes only to be found in drug and alcohol related parties and end up in police custody, due to flouting CoVid-19 health rules.

Concern is raised about the mental health of children abused during the school closure period. Teachers asked to be sensitive to those students who have been traumatised. The National Council of Churches claim that the rise in numbers is worrying and the situation should be reviewed before learning can resume on January 4th. They advised a delay in the resumption of school to a later date in 2021.

Kenyan universities too were in a financial mess with looming layoffs when institutions resume in January. Online learning depends on modern technology and infrastructure which many institutions lack or have limited capacity. The increase of semester fees by the institutions to buffer the financial crisis due to lack of funds, saw students begin riots throughout Nairobi and other Counties.

Medical Complexities

A perfect storm emerged between patients, healthcare workers, government officials and commerce. The patients need treatment, healthcare workers need protection and support, government officials need to provide integrity in their leadership while the mantle of honesty need to be shown by businesses. The healthcare workers suffer greatly as PPE gear is stuck with manufacturers, where KEMSA cannot buy due to probes and Counties have no cash to procure them. The healthcare workers threatened to strike for lack of PPE. Medical workers raised concern as 25 more medics died. They have no risk allowance and no insurance cover for themselves. Strike threats were announced unless their grievances were acted upon.

Broken and outdated medical equipment in Kenyan Counties hampers the fight against CoVid-19 as various hospitals lack the basic technology to test and treat patients leading to loss of lives. One medical doctor passed away due to the working conditions while treating CoVid-19 patients in

hospital. His health had deteriorated fast as he could not afford to pay for medical services, due to his not receiving his salary for close to 6 months as he battled to save his fellow citizens on the frontlines. There was uproar about the neglect of the healthcare workers who put their lives in danger without no pay or protection from the Government. In early December, the medical workers announced their strike demanding safer working conditions and more PPEs. They also demanded the Government pay its workers and hire more than 2,000 doctors saying the current work force is stretched. During the strike, medical services were severely disrupted, and patients were left to their own devices leaving many deaths in its wake.

Thousands of people who visited public hospitals in December had not been attended to due to strike and had to be turned away. NHIF had not received the medical cover for the medical workers despite the Health Minister promising that it would be disbursed. The Ministry of Health also announced it was in talks with the health unions to end the strike and engaged KEMSA on the PPEs issue. The plight of healthcare workers, working in private hospitals, who cannot be admitted there, when they fall sick, went before the parliament. Many sick healthcare workers are falling into poverty through treatment of their own sickness or assisting treatment of colleagues.

There was a health crisis for the poor sick after the strike had taken effect. The pressure further developed when the NHIF announced the county healthcare workers on the front lines lacked medical cover. In response, the Health Minister announced that he had formed a team to look into the healthcare workers grievances as pressure continued to pile up on the Government to act. Finally, the health kits were to be sold after Health Minister Kagwe gave approval to release PPEs being held by KEMSA due to investigations of illegal tenders. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Health snubbed to cover doctors while on the job treating CoVid-19 patients after a promise to do so. The Ministry then announced it would waive the bills that had been accrued by sick healthcare workers and the ones that had passed while fighting the virus. Added to the pandemic, according to UNICEF, the CoVid-19 made the HIV/AIDS tougher to manage and monitor. The rate of HIV infection has gone up tremendously.

At another level, the United Nations (UN) funded a 100 bed facility at Nairobi Hospital for UN and diplomatic staff. It was opened by President Kenyatta in November. Disappointingly this project was also affected by allegations of corruption with serious questions about the tender process.

Vaccines

The World Health Organization warned against complacency and erroneous belief that the vaccines will end the crisis but add a major powerful tool to the prevention kit. There are logistical problems in Kenya if vaccines were distributed. Research showed that CoVid-19 vaccine storage would be a major challenge for many Countries including Kenya. Kenya announced it was likely to go for the British-Swedish, Astra-Zeneca vaccine as the vaccine does not require complex cold storage like the Pfizer. AMREF estimated that Kenya would need 30 billion KHS (US\$300m) to vaccinate 60% of the population with a vaccine going for at least 500 Ksh (US\$5) depending on the one procured.

The developing countries were unable at the time to secure large amounts of the vaccines being manufactured and it was predicted that the poor may not be able to access these vaccines during distribution. Kenya has not yet ordered vaccines though trials continue in various locations. The CoVid-19 clinical trials in Africa commenced on November 29th with Kenya and South Africa being the only African countries carrying out vaccine trials.

With any crisis the opportunists take full advantage. The Health Minister warned people about the fake CoVid-19 certificates that were being discovered at the airport by health officials. Interpol also advised the world on fake vaccines that might be used by criminals to take advantage of the CoVid-19 situation.

Impact on the Economy

Job losses and violence are some of the major impacts of Covid-19. The tourism sector dwindled during March to November with a loss of up to 110 billion KHS (US\$110m). The Constitution and Reform Education Consortium released a survey carried out between May and September show that Kenyans are most concerned about job losses, which often lead to domestic violence due to the strain to eke out a living or failure to do so. Teenage pregnancies, violence by and to police officers, increase in suicide by those who have lost means of making their living, discrimination, and stigmatisation of the poor as bearers of the virus are among concerns of Kenyans. Concern was also raised that police are treating the virus as a security problem and not a health issue.

Ruthless robbers are taking over some areas as poverty increases. They are armed and dangerous and have no qualms about killing their victims to get what they want. Two counties, Siaya and Busia are among the areas affected.

While Covid-19 is a major concern for most Counties, those Counties with locusts are more concerned about fighting the invasion. In Samburu, farms are ravaged by the locusts in a second invasion. Due to difficult terrain, drones are used to spray and curb the locusts.

Throughout the country there are cries of frustration as looting of public funds continues with no concern for the suffering of many. The public is now questioning behaviour of some politicians and looters of public funds who cause the death of Kenyans through taking the resources needed to combat CoVid-19. Will there be a culture change, as people challenge political, economic, and cultural practices?

Convergence

The number of new CoVid-19 cases even as the festivities approach were decreasing. The average daily cases in November were 1,000 while in December they dropped to between 500-600 cases. Most cases are Kenyans while few are foreigners. Thankfully, the Government decided to pay medical fees for vulnerable Kenyans who are unable to foot the CoVid-19 treatment bills.

The Kenya Association of Women Business Owners (KAWMO) donated 10,000 face masks to women in Nairobi, Mukuru. They noted that women working in small businesses interact with a lot of people hence the need for protection from the virus.

Among the chaos artists are doing their bit to raise awareness through songs, poems, stories, posters, pictures as their creativity has been refreshing and hope filled, in at times, a heavy atmosphere.

One of our major contributors in kind, Mr Pankaj Shah was recognized as a major volunteer during the early stages of CoVid-19 when there was a great food shortage in Nairobi's poorest slums and surrounding areas. His team were able to give out and donate food hampers to vulnerable families that would last them up to 2 weeks. The Team Pankaj founder appealed to his friends and family to raise funds so that they could be able to give more needy families a meal. Nine months later, a multi-million shilling fund, hundreds of donors on board and hundreds of truckloads of food donations, Pankaj believes CoVid-19 paved the way to his purpose in life.

We will continue to keep you updated. Thank you for your support.



Sr Mary Killeen

Kenya - March – December 2020: 96,458 CoVid19 reported cases with 1,670 deaths.