



## **SIGNS OF A SHIFT TO A POST-PANDEMIC AFRICA**

In recent days, there has been some encouraging news on the COVID-19 front in Africa, especially in the smaller countries.

The Horn of Africa nation of Eritrea declared itself [virus-free](#), with 100% recoveries, and no deaths. Eritrea is one of the most closed and [censored countries in the world](#), and its COVID-19 reporting might be taken with a pinch of salt by some, so one of the continent's [tourist hotspots and best-governed nations](#), the island nation of Mauritius, would be a better example.

Last week it announced it had [won the battle](#) against COVID-19, but cautioned that the war against the virus was still on. It became the [second African country to record full recoveries](#) as of May 11, the other being Mauritania, in north-western Africa, which had arrived at that milestone much earlier, although it subsequently reported a new infection.

The broader continental COVID-19 outlook was shaping up to be a four-track affair; with several smaller mainland and island nations reporting hopeful signs; a tiny group of coronavirus refuseniks like Tanzania and Burundi continuing to muddy the picture; medium size countries that took early firm actions and are easing restrictions with few new infections and no deaths like in Senegal, and Uganda and Rwanda respectively; and the ones with high international traffic like South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Tunisia, and Morocco that are gradually reopening their economies, and are seeing an inevitable spike in infections, but lower death rates (see a separate update on the situation in the AGA-Africa zone).

There also seems to be a growing shift in focus on how a post-coronavirus Africa might look like, and the opportunities that presents, that AGA-Africa is following closely to get a sense of the doors that could be opened to engage in new ways with our program and work on the continent.

[One view](#) argued that having tested Africa's social, economic and political resilience, COVID-19 is "forcing African states to invest in their health systems". It added that the lack of essential healthcare supplies has [triggered a debate about the necessary industrialization of Africa](#).

A recovery will come out of the COVID-19 ashes in Africa. The bigger question then is, what type of recovery?

**Markus Green**  
Board Member AGA-Africa

## AFRICA COVID-19 STATUS UPDATE

The newsletter tracks developments in Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the setbacks, the triumphs, and pointers to the future as reported in continental and global media as they impact the range of transnational crimes that we work on:

- Read About [AGA-Africa, Partnerships For Justice](#)
- For updates on COVID-19 in Africa see: [AfricaCDC](#), [WHO Africa Region](#), [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Research Center](#).

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Even as Ghana scaled up measures to stem the spread of the COVID-19, child trafficking around its Volta Lake region seemed to get worse.

Within one month alone, the Growing Up Free (GUF) Project [has rescued 12 children trafficked for fishing](#) on the Volta lake.

Thousands of [African migrants are stuck in transit](#) - unable to reach their destination or to get back home because of the coronavirus pandemic. On the upside, the International Organisation for Migration, recently reported it [has recorded a sharp fall](#) in the numbers of migrant crossings on the Horn of Africa route. The picture is the opposite in the central Mediterranean route. Between Jan. 1 and April 5 this year, [there were five times more arrivals in Europe](#) than in the same period of 2019.

People smuggling is probably too lucrative to suffer more than a short lull during the pandemic. The traffic through Libya is estimated to generate annual [revenues of as much as \\$1.5 billion](#).

**In case we forget:** across the Red Sea, [Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates deported nearly 3,000 Ethiopian migrants](#) on cargo planes over suspicions that they have the coronavirus.

**Yellow Flamingo Moment:** New evidence gathered by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime suggests [growing hostility towards human smuggling in regions](#) where the activity is deeply entrenched in the political economy.

In areas of southern Libya – home to key hubs on the “northern route” to Europe – municipalities have called on the military to increase patrolling to combat smuggling. This is a significant shift given that the enterprise underpins many livelihoods in the area. In this region – as well as across Algeria’s southern borders and in northern Mali – smugglers also report that they are reducing their activities to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

**Also Read:** Malawi has set up a [National Coordination Committee Against Trafficking in Persons](#) and developed a National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons.

## COUNTERFEIT DRUGS



The Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) [suspended the permits of eight hand sanitizer brands](#) for not meeting standards.

KEBS also announced a unique USSD code that consumers can use to verify the validity of products on the market.

In Uganda, a report said counterfeit medicines are flooding the market. A total of 4,387 drug outlets were surveilled, leading to closure of 1,526 and effecting 56 arrests in the first half of the current financial year.

The World Health Organisation estimates that every year some [100,000 people across Africa die](#) from taking “falsified or substandard” medication. Since 2013, Africa has made up [42% of fake medicines](#) seized worldwide.

Ghana has strengthened its medicines regulatory system to ensure safety, quality and effectiveness of medical products manufactured, imported or distributed within the country. It becomes the [second country in the WHO African Region to attain regulatory system “Maturity Level 3”](#).

## MONEY LAUNDERING & CYBERCRIME



The increase in online usage since the COVID-19 pandemic hit has resulted in a major spike in cybercrimes such as cyberbullying, phishing and hacking. Over 70% of learners worldwide are doing some form of online education but for many schools and institutions in parts, the switch to remote learning has been unexpected, leaving little time for them to mitigate against cyber risks, [this article](#) argues.

Phishing schemes have exploded in the first quarter of 2020, with security firm Zscaler claiming to have seen a staggering [30,000% increase since January in detected phishing, malicious websites and malware related to COVID-19 themes](#).

Anna Collard, managing director at KnowBe4 Africa, a company that specializes in security awareness, [said](#) students are particularly vulnerable.

**Also Read:** Microsoft [Just Made A Major COVID-19 Security Move](#) That Will Impact Everyone.

**In Case You Missed It:** COVID-19 supplies and lockdowns have spawned all manner of petty and grand scale corruption. In Uganda, four top government officials were [arrested in a \\$528,000 corruption scandal](#) while running a coronavirus food relief for the vulnerable. The lockdown in the country also resulted [increased extortion by traffic police enforcing curfews](#), and the bribe sums are also higher. Other countries have reported the same trend.

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING



In an [Op-Ed](#), former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa called for African governments to provide greater support for the conservation and tourism industry as “an insurance policy against diseases like COVID-19”.

President Mkapa, who is the current African Wildlife Foundation Board of Trustees Vice-Chair, [added that](#); “The lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is that there are significant costs associated with undervaluing our biodiversity and ecosystems, and that separating economic development from nature is a false choice. We need to strive for greater harmony between our economic models of growth and nature”.

The East African region—Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda—expects to lose up to \$5.4 billion in tourism revenues as a result of restrictions to travel caused by the coronavirus. Such revenue has been important to conservation efforts in each of these countries.

In Kenya, the impact of the disruption of COVID-19 on groups dependent on nature and wildlife tourism was [revealed starkly](#), with reports that one community in the northern part of the country that used to “make close to \$300,000 in 2019”, saying this year it will make zero revenue.

## **CROSS-BORDER CRIMES/SMUGGLING**



Cigarettes and alcohol conservatively valued at over Rand 2 million (US\$110,950) [were confiscated by soldiers doing border protection in April](#), another indicator of the South African black market for goods banned under rules to combat the new coronavirus.

This is substantially more than the R1.07 million reported in March for all contraband.

The border protection Operation Corona currently has 15 companies deployed along South Africa’s land borders with Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



In the first four days of the national lockdown in South Africa, calls to the gender-based violence command centre in Tshwane [doubled and data free messages increased more than tenfold](#).

Yvonne Jooste, a former law lecturer at South African universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, argues that cash transfers could be a crucial tool in reducing gender-based violence during COVID-19.

She refers to studies from Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, including a World Bank [review](#) of 22 different studies in 2018 which found that most cash transfer programs lowered the rate of intimate partner violence.

**Bright Spots:** Over [3,000 bags of Rwandan “Gorilla” coffee sold out in seconds](#) at an Electronic World Trade Platform livestream event in China.

Rwanda and Chinese e-commerce giant, Alibaba Group partnered in October 2018 to offer African businesses easier access to new markets through simple and straightforward procedures. The platform is also being used to drive sales for global brands impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Also Read:** 3 ways COVID-19 could actually [spark a better future](#) for Africa.

How measures by governments in response to COVID-19 including port closures, delays in disembarkation, and the reduced presence of search and rescue vessels are raising serious concerns about the fate of migrant-carrying vessels in distress and [so-called “invisible shipwrecks.”](#)

Copyright © 2020 AGA-Africa, All rights reserved.

[www.agafrica.org](http://www.agafrica.org)

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.

