



AGA-AFRICA
PARTNERSHIPS FOR JUSTICE

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Rule of law and police brutality in the time of COVID-19

It's now a month since we started this newsletter series. We've produced them over the period we thought was going to be the shock phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic still rages, it seems everywhere in the world we are now in the coping phase.

We have seen complications in many areas, including human trafficking and, as the continent that's by far the leading mobile-money services market in the world, witnessed the opportunity that an even greater shift to digital cash transactions presented to cybercriminals.

We planned this month, in addition, to begin engaging various AGA-Africa members, partners, and experts to paint a picture of how COVID-19 will reshape Africa, and begin teasing ideas of how we might engage. The result will be a cross between a scenarios and futures report, which we will share with you.

The one thing we didn't foresee, were the events in the US over the last few days. In Minneapolis on May 25, four police officers violently tackled 46-year-old George Floyd, an African-American man, for allegedly trying to pass off a counterfeit bill at a store. One of them, Derek Chauvin, a Caucasian police officer, knelt on Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Mr. Floyd died after lapsing into unconsciousness.

The incident sparked protests and looting in Minneapolis, and spread to nearly 30 other cities in the US. The killing of George Floyd once again spotlighted racism and police brutality in America, but this time there was something different. Democratic activist Abdul El-Sayed summed it perfectly: "I think people are sick of it but then it's not just that, it's the fact that you look at COVID-19, which has been the story for the past four months, rightly so, 100,000 lives lost. Those lives are disproportionately black folks' lives. As a function of the same exact structural forces that have allowed black people to be executed by law enforcement," he said.

The African Union, in a rare action, condemns George Floyd's killing. And in a highly unusual move, the US embassies in Kenya and Uganda, publicly issued statements expressing anguish over his brutal death.

This "death by knee" shocked Africa for many reasons, but it had echoes of something we saw at the start of the lockdowns in Africa as police brutally enforced curfews, and in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa in the early stages they were killing more people than the virus.

On a more positive note, I would like to congratulate the Attorney General of Minnesota, Keith Ellison on his appointment as the lead on the George Floyd case. As a friend of AGA and a recent speaker at our Africa cross-border crime conference in Ghana, we would like to thank you for continuing to push the boundaries of social change and criminal justice reform to change laws, practices, and systemic apparatus that disproportionately continues to affect marginalized groups of people in our society.

Experiences like these mirror certain African realities and we are continually committed to plant the seeds of a network of global support and collaboration on cross-border crime and the rule of law.

In a few days we shall hold a Tweetathon to discuss these traditions of impunity in the US and Africa. Please join us.



LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC COST OF COVID-19

After the flurry of quick releases on the impact of COVID-19 on the global and national economies at its outbreak, there has now been time for more considered studies.

The World Bank recently published a sobering [survey of how much poverty could rise in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 as a result of the pandemic](#). It projects that an additional 26 million people in the region, and as much as 58 million, may fall into extreme poverty defined by the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. This would set back poverty reduction in the region by about 5 years.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted a similar scale of economic devastation, but argued the COVID-19 crisis also presented possibilities. It offered [opportunity to accelerate the push towards greater digitalization](#), generating broader gains in areas such as transparency, efficiency of public service, and tax administration.

We will return to a summary of the May economic picture in the AGA-Africa zone individual countries at the end of this newsletter.



INFODEMIC: FAKE NEWS, CURES, AND CYBERCRIMINALS

From disinformation, selling fake coronavirus cures online, cyber-attacks on hospitals' critical information systems, to scamming users who have pivoted in large number to using online payments, criminals have exploited the COVID-19 crisis extensively.

In March Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO said; “We’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic,” referring to fake news that “spreads faster and more easily than this virus.”

We have not covered efforts to combat this infodemic, but, in addition to a range of global efforts and the work of research and tech and media companies like Facebook, Google, Pinterest, Tencent, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, there are several valiant efforts pushing back against the flood of fake news and disinformation on COVID-19 in Africa. There are a [few very good platforms that are doing a brilliant job debunking the disinformation](#), though their existence might not be well-known. Worth checking out. Next week we will share an update of efforts in this area by some AGA-Africa countries.



RULE OF LAW, POLICE BRUTALITY

The killing of George Floyd, an African-American man in Minneapolis, on May 25, which has sparked sometimes-violent protests and looting in nearly 30 US cities and solidarity in other parts of the world, drew ire from Africans.

It received rare criticism from the African Union, and more unusually, from US embassies or ambassadors in Congo, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania all condemning the killing.

Perhaps no single report captured the African reaction better than Quartz's "George Floyd's killing touches a nerve with Africans [who know police brutality at home and abroad](#)".

More fundamentally – and provocatively - the argument was made in South Africa that American protests over police brutality at the hands of a racist police system, got South Africans speaking out against their "[own anti-Black police system](#)", which still largely draws on the country's apartheid norms. Similar sentiment was expressed in the face of violent police enforcement of COVID-19 curfews in [Kenya](#), and [Uganda](#), where police regimes are seen as still steeped in [colonial](#) traditions.



GENDER VIOLENCE & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A webinar by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) pointed to a surprising face of gender violence in Africa during COVID-19. A panelist argued that women across the continent were [bearing the brunt of the pandemic, as they have been pushed out of agricultural value chains](#) resulting in drastically reduced incomes and domestic violence in the home.

One solution? "Digitize land registries". Very few would have thought of that.

The Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Protection Unit (AHTCPU) in Kenya flagged the "[alarming and sudden spike in online human trafficking, recruitment and exploitation of children in Kenya](#), with concerns that the trend will continue for as long as children are at home and online".

MAY 2020 AGA-AFRICA ZONE ROUND-UP



NIGERIA



Already reeling from a recession, Nigeria has been one of the countries hardest hit by the coronavirus on the continent after reporting nearly 9,000 cases by the end of May.

A major oil producer, the tumble of oil prices, which started in March has forced the Nigerian government to project a decline in oil revenues from 5.5 trillion Naira (USD\$ 14 billion) in 2020 to 1.1 trillion Naira (US\$2.84 billion). [Food prices have also risen significantly](#) in Nigeria since the onset of coronavirus.

Yet not all is doom and gloom; the coronavirus pandemic has also [accelerated decisions on a number of key structural issues that had hobbled Nigeria](#) for long.

“The fuel subsidy policy, which has cost a lot of money and not been very effective in helping people those with lower incomes has been reversed. Discussions about market-based tariffs for electricity in Nigeria are also coming to fruition. The government is starting to make decisions, which have the potential to lead to much more investment and much more rapid, inclusive, economic growth in Nigeria,” said Andrew S. Nevin, the Partner and Chief Economist, West Africa, for global accounting firm PwC.

SOUTH AFRICA



At over 32,000 cases and 683 deaths as of end of May, South Africa is the hardest hit African country by the coronavirus. The country has however ramped up testing efforts and to date has the highest number of tests for any African country.

Initial bans on the sale of alcohol and cigarettes, movement within districts, and gatherings of not more than 50 people in churches, mosques and temples were lifted on June 1, as part of the country’s “level three” easing of lockdown measures. The coronavirus has exposed the underbelly of [South Africa’s obesity crisis](#). Up to two-thirds of coronavirus deaths in South Africa so far are among people aged under 65, most of whom were obese and had diabetes or hypertension. With over 8 million South Africans suffering from diabetes or hypertension, the country could be staring at even bigger crisis beyond COVID-19.

Plans for a [reopening of schools, slated for June 1, remain on hold as government](#) pursues a cautious approach.

GHANA



Ghana's estimated GDP growth is projected to plummet from a target of 6.8% to about 2.6% in 2020, as the country projects to [lose up to Ghana cedis 2.3 billion \(US\\$ 400 million\)](#) in non-oil tax revenue.

In a uniquely Ghanaian phenomenon, a [country-wide ban on funerals affected several industries](#), including catering, textiles, choral groups and dancers, as well as event organizers, since funerals in Ghana tend to be “huge, dramatic and regular ceremonies,” according to Ghanaian journalist Elizabeth Ohene.

KENYA



Kenya, with close to 2,000 cases at close of May, is the hardest hit in the East African Community. Its all-important [tourism sector has nosedived](#).

Internally, the containment measures that included closure of hotels and restaurants, cessation of movement across some counties such as Nairobi, and the coastal cities of Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi, which are premier tourist destinations, have hit local tourism hard.

In late May President Uhuru Kenyatta announced a Sh53.7 billion (US\$ 500 million) stimulus package to revamp the economy.

UGANDA



The coronavirus has [greatly impacted two of Uganda's leading foreign exchange earners](#), tourism and remittances, which annually contribute close to \$3 billion to the country's economy.

The economy is now projected to grow at 3% in 2020, compared to earlier projections of 6.2%.

The country has however registered a lot of goodwill across the continent and globe as it remains the only East African Community member state yet to register a death due to the coronavirus at the end of May.

RWANDA



[Research by Rwandan economists](#) on the indicative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on Rwanda predicts that, the agriculture sector and international trade will be negatively affected by the pandemic.

SMEs, which are a main source of livelihoods for most Rwandans, are expected to be even more affected, according to the report. The [IMF predicts](#) the economy will

grow by at least 3.5% in 2020, less than half the rate it did in 2019.

With tourism, which contributes up to 14% of GDP, the highest in the East African region, Rwanda's tourism and conferencing industry is one of the hardest hit in the region.

MALAWI



President Peter Mutharika's controversial [decision to allow this year's tobacco market to operate](#) even in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, proved to be a lifeline for Malawi's economy which is at the mercy of the global pandemic.

While many businesses were forced to close due to the pandemic, Malawi allowed Auction Holdings Limited to go ahead with the auction of this year's tobacco crop.

As of Friday, 22 May, 2020, a total of 25.9 million kilograms of tobacco had been sold at the floors, not too far off from the same time last year when Malawi sold over 27.7 million kilograms of tobacco.

ZAMBIA



The IMF in April forecast Zambia's [economy would contract by 3.5% in 2020](#), down from growth of 1.5% in 2019, because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the global economy.

The government projects a 20% fall in revenue collection, which will [significantly affect its ability to fund](#) the limited social welfare programs it runs.

On the social front, the Bank of Zambia in May introduced a [Targeted Medium-Term Refinancing Facility](#) to enable Financial Service Providers to support businesses and households that are being impacted by COVID-19.

OFF-CUT



South Africa's alcohol ban has given a "massive boost" to criminal gangs, but it has brought lots of good too. [Murders have come down by 63%](#) during the lockdown and that suggests that other violent crimes have gone down too.

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