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Critically Assessing the Effect of COVID-19 beyond the Pandemic: The Social and Economic Impacts in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT With the increased level of unemployment rates experienced during the Great Depression, many households and employees across the world are reorienting themselves in the face of an uncertain future due to the economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this study was to explore the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa while looking at the strategic approaches embraced by governments in responding, monitoring, and alleviating the socio-economic effects of COVID-19. This is largely based on debates and information sharing, given the insight that looks at priority issues, such as financial support to small and medium scale enterprises since lockdown in many African states. This research is a qualitative study that primarily collected its data and analysed them through the content data analysis method. The researchers found increasing impacts of COVID-19 on many states' economies. African governments need to take charge of the opportunity to build stable economic systems.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life globally as it presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The socio-economic disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: "tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million, could increase by up to 132 million by the end of the year" (Chriscaden 2020). The objective of this study critically examined the effect of COVID-19 beyond the pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, while looking at the mitigating strategic approaches embraced by governments in responding, monitoring, and alleviating the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Subsequently, the first mark of COVID-19 in the African continent was on the 14th of February 2020 in Egypt.

Since then, 54 African countries have reported more than 1, 145,890 cases and about 24,500 deaths from the new coronavirus by 22nd September 2020 (Morley et al. 2020). Though a worldwide pandemic was an impending crisis for decades, COVID-19 shocked health systems, economies, and governments on a global scale. Given the enormous impact of COVID-19, which has taken an unprecedented economic toll on many country's social and economic sectors, especially with the high unemployment rates. Many households and employees across many countries are trying to reorient themselves in the face of an uncertain future.

The current crisis has exposed how many people face difficulties in accessing government assistance during pandemics such as COVID-19 because they do not have cash or food reserves. It is therefore important for governments to adopt approaches in supporting economic recovery during the COVID-19 and beyond. At least 8 out of every 10 people in the Sub-Saharan region are informally employed and they struggle to make ends meet with minimum wages, thus the livelihood, income, and well-being of numerous households, and their human capital, are at risk" (TRALAC 2020).

Primarily, the most affected are the workforce in the informal sector and the self-employed city vendors. Despite COVID-19 placing the human capital at risk, bad health systems have also been predicted to deny people of their remunerations thus, potentially straining their financial stability as they will be forced to source out funds for treatment, the effects are now felt across all demographics. This is due to the social distancing measures that minimised economic activity, disrupting supply chains and in turn affecting product pricing and remittances from abroad which have been slowly drying up (OECD 2020). The objective of this study explored the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa while looking at the mitigating strategic approaches embraced by governments in responding, monitoring, and alleviating the socio- economic effects of COVID-19.

The Economic Fallout of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa

There are also 13 little states in Africa with tiny populations, little human capital and a tiny geographic area. Even though Sub-Saharan African nations have controlled COVID-19 at low figures (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2020), the pandemic is still wreaking havoc on the people of Africa and their economy, with an expected 3.3 percent fall in economic activity in 2020. This would be the initial regional depression in 25 years (World Bank 2020). The significant reduction in economic activities is expected to cost the region a minimum of $115 billion loss of production this year (World Bank 2020a), owing in part to weaker domestic consumption and investment because of coronavirus containment efforts. This situation can potentially impoverish 40 million people, retracting about five-year gains in poverty reduction (AUC 2020). COVID-19, meantime, may stall efforts in developing human capital, since school closures would touch over 253 million pupils, potentially resulting in learning losses (Adesina 2020).

As a result of the larger production reductions in South Africa and Angola, Eastern and Southern African nations were the most affected by the economic effects of COVID-19. Lockdowns and disruptions in the tourism industry may create significant delays in Ethiopia, Kenya, and the island states (Adesina 2020). Non-resource-intensive nations, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal, experienced slower economic activities, however, aided by comparatively stronger agricultural development (World Bank 2020). As COVID-19 intensifies the causes of fragility, fragile nations in the area are projected to see a sharp drop in growth (Bruegel 2020). In 2021, the area is expected to recover, although growth will be uneven between nations. Even though South Africa is predicted to have a slow reclamation, the Southern and Eastern African areas are predicted to expand at a rate of 2.7 percent on average. Though Nigeria's economic recovery is projected to be slow, the Central and Western African areas are predicted to expand at a rate of 1.4 percent on average (World Bank 2020).

Collier et al. (2020) assert that the economic impact of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa with over 1 billion people is seen as a human and capital at risk. World Bank (2020) confirms that, half the population will be below 25 by 2050, and that Africa is a diversified region with human and natural resources that can potentially generate comprehensive development while eradicating poverty, enabling Africans to have healthy and wealthier livelihoods. With the globe's biggest free trade area and a 1.2 billion market, Africa is forging a new growth path by using its resource and people potential (World Bank 2020). There are low-, lower-middle-, upper-middle-, and high-income nations in the area, with 18 of them fragile or conflict-affected (Fletcher and Rouget 2020). In the advent of COVID-19, numerous nations implemented critical reforms and investments for long-term growth. Apprehensions of a third wave are causing increased insecurity (Ikwegbue et al. 2020).

In this setting, the path to recovery will be long and tough, require policy and investment that focuses on connecting people to employment potential, which can reduce severe poverty after COVID-19. Digital economy and infrastructure investments will be critical to ease the damages of the COVID-19 pandemic while encouraging a long-term recovery during a period of lockdowns and social isolation (Calderon and Zeufack 2020). Governments, families, and businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa are still lagging behind other areas in the globe in terms of digital technology adoption (World Bank 2020b). Interventions by the government to lower the cost of devices and services, minimize disconnections due to nonpayment, and enhance bandwidth will be critical.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research paper that adopted a content data analysis method. This method allows researchers to consult different literature and analyse written documents accessed from public or private spaces (Mogalakwe 2006). The researchers then examine the significance of such documents to the study. Furthermore, documentary analysis creates the criteria for the researcher to select different documents. Through an advanced search, the researchers ensured ensured an extensive review of about 190 of the literature, but only the ones found relevant was analysed while employing a systematic analysis of the literature of the baseline data collected to form part of a collection randomized controlled sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conditions and Macroeconomic Impact of Pre-COVID-19

Between 2000 and 2018, the productivity of Africa's labour in proportion to that of US production remained stable, while the Africa-Asia labour productivity ratio fell from 67 percent in 2000 to the current 50 percent (AUC/OECD 2019). In the year 2019 before the pandemic, the continent witnessed a decline in general development and poverty decline, however, there were significant disparities between nations (Coulibaly and Madden 2020; Howard 2020). Years of progress might be wiped out by the current global catastrophe (OECD 2020). Africa's 3.6 percent GDP growth in 2019 was inadequate to initiate socioeconomic progress and poverty alleviation (IGC 2020). The creation of employment has fallen short of the required figure to sustain the 29 million youth seeking employment annually (AUC/OECD 2018).

Exports of oil, minerals, and agricultural goods make for 88 percent of Africa's total exports. Furthermore, at the beginning of the crisis, the outlook for different economies differed (IMF 2020a). Although several countries like Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ethiopia enjoyed strong growth rates of over 7.5 percent, Africa's main economy had stagnated (McKinsey 2020; World Bank 2020). The non-oil sector was less productive in Nigeria (2.3% GDP growth), the oil industry has been poor in Angola (-0.3%), and poor investment sentiment has weighed on economic activity in South Africa (0.9%) (World Bank 2020). Growth is expected to be harmed as a result of macroeconomic supply and demand shocks. Africa is facing a two-fold supply and demand shock that will arrive in three waves, firstly from the People's Republic of China (hereafter "China"), then from OECD nations (firstly Europe, and now the United States).

Finally from a potential intra-African if African nations such as South Africa, completely adopt containment measures (World Bank 2020c). The severity and duration of the shock will negatively impact the rate of economic activities and employment in 2020-21. Considering this background, Ikwegbue, Enaifoghe, Maduku and Agwuna (2020) highlighted how demand and supply irregularities will significantly impact growth and development in the post-COVID-19 period in Africa. With Africa's challenges in grappling with a twin public health and economic crisis that threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems, damage livelihoods, and stifle the region's long-term growth potential (ECA 2020).

COVID-19 in Africa: The Socio-economic Implications and Policy Responses

Recent predictions reveal that the GDPs of most nations will shrink in 2020, last experienced 25 years ago (World Bank 2020). The UN says, approximately 30 million more people might become poor alluding to the rapid increase in the population affected by food insecurity (Thurlow 2020). African policymakers and partners ought to re-evaluate their priorities according to short-term, medium-term, and long-term projections. As global economies respond to the crisis, DAC (2020) states that such policy measures are bound to continuously change including epidemic survival (ensuring sufficient resources are invested in medicines, food, physical health, mental health and safety), returning to normal by supporting people and companies to continue the economic activity and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 as well as investing resources and focus to long-term development) (World Bank 2020).

COVID-19 took a long time to get to Sub-Saharan Africa. At the onset of the pandemic, numerous African governments employed serious measures to enforce social distancing including closed borders, travel restrictions, closing of schools as well as banning large gatherings. Ihekweazu (2020) affirms that the first case was initially identified on February 27 in Nigeria, and the virus was restricted to less than a dozen nations until mid-March. This delay was exploited by governments all around the area. South Africa started by imposing a 21-day lockdown for curfew and partial lockdown which were then adopted in various African nations, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Botswana, Senegal and Zimbabwe (Ikwegbue et al. 2020; World Bank 2020). Though the first two cases were registered on March 21, by late February Angola implemented quarantine measures for those arriving from countries showing high risks and eventually closed its borders on March 20 (Fletcher and Rouget 2020).

Despite the lack of proven instances Lesotho, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Comoros closed their borders for all except nationals and emergency personnel (Fletcher and Rouget 2020). Before registering a single case, 15 nations in Sub-Saharan Africa partially restricted their borders, blocked their airports, ports, and land borders (The New Humanitarian 2020). By March 30 in 2020, almost 46 out of 49 governments in Sub-Saharan Africa had implemented limited or complete border closure; 44 had closed schools, prohibited public meetings, or implemented further measures for social distancing while 11 countries had found it suitable to declare states of emergency (Ikwegbue et al. 2020; UNCTAD 2020; IGC 2020).

It may be too early to assess the effectiveness of the government's intervention but, only 24 nations have proven domestic transmission, implying that many had successfully, promptly, isolated imported patients to avoid outbreak (OECD 2020). AUDA-NEPAD (2020) confirmed that the crisis stemming from lockdown regulations was likely going to have a tremendous influence on African progress, internally and outside, with huge effects on the well-being and quantity of poverty-stricken people.

Avoidance Beats Cure

In a recent COVID-19 poll in Nigeria, 63 percent of Nigerians rely on daily wages for survival (Oxford Economics 2020). If COVID-19 increases, the healthcare system will suffer since the region is not prepared enough. Public health expenditures in Sub-Saharan Africa have been constant in the previous 20 years, at 5.2 percent of GDP on average, compared to 10 percent internationally (World Bank 2020). African nations do badly in different rankings that assess healthcare indicators or pandemic vulnerability. In particular, the Healthcare Access and Quality Index, Sub-Saharan Africa recorded 17 out of 20 low-ranked nations, 18 out of 20 were found experiencing the most vulnerabilities in the Rand Corporation's Infectious Disease Vulnerability Index (World Bank 2020). While 18 of 20 nations are listed as high risk in the European Commission's INFORM Epidemic Global Risk Index (Oxford Economics 2020).

Many countries in Africa have below 100 intensive-care beds, according to data; there are more lawmakers and senators in Abuja Nigeria in comparison to ventilators in 36 states. Some research analysts initially claimed that Africa would be spared from the harshest effects of COVID-19, and some still do (Paudel 2020). However, the World Bank (2020) still confirms that young people are less susceptible to the virus's more severe symptoms. What remains clear is that these characteristics do not guarantee expected protection, or they might be counterbalanced by other variables including extreme HIV/AIDS and TB rates in numerous countries (Ihekweazu 2020). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of infections is rising at a rate that can be compared to other areas at similar outbreak phases.

African governments are likely to face extreme challenges if they are unable to escape epidemics or to be shielded by demographic or climatic factors. Several nations have received important expertise with monitoring, tracing contacts, and community awareness efforts due to recent outbreaks like COVID-19 (Simpkin et al. 2019). The Senegalese Pasteur Institute is collaborating with a biotech company from Britain to create a low-cost, rapid virus test (World Bank 2020). Even with this knowledge, governments will find it difficult to suppress the virus. In highly packed informal settlements and economies that rely heavily on informal trade, social distancing standards are unworkable (Primi et al. 2020).

Africa's Unpleasant Economic Measures

The toll of this crisis on the economy is visible, worsened by high costs of control mechanisms aimed at preventing an outbreak. These include the region's GDP, which was expected to grow by 3.5 percent, with particularly promising forecasts in East and West Africa (IATA 2020). The expectations were that South Africa would experience gradual recovery following years of stagnant economic growth, meanwhile Angola and Namibia with expectations to rise from recession. Growth forecasts are already being lowered (OECD 2020a). Exporters of oil from Africa are the most impacted. Nigeria's 2020 budget was based on an anticipated oil pricing of USD57 per barrel, whereas Angola's was based on a somewhat more cautious USD 55 per barrel (Simpson 2020). As of the 27th of March, the price of Brent crude oil was below USD25 per barrel globally, thus these countries are experiencing major fluctuations in revenue.

The tourism sector in Africa had been the globe's 2nd leader in growth patterns, recording 8.5 percent of the total accumulated GDP on the continent– and significantly higher in small nations like Mauritius (24.3%) but it has now come to a halt (PROPARCO 2016). Although trustworthy figures are unavailable at this time, the evidence available indicates a significant slowdown in both investment and commerce. The East and West African Franc CFA zone's (UEMOA) economies are better positioned to withstand the storm, however, outright winners are not clear (World Bank 2020c). The budgetary expense of government interventions is reducing economic growth. In Sub-Saharan Africa, central banks reacted by tweaking their monetary policies to "shore up liquidity and freezes on spending" (World Bank 2020b).

Other governments declared measures to stimulate the economy or provide social assistance. President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar, for example, has announced a "social emergency plan" inclusive of food and cash handouts for individuals with an inability to work as a result of the lockdowns in Antananarivo and Toamasina (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2020). These initiatives do not measure up to the proposed packages by Asian and Western governments in terms of absolute value (Adesina 2020). Madagascar's "social emergency plan" all its just MGA 10 billion (USD 2.7 million) for cash payments, in addition to a projected investment of MGA 620 billion (USD 165.6 million) of central bank capital into the banking sector as a liquidity boost (PROPARCO 2016). However, they represent a large outlay for governments that, in many countries, are already saddled with substantial debt.

Findings show that the IMF listed seven nations in Africa experiencing troubles of debt and a different nine high risked in an October 2019 study (IMF 2020b). Adesina (2020), noted that nearly 20 states have asked the IMF for emergency assistance; Finance ministers of African nations have requested that wealthy creditors extend their due dates for loan payments, and the African Development Bank (AfDB) has collected USD 3 billion in a "Fight COVID-19" Social Bond. Nevertheless, many governments are unable to act on the scale required while evading significant surges in costs or debt.

Linked Safety Indicators in Africa

Looking at the associated safety symptoms, a mix of forced isolation and economic woes will lead to rebellion, similar to what happened in Liberia during the Ebola outbreak in 2014-15 (AUC/OECD 2019). Security personnel in Senegal fought with scores of individuals who defied mobility restrictions to attend a traditional ritual on March 17th. On March 23, a riot erupted in Niger when authorities shuttered mosques and jailed a popular preacher for defying a religious ceremony prohibition (World Bank 2020). Taxi drivers in South Africa and Kenya have demonstrated the effects of lockdowns on their livelihoods (The New Humanitarian 2020). Mob violence has also been reported against foreigners accused of spreading COVID-19 in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya.

It is a matter of high risk that the use of security forces to impose isolation measures could give Islamist or other violent organizations in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, or northern Mozambique more freedom to grow. Meanwhile, essential virus-containment measures could be interpreted as authoritarian efforts implemented by regimes to enforce their power, thus causing loss of trust in democratic institutions (Primi et al. 2020). Ethiopia considered delaying its elections in August, however, opposition parties which included armed militants vowed to fight any plans to postpone the electoral process. Many regimes' patronage flows will be disrupted by inflation, budget cuts, and halted projects, particularly in Central Africa's petro-states (OECD 2020a).

COVID-19 limitations will continue to halt economic activity thus increasing threats to economies, national securities as well as political stability (World Bank 2020). As COVID-19 cases increase, threats will continue to rise, further straining hospital resources, raising public outrage and fear as well as prolonged international travel restrictions. If the governments' quick response or the immediate effort taken to avoid breakouts is effective, Sub-Saharan Africa may recover soon. Currently, governments and businesses ought to hope for the best while preparing for the worst.

The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Selected Countries

Governments across the world are preparing for the socio-economic shocks of COVID-19 effects. Some measures employed by hard-hit countries include big economic stimulus packages, lowered interest rates as well as social safety nets for millions of citizens (Bodewig et al. 2020). The pandemic has increased existing inequalities while at the same time can be interpreted as an opportune moment to address the inequalities that it has made visible. It plunged the globe into panic mode to quell its spread. From the perspective of COVID-19 in Africa, we cannot ignore the close relationship that exists between national health and the national economy. Likewise, the highest number of COVID-19 cases were recorded in Southern Africa, within which South Africa registered 90.31 percent of the total infections. (Collier et al. 2020).

The government established a COVID-19 National Trust Fund whose aim is to assist the most vulnerable in society towards sustainable economic recovery strategies. In backing of small and medium enterprises in West Africa, the Ghanaian government apportioned soft loans worth GHc600 million (approximately USD109 million) to sustain the country's affected industries (Adesina 2020). The Ghanaian private sector set up a COVID-19 Fund worth GHc100 million to supplement the government's effort (Adesina 2020). The Egyptian government declared USD 6.13 billion in stimulus packages, partly to support their health and tourism sectors (Bodewigugo et al. 2020). In mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and resuscitating the economy, the Egyptian government also deferred the real estate tax payments for three months, lowering costs of energy for industries, lowering interest rates by 300 points while postponing debt repayments by six months (OECD 2020a).

Similarly, World Bank (2020b) confirms that, in mitigating the economic impacts of COVID-19, the Tunisian government recognized an emergency stimulus packages aimed at postponing and exempting payment of debt and the deferment of taxes for people with low income. In like manner, Namibia initiated an Economic Stimulus and Relief Package to curb increased expenditure in health, to provide wage subsidies, income grants, to provide low-interest loans for small businesses (including those in the agriculture sector), individuals as well to assist in the payment of salaries for retrenched staff (World Bank 2020a).

How Effective are the COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations?

Critically interrogating how effective are the COVID-19 lockdown regulations in this study, the researchers confirmed according to the study how the COVID-19 lockdown regulations were enforced in most African countries. The enforcement appears to threaten the already fragile socioeconomic inequalities. In enforcing the strict requirements of social distancing, stay-home orders, movement, and assembly of people among others, the researchers do not refute how the lockdown regulations were equally essential in mitigating the spread of the novel virus. However, in the process, the researchers confirm how the inequality gap between the rich and the poor was further widened, with the poor and the vulnerable individuals being thrust into tough economic survival strategies during the lockdown stages (Hopman et al. 2020).

With this said, this research constitutes an epistemic break by contributing to the development of knowledge on the implications of not implementing economic recovery strategies for vulnerable groups of people. The COVID-19 pandemic has gravely affected human life and the South African economy. However, there has been an uneven impact in the measures (that is, lockdowns) implemented to curb the pandemic. The pandemic has seemingly exacerbated the persistent income inequalities in the country's economy (Parthasarathy 2018). Vulnerable groups as those who earn low incomes in informal and precarious employment are mostly impacted by the loss of jobs and thus, loss of income. Though it is an essential health problem, COVID-19 has had a negative toll on various aspects of people's lives. Job losses led to reduced ability to access health care and nutrition which negatively impacted the health of the masses.

Pandemics have a history of relative disadvantages to less fortunate racial groups, for instance, African Americans in the United States were most affected with high mortality rates due to COVID-19 as compared to fortunate racial groups. Similarly, lack of access to superior healthcare has contributed to health inequalities based on race (McDade and Mao 2020). In the same manner, Simpson (2020) further alludes to the segmentation of the South African health system, saying that it comprises of well-resourced private sectors afforded through expensive medical aid scheme memberships, while the poor masses are catered for by the overburdened public sectors that they can afford. Simpson's (2020) estimations showed that approximately 10 percent of Africans have medical aid schemes in comparison to 73 percent of the white community in 2018.

Poor households are the hardest hit by COVID-19 across the world. Take Africa, an increased number of people are experiencing hunger caused by mass retrenchments as well as insufficient, poorly implemented supplementary cash grants (Primi et al. 2020). Moreover, the pandemic has enlightened Africa's poor understanding of the food system, whereby large industries function with limited oversight whereas vulnerable informal businesses experience over-regulation. This study recommends urgently expanding price controls to basic commodities and monitoring retail prices. Though expanding social protection measures contributes to food access by poor and vulnerable households, African governments must monitor and regulate the food sector to ensure equity and sustainability of food systems for consumers and traders in the informal food markets.

COVID-19 effects such as large scale retrenchments will exist for a while; thus it is not too late for intervention. Poor African homes cannot endure a lack of employment while there is inflation of basic commodity prices. Huge access inequalities exist between rural areas and urban areas. Akin to greater Africa, approximately 70 percent of the Kenyan population reside in rural areas relying on volunteer health workers and facilities dependent on nurses providing basic health care services like immunization (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2020). Sub-county hospitals have better facilities including the availability of medical doctors, however, access to health care is limited to those who are insured and can afford it, with poor communities lacking financial capabilities to receive adequate health care services.

Access to healthcare risks acquiring impoverishing bills. Quite a several African governments are battling to deliver relief to the unemployed, thus creating public health threats from two sources, COVID-19 as well as hunger. Thus, the need to design control mechanisms to prevent hunger. As mentioned above, inequalities associated with the impact of COVID-19 reveal that the poor are more likely to lose their jobs and other things. The increased retrenchments among the economically affected population would worsen the health conditions of poor people who struggle to fend for themselves through food and medication. Thus, sustainable livelihood methods must be implemented to curb the plight of the poor during and post COVID-19.

The study, therefore, recognises that policy on health aimed at addressing inequalities related to race must be implemented, these include universal access to health as well as curbing hunger to fight health inequalities during and after the COVID-19 era.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this report was to highlight how COVID-19 has been spreading globally and how governments of different countries have implemented measures to fight COVID-19 for governments to respond to the economic recovery beyond the pandemic period for social and economic recovery in sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, this study proposes key strategies on how to avert the possible impacts on the existing health governance situation underpinning the continent in general, in the heat of COVID-19. As a result, this study confirms that combating the impacts of this virus involves the mutual collaboration of research and knowledge in working together to comprehend how to best fight the virus and warning of future outbreaks beyond the pandemic for social and economic recovery in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is, therefore, against this backdrop that this study looks at the approaches adopted by the African governments in the sub-Saharan in responding to the social and economic impact of COVID-19 further mitigating its drastic effects on the household economy. This study looks at mitigating strategies adopted by various governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study found increasing impacts of COVID-19 on many states' economies, it recommends the need for African governments to take charge of the opportunity to build stable economic systems. It is further recommended that the Sub-saharan African countries re-examine their individual fiscal and economic-policy priorities, to enhance health and social support systems, particularly in countries that have failed to implement critical health-related lockdowns due to a lack of social policy safeguards for both rural and urban populations.

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