

Application of Democratic Governance Principles in Advancing Effective Crisis Response and Recovery for Sustainable Development: A Case of Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: Following the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019, countries, including Kenya, implemented containment measures that had a significant impact on direct contact and transmission, which was consistent with relatively low epidemic in Kenya (and other Sub-Saharan African countries with similar early containment measures), but they also caused significant economic insecurity. To advance effective crisis response and recovery, what sustainable steps can the government take to ensure that no citizen or place is left behind, particularly in a post-COVID world?

Design/methodology/approach applied: A literature review approach coupled with qualitative research was employed to elucidate discussions and conclusions.

Main findings: Response and recovery must adhere to fundamental democratic governance principles such as citizen participation, representation, openness and transparency, rule of law, competence and capacity, sustainability and long-term orientation, human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, and accountability.

Practical implications: Leveraging democratic governance principles to advance effective crisis response and recovery can have a cumulative effect and deliver lessons from a local, national, regional, continental, and global perspective. These include exchange of information and dialogue on regulatory matters; transparency of national regulations, common rules and guidelines on conformity assessment procedures, and references to international standards; cooperation and regulatory alignment around measures.

Originality/value: Though democratic governance may not be an obvious focus during a crisis, it is during these trying times that leadership and management structures are put to the test, exposed for their strengths and flaws, and remembered by stakeholders in the long run. Democratic governance principles promote a comprehensive approach to crisis response and recovery, increasing multi-stakeholder engagement while striving to leave no one or no place behind as envisioned by the African Union(AU) Agenda 2063 aspirations and the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: COVID-19, Crisis Response and Recovery, Democratic Governance Principles, Kenya, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Governments have a crucial duty to manage crises strategically. Since the effects of crises can extend beyond national borders and have a significant ripple effect on the economy, society, and environment, it is frequently necessary to make crucial decisions quickly under challenging and complex circumstances. The resilience of people, communities and vital infrastructure networks can be significantly improved by governments (OECD, 2015). Experiences in crisis management globally must influence future response operations that lay the groundwork for long-term disaster resiliency due to the shifting nature of crises that governments must contend with. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a global wake-up call.

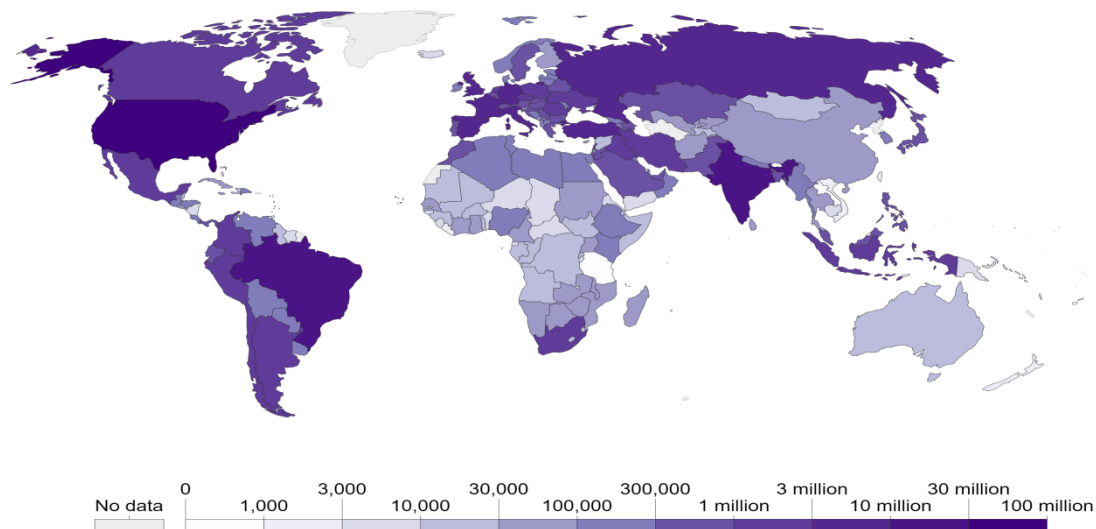
Since the first case of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was reported in December 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly spread to all parts of the world (James, 2020). In January 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)(Harapan et al., 2020). Around March 2020, the pandemic began to break out worldwide, and the number of confirmed cases and deaths rose sharply.

On January 20, 2020, the Chinese government officially classified COVID-19 as a notifiable infectious disease and activated a Level 1 public health emergency response. Many air, train, and coach transportation services were suspended across the country. The number of Chinese business travellers dropped significantly during the outbreak. The flow of tourist travellers effectively ceased due to health concerns and the closure of tourist sites (Yu & Li, 2021). The few remaining travellers, whether by air, rail, or road, were required to undergo temperature testing and health surveys. Whenever people passed through a city or a facility during their journey, their temperature had to be tested and fill out a declaration form.

From January to March 2020, mainland China experienced a high-risk period with a concentrated outbreak of COVID-19 (Cheng & Shan, 2020). In April 2020, China entered a low-infection phase, in which the most critical and difficult task was to contain the resurgence of the epidemic (Jones, 2020). During this period, small clusters of cases were observed in Beijing, Xinjiang, Liaoning, Shandong, and Inner Mongolia, and sporadic cases were observed in Shanghai, Tianjin, Anhui, Guangdong, and Sichuan.

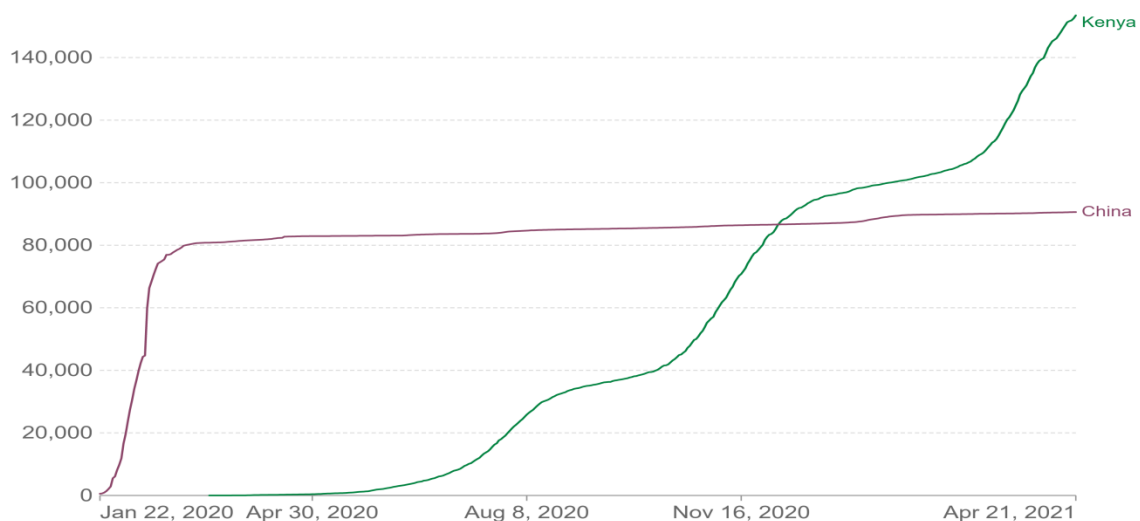
As of April 21, 2021, there were 143,542,550 COVID-19 cases, 3,057,541 deaths and 121,896,157 recoveries worldwide; China had a total of 90,541 COVID-19 cases, 4,636 deaths and 85,600 recoveries; Kenya had a total of 152,523 COVID-19 cases, 2,519 deaths and 103,838 recoveries (Worldometer, 2021). Most of the recorded cases and deaths occurred in high-income countries in Europe and North America. Many countries had adopted extreme physical distancing measures to control the spread of COVID-19 (Hale et al., 2021). Modelling studies suggested that without substantial mitigation measures, most low- and middle-income countries, including sub-Saharan Africa, would experience a delayed but severe

epidemic (Cabore et al., 2020). However, by then, Africa had recorded far fewer cases (see Figure 3) and deaths than predicted, prompting speculation as to why many African countries had avoided a severe, uncontrollable epidemic. A range of reasons was proposed, including environmental differences in the ability to detect cases and deaths, demographic factors such as population age distribution, and the role of temperature and drought in transmission(Quaife et al., 2020). The cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in the world, the cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in China and Kenya, and the cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in Africa as of April 21, 2021, are shown as follows (see Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3)(*Coronavirus (COVID-19) Cases - Statistics and Research - Our World in Data, 2021*):



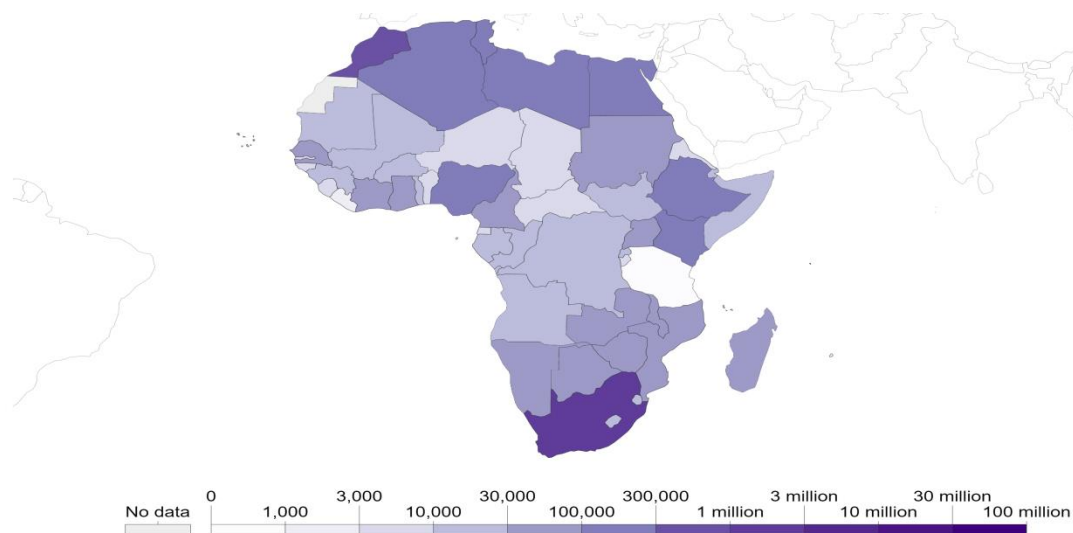
Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

Figure 1 Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide as of April 21, 2021
(Source: Authors’ Compilation based on John Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data)



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

Figure 2 Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in China and Kenya as of April 21, 2021
(Source: Authors’ Compilation based on John Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data)



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

Figure 3 Cumulative Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Africa as of April 21, 2021
(Source: Authors' Compilation based on John Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data)

However, given the trajectory of the epidemic, many Sub-Saharan African nations instituted lockdowns and curfews significantly sooner than most high-income countries in Europe and North America. Kenya, for example, declared a partial lockdown on April 6, 2020, despite only 158 reported cases and six deaths. On March 13, 2020, the first case in Kenya was reported, and schools were closed on March 15, 2020. On March 25, 2020, the government announced the suspension of international flights, as well as mandatory quarantine of incoming residents, the closure of bars and restaurant hours, and a prohibition on large gatherings, which was followed by a nationwide curfew from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. On April 5, 2020, the Kenyan government declared that masks must be worn in all public places. Following an increase in cases, areas such as Nairobi imposed a halt to operations.

Over time, even though the containment measures implemented were consistent with relatively low epidemic growth in Kenya (and other Sub-Saharan African countries with similar early containment measures), they also sprung up a dilemma for the government concerning different sectors of the economy, causing significant economic insecurity. This study touched on the measures taken by the Kenyan government during the initial 2020-2021 period vis-à-vis the measures taken by one of the earliest countries to experience the outbreak, China, on a comparative basis and for lesson-drawing. So, to advance effective crisis response and recovery, what sustainable steps can the government take to ensure that no citizen or place is left behind, particularly in a post-COVID world?

Design/Methodology/Approach Applied

The study employed a literature review approach (a review of existing published journal articles and grey literature) coupled with qualitative research to elucidate discussions and conclusions. For the qualitative research, an online survey created with Microsoft forms was used because it allows the target group to respond to it using almost any web browser or mobile device, and it allows for real-time results as they're submitted as well as the use of built-in analytics to evaluate responses. The survey primarily focused on perceptions of COVID-19 trends and situations in Kenya during the initial 2020–2021 period since it was

officially reported, and consisted of two key questions: How was the government's response to COVID-19 during the initial 2020-2021 period in terms of the following measures? (Citizen participation, representation, transparency, rule of law, competence, sustainability, human rights, inclusion, accountability) and How can the government ensure that no citizen or place is left behind in a post-crisis/post-COVID world?

Findings and Discussion

Preventive and Control Measures Taken by Kenya

Presumably, previous outbreaks of life-threatening infectious diseases in Africa, such as malaria, prompted African countries to react and implement a slew of stringent response measures to keep their healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed. African governments acted quickly in the early stages of COVID-19 detection within their borders to halt the disease's spread and negative consequences. However, these prevention and control measures were deemed unsustainable, with a negative and inequitable impact in resource-limited settings (Quaife et al., 2020). Kenya's prevention and control measures were as follows:

Appropriate Personal Hygiene and Sanitation

Controlling the COVID-19 outbreak relies heavily on appropriate hygiene and sanitation practices. Kenya launched a nationwide media campaign to educate citizens on proper hand-washing techniques and the immediate use of masks after the first case of COVID-19 was identified in March 2020. Hand washing and surface cleaning with soap and running water, a 70% alcohol-based sanitiser, or 0.1% sodium hypochlorite were all recommended in these campaigns. Local artisans in the informal sector were given financial assistance to build hand washing stations and disinfection equipment out of readily available raw materials and recyclable components, which could then be quickly distributed throughout the country. On a regular basis, infection hotspots (e.g., markets, public transportation, and hospitals) were fumigated. Hand washing was required before entering any public space or boarding public transportation. The Ministry of Health's stakeholders developed new protocols and policies for handling human remains and conducting funerals. Funerals, for example, were limited to a maximum of 15 participants in order to maintain physical distance (Yaacoub et al., 2020).

Daily briefing

The Ministry of Health issued daily reports to all media sources on the number of confirmed cases, fatalities, and recoveries associated with COVID-19, as well as the total number of beds in each hospital as well as the disease's prevalence in all 47 counties. They also recommended all residents continue taking steps to prevent contracting COVID-19 and provided contact information on how and where to seek treatment if symptoms arose. Furthermore, the government formed a COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Subcommittee in collaboration with media organizations, health-care stakeholders, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to improve strategic communication and community engagement, promote trust, and influence risk perceptions (Dryhurst et al., 2020; International Organization for Migration, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020b; Zarocostas, 2020). Mental health and social support, such as dealing with loss or grief, were also provided by community health workers.

Physical/Social Distancing

In a population, social distancing reduces human-to-human transmission of COVID-19. This shields both symptomatic and asymptomatic infected individuals from the worst effects of infection, limiting increases in the basic reproductive number (Leung et al., 2017). In Kenya, the government imposed a nationwide curfew from dusk to dawn, as well as restrictions on movement into, out of, and from Covid-19-affected cities to rural areas with lower incidences. Because of the sluggish urban economy, such measures were designed to limit the migration of large numbers of people to rural areas, resulting in infection of the elderly and vulnerable minorities. Learning institutions and daycare centres were forced to close. Furthermore, workplaces that did not provide essential services were advised to allow employees to work from home and to implement physical distancing measures if employees absolutely needed to be at their workstations. All mass gatherings, religious activities, festivals, conferences, trade fairs, sports, and cultural events were prohibited, and all human-to-human contact was restricted. The reasoning behind this was that physical distancing in large crowds, such as exit and entry spaces, and even public transportation, was difficult. However, for these countermeasures to be effective, they needed to be implemented over a longer period. Physical distancing can be encouraged by social connection with colleagues, family, and friends via digital media such as the phone or the internet. The government collaborated with Google to launch a massive network of internet balloons across the country to provide emergency internet services (Buckholtz, 2020). This internet connection was also intended to be used for e-learning, working from home, and facilitating the expansion of e-commerce.

System of Good Monitoring and Detection

COVID-19 transmission dynamics and societal impact can be better understood with the help of comprehensive surveillance and detection technologies which play a role in data collection and analysis. These systems should enable control on three levels: first, to enable rapid discovery, isolation, testing, and management of suspected cases; second, to guide the implementation of control measures to contain the spread of the outbreak among vulnerable populations, monitor long-term epidemiologic trends and evolution of COVID-19, and assess the outbreak's impact on the health care system; and third, to incorporate capabilities sufficient to understand the co-clustering of COVID-19 (its co-circulation with other respiratory viruses) (World Health Organization, 2020a). These systems provide solid evidence for the creation of disease management implementation policies (Yue et al., 2020). The Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) system in Kenya aided in the quick detection, reporting, management, and treatment of infections that were reported (Toda et al., 2018).

Regardless of the above measures (or while they were being implemented), it was noted that mitigation measures aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19 resulted in economic losses and a decline in global economic activity; this was a dilemma in itself. For example, the tourism and hospitality industries, which are critical to Kenya's foreign exchange generation, have suffered massive losses as a result of global mobility restrictions. To stimulate economic activity and secure livelihoods, the government announced an eight-point economic stimulus package that was incorporated into the national budget (The Presidency, 2020). To protect the dignity and welfare of those most affected, a cash transfer program aimed at the elderly, poor, and vulnerable was implemented. Similarly,

tax reductions and exemptions for raw materials used in domestic production were planned. Furthermore, a post-COVID-19 outbreak economic recovery strategy was to be developed in order to mitigate the negative effects and return the economy to a stable and sustainable growth trajectory (Bank, 2020). Aside from that, greater efforts were to be made to strike a delicate balance between reducing the incidence of COVID-19-related morbidity and preventing economic decline, which is critical to avoid reversing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Preventive and Control Measures Taken by China

As previously stated, China launched a national response immediately following the discovery of COVID-19. The number of new daily domestic cases in China fell to single digits in about two months; in nearly three months, decisive victories were won in the battle to defend Hubei province and the provincial capital Wuhan (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2020). The primary strategy was early containment, with active case identification and management being critical (Li et al., 2020). The primary requirements for implementing all prevention and control measures were the "four early steps" (early detection, early reporting, early isolation, and early treatment). All communities, organizations, and citizens were mobilized to combat the epidemic during this process (Li & Gao, 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). Then, based on monitoring and risk assessment results, containment strategies were implemented by establishing strong and flexible response mechanisms to implement or remove control measures in various areas.

At times, the emergency response strategy included performing nucleic acid testing on all residents. Following the confirmation of a case, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommended analysing the patient's activity over the previous 15 days, isolating and testing family members, colleagues, and close contacts, and disinfecting the environment (Wang et al., 2020). Concerning the COVID-19 outbreak, local governments in China believed that close contacts were not being sufficiently tested. Instead, they wanted to find every infected person in the city, and the only way to do so was to test everyone in the city (She et al., 2020). Wuhan was the first city to conduct full nucleic acid testing on all residents. Following that, Beijing conducted large-scale, centralized nucleic acid testing on over 12 million people. Qingdao also administered nucleic acid tests to 9 million citizens in 5 days. Comprehensive nucleic acid testing was also carried out in Shijiazhuang City, Tonghua City, Jilin Province, and other locations.

The government implemented a new routine prevention strategy in the fight against the outbreak. Because manual health checks were unreliable and time-consuming, China's "health passcode" was created. Citizens' basic information, health information, and travel information were all included in the health passcode. The information could be checked by scanning the health passcode at the checkpoints. Name, age, ID number, home address, job, home information, owned vehicles, and other modes of transportation were among the basic details. Health information included citizens' most recent temperature records, hospital medical records, pharmacy purchase records, and so on. Users scanned the health passcode to obtain travel information, which included information about their personal travel trajectory, such as shopping malls visited, restaurants visited, and flights taken (光明日报, 2020).

Because the government provided all citizen registration information managed by the police station, hospital diagnosis and treatment information managed by the National Health and

Family Planning Commission, citizen medical insurance information managed by the Medical Insurance Bureau, and ticket purchase and travel information from the transportation department, local governments supported the health code. The Health Passcode program's data structures, data element properties, and data management requirements were designed by the program's developers. In order to determine citizens' travel trajectories, the government also required public service agencies to scan the health passcode and upload the information record to a database (人民网, 2020). The overall concept's ultimate goal was to achieve a "unified coding system, unified presentation method, and unified data content."

Large-scale local outbreaks occurred in rural areas of Hebei, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and other provinces during the winter and spring of 2020-2021. The local epidemic was effectively controlled thanks to unwavering efforts. Nonetheless, given the size of its population, China faced potential challenges in preventing the COVID-19 outbreak resurgence.

China was the first country to be devastated by Covid-19, and it then became a trailblazer in how to reopen the economy during the global pandemic in the initial phases. A point to pick during that phase is about work; getting employees back into the workplace is critical to getting the business back on track. Working from home was an important strategy for mitigating COVID-19 spread and keeping employees safe. Many organizations reintroduced people into the workforce cautiously over time (Steelcase, 2020).

Experiences and Lessons of Public Crisis Governance Modes based on Epidemic Prevention and Control

Neither China nor Kenya has escaped the COVID-19 outbreak unscathed. COVID-19 and its consequences have had a significant impact on the economies of China and Kenya, as they have on other countries. Nonetheless, Kenya and China are expected to grow and return to economic normalcy. Some of the lessons learned about the epidemic and how to make progress in the near future are as follows:

Information Sharing

Good leadership is built on open, direct, and consistent relationships. Keeping an open line of communication with your team, sharing ideas, and developing plans and solutions with the team in mind becomes even more important during difficult times. Online communication apps were widely used in China to share crisis information in real-time and keep teams on track. Kenya did well in this area as well, thanks to daily briefings.

Establishing Cooperative Initiatives

Many countries faced difficulties as a result of the crisis (including China and Kenya). To address these common issues, new channels of communication with other initiatives can be established, existing channels can be strengthened, and creative ways of collaboration can be found. Large and small organizations should collaborate to develop solutions to the outbreak (and other crises).

Making Good use of Digital Tools

To ensure smooth operation, digital transformation must be quick and efficient. Working from home should be implemented if possible (and necessary), with clear rules and expectations for all parties involved. As seen in the early stages of the epidemic, leveraging social networking, working from home, and e-commerce may be critical.

Team Training

Crises are unpredictable periods. Survival necessitates teams being ready to respond quickly and flexibly to new challenges that arise on a regular basis. Anticipating challenges and quickly implementing strategies to avoid or overcome them is critical for best coping with the effects of a pandemic. As a result, well-trained teams are critical in both strategic planning and dealing with adversity.

Creation of a Safe Working Environment

COVID-19 prevention and control measures must be implemented in many entities, such as the workplace. It's also critical to keep the public informed about daily safety precautions. When practicable and suitable, hand sanitiser should be placed at strategic locations, and people's body temperatures should be taken. There is a need for these to be standard operating procedures in all entities, including small and medium-sized businesses, with apps to track temperature and health check status.

Planning for the Future

Rapid recovery may be impossible to achieve without the vision to begin formulating methods for dealing with the epidemic's harm and preparing for the future even during the crisis. It's critical to start thinking about how to prosper in the "new normal," such as by restructuring an organization.

The epidemic has heightened the need to change how we communicate and conduct business. On the one hand, solutions can be found within an organization, while on the other hand, answers can come from afar, drawing lessons and experiences that indicate the possibility of surviving crises and even creating something new in the face of adversity.

Perceptions of COVID-19 trends and situations in Kenya during the initial 2020–2021 period since it was officially reported

In the survey conducted, 69% of the respondents were female, and 31% were male. Amongst them, 85% acknowledged being students during the period 2020–2021 as opposed to 15%. In terms of age, 46% of the respondents fell into the 18–25 year category, 23% in the 26–30 year category, and 31% were over 30 years old. The first key question to the respondents touched on their perception of the government's response to COVID-19 during the initial 2020–2021 period in terms of the following measures (which are fundamental democratic governance principles): citizen participation, representation, transparency, rule of law, competence, sustainability, human rights, inclusion, and accountability. The findings were as follows:

Table 1

Respondents' perception of the government's response to COVID-19 during the initial 2020-2021 period

	Very bad	Bad	Average	Good	Very good
Citizen participation		7.7%	53.8%	23.1%	15.4%
Representation		15.4%	46.2%	30.8%	7.7%
Transparency	7.7%	38.5%	38.5%	7.7%	7.7%
Rule of law		15.4%	38.5%	23.1%	23.1%
Competence		7.7%	30.8%	53.8%	7.7%
Sustainability			76.9%	7.7%	15.4%
Human rights	7.7%		53.8%	30.8%	7.7%
Inclusion		7.7%	38.5%	46.2%	7.7%
Accountability	38.5%	15.4%	23.1%	15.4%	7.7%

As indicated in Table 1 above, based on the findings, there is still much to be done in terms of transparency and accountability and room for improvement in the other measures when it comes to crisis response. On that note, the respondents were asked to give their thoughts on how the government can ensure that no citizen or place is left behind in a post-crisis or post-COVID world. On one hand, the responses were largely directed towards a more holistic, citizen-oriented approach. On the other hand, the responses sought to have an empowered citizenry with the capacity to be co-actors in crisis response, recovery, and sustainable development. To leave no citizen or place behind, the government should offer education revolving around COVID-19. Then, instead of assuming that COVID-19 is solely the responsibility of the government, the average citizen will rally around taking responsibility for their own and their family's health. The government should also set up policies that ensure equality for both high-status and low-status citizens. It could come up with better solutions to make sure that even the "Mwananchi" (ordinary citizen) can afford and keep up with the inflation. The government could also provide subsidies, especially to SMEs, and deal with unemployment. Similarly, there was a call for the decisive implementation of post-management policies; being transparent and making sure policies allow participation and inclusion; visiting all places and keeping them up-to-speed; improving the accountability of public resources; and ensuring an adequate supply of vaccines across the nation. Moreover, there was a need to ensure that citizens abide by the rules of the law while taking into account all citizens' rights and finally working towards ensuring the quality of life improves significantly, hence the improvement in life expectancy.

Implications

Crisis Response and Sustainable Development

As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, global civilization has experienced a rapid and profound upheaval. At the time of occurrence, it was the worst blow to educational institutions in decades, owing to the prolonged school closures and the impending economic downturn. It will inhibit the attainment of global development goals, particularly those relating to education. The COVID-19 dilemma presented significant threats to the education, employment, mental health, and disposable money of young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable (The World Bank, 2021). The possibility for more lasting recovery is so

glaringly apparent that it is vital to capitalize on the lessons learned and newly established patterns.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2020), proposed the following initiatives that Governments may take to create inclusive, sustainable, and equitable recoveries: (a) Integration of young perspectives and intergenerational dialogue into government crisis response and recovery efforts, (b) Collaborating with national statistics agencies and academic institutions to collect age-specific data on the crisis's effect in order to monitor disparities and guide policymaking (together with data on other identification characteristics like sex, education, income, and work status), (c) Using impact assessments and establishing or bolstering institutions to track the impacts on today's youth and future generations may help us foresee the distributional implications of legislation and the allocation of public resources across various age cohorts. (d) Increasing the representation of all age groups in government decision-making through encouraging participation in public consultations and state organizations. (e) Build societal resilience to future shocks and catastrophes by capitalizing on the present mobilization of young people to mitigate the crisis using existing procedures, tools, and platforms (such as the utilization of digital technologies and data), (f) Ensuring the well-being of future generations by coordinating immediate emergency measures with investments in economic, social, and environmental goals and finally, (g) Offering specific programs and support to communities with high concentrations of at-risk populations.

Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Crises

The recent past has made it abundantly clear that we cannot support economic growth at the expense of the various crises that have afflicted our society. Our society is currently depleting natural resources so quickly to meet its demands that it is endangering the needs and potential of future generations. Our population is always expanding, and we need to provide them with the energy, nutrition, and clean water they need in order to stay safe from the negative effects of climate change. Sustainable entrepreneurship is one approach to addressing these issues. Eco-friendly technology and goods are sought after by sustainable entrepreneurs, who also look for eco-friendly solutions that may successfully address pressing environmental and social issues. Environmental degradation and sustainability present chances for sustainable business owners to build innovative business models (Galyan, 2015). In addition to causing widespread devastation, the Covid-19 pandemic also offers some substantial chances for business people to be innovative in the industry. Different types of entrepreneurship have been impacted by this crisis in terms of culture, lifestyle, and societal change. The enterprises have had to make cultural, lifestyle, and social changes in light of the current and recent COVID-19 problems, hence giving guidance to existing and future business owners on how to handle short-and long-term concerns and react to crisis circumstances. A rising collection of entrepreneurial research that adopts a crisis-based perspective is providing insightful information.

Though tenacious by nature, entrepreneurs have experienced unique difficulties in adjusting to the new environment as a result of the COVID-19 crisis due to its scope and duration. These difficulties may be linked to how flexible entrepreneurs adapt to uncertainty as well as the existence of an entrepreneurial ecosystem setting that provides a modern perspective on how businesses might improve public welfare (Ratten, 2020).

Gender Equity and Sustainable Development

All types of crises act as magnifying glasses, revealing underlying problems and structural inequities. A crisis, in addition to bringing them to light, typically exacerbates inequalities, leaving societies in worse shape. Gender inequality is undoubtedly the most widespread form of discrimination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on gender equality began to reverse. Importantly, rising inequality may exacerbate the negative effects of the crisis on our societies. The positive force that gender equality brings, on the other hand, is significant (Hepp et al., 2022). The same goes for gender equity in relation to sustainable development.

The foundation of gender equity is mutual respect; the recognition and development of everyone's potential; and the provision of equal opportunities to all people, regardless of gender, in order to realize their potential and contribute to the nation's sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (2008) as "development that satisfies the demands of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs." Simply put, this means that the idea of sustainable development is based on the idea of meeting the needs of both the current generation and future generations. The main goal of political participation and inclusion of women is to ensure that they also acquire power and have the authority to disperse power to organize society, harness and distribute resources in their respective communities or societies, and also influence decision-making that is in line with their interests. Okolie (2004) defines political participation as the freedom of expression, association, free speech, the right to influence decision-making, and the right to social justice; health care; better working conditions; and the right to franchise. Women in the East African Community (EAC) are under-represented in positions of power and leadership, are undervalued, and face discrimination and gender-based violence. Gender equality and women's empowerment are critical for long-term development in the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. As women account for more than half of the population, their role in driving development cannot be underestimated. Gender disparity continues to occur among EAC member states, particularly in political participation and inclusion, policy formulation and implementation, and decision-making.

Kenya has set the pace and hit the ground running with its August 9th, 2022 general elections, in which a large number of women were elected to elective positions while others were appointed. The election established a precedent in which more women will compete for elective seats in future elections, ensuring that women are represented in decision-making circles and their voices are heard. Women's voices are critical in creating and advancing a space for women in leadership and allowing them to tell their own stories. Women's participation and inclusion in elective and appointive leadership positions in the civil service, public and private sectors have increased significantly in Kenya.

In the bid to bridge gender disparities and biases in Kenya, several measures have been undertaken to address the issues to attain the country's gender policies and goals as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Africa we want and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Generation Equality is an international platform that is convened by United Nations (UN) women. They are bringing together the next generation of women's rights activists with gender equality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating and advancing the Beijing platform for action. The Generation Equality campaign seeks to accelerate and advocates for equal pay, an equal share of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health

care services that meet their needs, and equal participation and inclusion in political life and decision-making in all areas of life (UN Women, 2021).

Gender equity is a critical component in the long-term development of all spheres of society. Gender analysis is a tool for better understanding the realities of women and men, girls and boys, whose lives are influenced by planned development activities. The 2030 Agenda places a strong emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment. They are interwoven within the agenda and seen as essential to its success. The General Assembly states in the Resolution on the Agenda that "realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a key contribution to progress across all the goals and targets." The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have goals for gender-based aspects of poverty, health, education, employment, and security. All SDGs and their aims must prioritize gender equality and women's emancipation. Because of this, governments must approach gender equality holistically throughout the entire framework and have gendered policies.

Conclusion

Countries adopted and executed a number of prevention and control measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. All of this was done to ensure that each country's domestic and international outcomes were good. China and Kenya, for instance, did not fall behind. Despite the difficulties, the methods used had a considerable impact on the results. Control efforts such as advocating for heightened personal hygiene and social distancing against COVID-19 had a big impact on direct exposure and transmission, but they also caused a significant dilemma, affecting various sectors of the economy and demographic segments as well. In Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries that used similar early control methods, the drop in basic reproduction number corresponded to relatively modest epidemic expansion. However, because of the negative and inequitable impact on the economy, control measures may not have been feasible in the long run.

A couple of factors emerged as a result of the online survey. With regard to the respondent's perception of the government's response to COVID-19 during the initial 2020–2021 period in terms of the fundamental democratic governance principles, namely, citizen participation, representation, transparency, rule of law, competence, sustainability, human rights, inclusion, and accountability, the findings showed that there is still much to be done in terms of transparency and accountability, and room for improvement in the other measures when it comes to crisis response. When it comes to the respondents' thoughts on how the government can ensure that no citizen or place is left behind in a post-crisis or post-COVID world, the responses were largely directed towards a more holistic, citizen-oriented approach and also sought to have an empowered citizenry with the capacity to be co-actors in crisis response, recovery, and sustainable development.

In the early stages of the pandemic, China became a potential role model for the rest of the world, as the first country to experience the devastation of the pandemic and successfully implement a series of decisive containment and prevention measures. Despite previous challenges, it was on the road to recovery during that initial phase, unlike many other parts of the world. However, due to its large population, it faced potential challenges. It is critical that countries cooperate objectively in all areas of public crisis management to ensure that the world overcomes the pandemic and adapts appropriately to this "new normal" by learning from one another and sharing experiences. Overall, lessons drawn from the deficiencies of control measures instituted by Kenya and China converge to the renewed perspective on

ideals of sustainable development. Special emphasis is given to both the active engagement of the public and the exchange of ideas between governments. When contemplating sustainable development in a post-COVID world, one of the most important aspects to keep in mind is the need of building future economic concepts around the preservation of natural systems and the recovery of resources.

Though democratic governance may not be an obvious top priority during a crisis, this research highlights an important perspective: it is precisely during times of adversity that leadership and management structures are put to the test, exposed for their strengths and flaws, and remembered by stakeholders for the long run. Democratic governance principles such as citizen participation, representation, openness and transparency, rule of law, competence and capacity, sustainability and long-term orientation, human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, and accountability are of the essence to the populace thus leveraging them to advance effective crisis response and recovery can have a cumulative effect and deliver lessons from a local, national, regional, continental, and global perspective. Democratic governance principles promote a comprehensive approach to crisis response and recovery, increasing multi-stakeholder engagement while striving to leave no one or no place behind as envisioned by the AU Agenda 2063 aspirations and the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs.

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