ECOSOCC RESEARCH STUDY

Civil Society as Partners in
Emergency Response:
The Case of Covid-19

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African Union

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CIVICUS	Global Alliance of Civil Society Organizations based in South Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
COVID -19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union
EnD#SARS	Social Movement and Mass Protests against Police Brutality in Nigeria
EPIC AFRICA	African organization, based in Senegal that seeks to Strengthen civic infrastructure and deepen philanthropic Impact on the continent
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
LGTBQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questionings, and many other terms (such as Non-Binary and Pansexual)
LINC	US based organization that assists local and Organizations to effectively design projects, increase Capacity, forge partnerships and measure impact
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NNNGO	Nigerian Network of NGOs
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SMS	Short Messaging Service
TRIP	World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade- Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIP)
VAW/G	Violence Against Women and Girls
WINGS	Women Initiating Goal of Safety
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Emergencies refer to unforeseen combination of circumstances that call for immediate action or response. Such circumstances can cause death or significant injuries to people, disrupt operations and social life, cause physical and environmental damage and threaten the functional capacity of the location or community of impact. Even so, the character, source, scale, intensity, duration, territorial coverage and demands of emergencies vary. There are minor, major and complex emergences. Minor emergencies such as traffic accidents or fire outbreaks occur almost everyday. They are limited in their size, scale and impact. Usually also, there are public organizations focused on the possibility of their occurrence and equipped to deal with this kind of situations, such as the Fire Department, Civil Defense and a variety of emergency management agencies focused on emergency threats in specific areas.

Major emergencies differ in scale and proportions, and create a specific context in which organizations and usual processes are ill adapted[1]. They are events, occurring with little or no warning, that cause social disruptions of life, property, essential services, community, the environment, infrastructure and which, because of their scale and effects cannot simply be dealt with by the normal emergency response services[2]. Major emergencies have three important characteristics. First, they pose immediate threat to life, health, property or environment and /or have already caused loss of life, health detriment, property or environmental damage. Second, they have a high probability of escalating to cause immediate and eventually long term danger to life, health, property, environment and community. Third, they require the mobilization of additional resources beyond the capabilities of principal response agencies to ensure an effective response.

In addition, the character of major emergencies can be differentiated according to context. Major emergencies can occur in local, national, international or global context and each level of gradation create a further category of severity and aggravation that complicates the nature and demand of responses.

1.2 Covid- 19: A Global Pandemic Emergency

Epidemics and pandemics have always been part and parcel of the history of global emergencies, which has also documented a pattern of responses towards them. Over the years, since the beginning of the 20th century, the world has been faced with a variety of pandemics including the 1918 (Spanish Flu) caused by an influenza A (HINI) virus, the 1957 influenza A (H2N2) virus, the 1968 influenza A (H3N2) virus, 2002 Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)) coronavirus, and the 2009 Swine Flu caused by an influenza A (HINI) virus. In addition, the more recent West African Ebola virus, that was not declared an epidemic, claimed about 11, 399 lives[3]. This is besides the emergencies emanating from natural disasters such as extreme weather phenomena including floods, blizzards, earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, droughts and man made disasters such as nuclear explosions and accidents, insurgences, wars, famine, refugee and migrant crisis, situations of genocide and global terrorism that have often had similar effects.

1   Henderson. A. 'The Critical Role of Street Level Bureaucrats in Disaster and Crisis' in R. Schweister (ed.) Handbook of Critical Incident Analysis. Nova York, NY, M.E. Sharpe, 2014, pp217-235.
2   See Salford City Council, https://salford.gov.uk and https://www.limerick.ie.
3   Akin Abayomi, et al, 'Ebola to Covid -19: Emergency preparedness and response plans and actions in Lagos, Nigeria'. Global Health 2021,17 (1)

Even so, the case of COVID-19 comes with a difference. The virus knows no boundaries. It is contagious and easily transmissible, kills quickly and indiscriminately, and leads to tremendous loss of human life across communities, national, regional and global boundaries. Beyond catastrophic death tolls, this emergency restricts or impedes, mobility within and outside families, communities, localities, countries and among international society. Covid-19 disrupts family life and undermines trust and social cohesion, impacts negatively on health and health care facilities, jobs, the economy etc. Moreover, the existentialist threat of the current situation cannot obscure the likely consequence that it will have a cumulative negative effect on most dimensions of people's life in the aftermath of the present episode.

This difference notwithstanding, COVID-19 shares an attribute with other major complex global emergencies. It requires a "whole of society approach "to address the problems associated with it. Invariably, governments all over the world have to play a leading role in this process, but the demands are of such a scale and variety that adequate response strategy has to anticipate active mobilization and support of the citizenry.
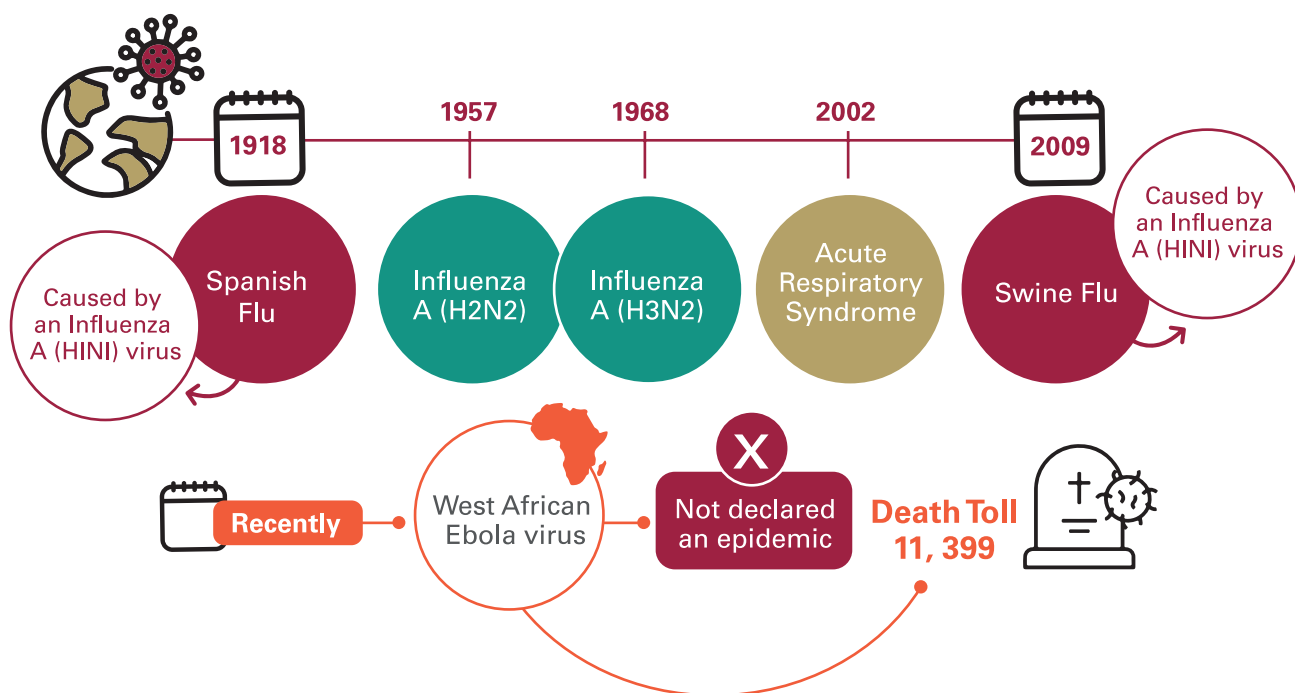
2. THE DEADLY AND DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COVID-19.

The impetus for this orientation can be attributed to the deadly and devastating impact of this coronavirus pandemic. When Chinese Health authorities first reported the coronavirus disease in December 2019, the impression was of the normal complex international emergency. The effects of COVID-19 soon overtook this impression as it rapidly unfolded. Indeed, the circumstance surrounding Covid 19, which the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, became quite dramatic.

The virus spread rapidly across communities and transnational boundaries. Significantly, it affected almost every facet of human life. As the world grappled with finding a vaccination treatment to mitigate and eventually find a cure for the virus, the debilitating effects continued to impact in deadly fashion across the regions of the world. Efforts and measures to contain this process in the interim included lockdowns, travel bans, limited mobility and movement restrictions within and across families, communities and states across the globe, physical distancing, closure of schools and restriction of in-person learning, the wearing of face masks and/or personal protective equipment (PPE), quarantine requirements and facilities etc.

All of these impacted negatively on agricultural and industrial outputs, caused decline in stock exchange percentages, fuelled price raises and inflation as well as contractions in GDPs. The World Bank estimated that the pandemic would push 100 million additional people into extreme poverty in 2020[4].

By this time, political leaders around the world began to treat the virus as a matter of priority and held national daily press conferences with the support of their health and scientific advisers to provide daily updates on the virus, highlight government efforts, advise citizens and the public on what needs to be done and seek their support and cooperation to combat the spread of the virus[5]. At this point, it was evident that the task of combating the virus was too serious for it to be left to governments alone. Success would involve the total mobilization of all sectors of society particularly in civil society. This was not always the case. Empirical observation and media accounts suggest that the approach towards the pandemic developed in three broad phases that often transited into each other[6].

The first phase was marked by denials or benign cognizance. The second phase was one of serious to critical concern and innovation and experimentation on models of containment as the infection spread and the death toll continued to rise. As the situation worsened further there was a third and final phase of collective purpose and collective action. The costs of the pandemic in human lives continued to rise as new variants emerged provoking a sense of agitation and embrace of the pandemic as one that requires a tilt in state-society relations involving a collaborative management strategy based on active partnership with all elements in society, particularly civil society.

Former US President, Donald Trump, Brazilian President Bolsonaro and the late Tanzanian President, John Magufuli, exemplified the tendency of the denial and benign cognizance. In February 2020 President Trump, at various times, observed that COVID-19, will 'go away[7]'. He downgraded it as one at par with the Ebola, "This is a flu. It is flu like[8]". He also noted that "it is going to disappear" and "the risks are very low[9]". The late Tanzanian President took a more benign view when he noted that God had eliminated Coronavirus as a result of Tanzanian prayers. ' Coronavirus, which is a devil, cannot survive in the body of Christ… it will burn instantly'[10]. Yet, Covid-19 did not disappear and as the death toll mounted in thousands across countries and millions globally in 2020 and beyond, the risks became rather astronomic. As of 11 November 2020, 46 million Covid 19 infections have been confirmed worldwide along with 1.2 million deaths. A joint statement by ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO lamented that the pandemic had led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide, and unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work[11].

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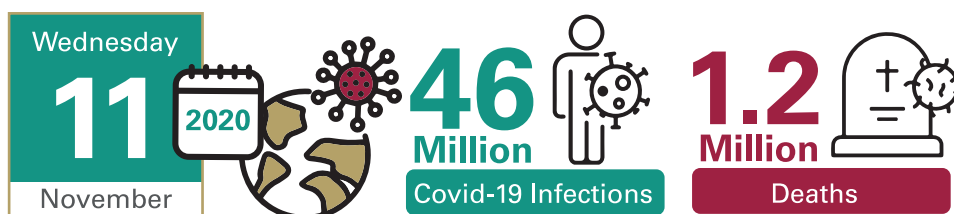
4   World Bank 2020: Shared Prosperity and Reversals of Fortune. Washington DC: World Bank. https://openknowledge. worldbank.org/handle//10986/34496.

5   Roy Satyaki and Ghosh Preetam, 'Factors affecting Covid 19 infected and death rates inform lockdown-related policymaking' https://dei.rg/1037/journal.pone.0241165

6   This was a pattern but there were subtle variations worldwide and it was not unilineal. Some leaders and governments moved at faster rates than others.

7   CNBC 3 August 2020

8   Phillip Bump '210,00 deaths later, Trump reverts to comparing the Coronavirus to the Flue' Washington Post, 6 October 2020. Brazilian President Bolsonaro also stated that the virus was just 'a little flu' and that' having had Covid is better than getting vaccinated'. See Jake Horton 'Why Bolsonaro could face charges' Reality Check, BBC News27 October 2021. https://www.bbc.com.

9   White House Press Conference Feb. 2020, Fox News, 17 July 2020.

10   'John Magufuli: Tanzanian late President in his own words' BBC News, 18 March 2021

11   'Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihood, their health and our food systems' Joint Statement by ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO, 13 October 2020.

Indeed, cases of Covid-19 related infection and deaths continued to rise. As at 6 January 2022, over 298 million people around the world had been infected, with 5.48 million deaths[12]. Compared with other regions of the world, the impact was less severe in Africa. Africa had approximately 7.4 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 infections. The death toll was put at about 222, 276 with South African figures of 89,954 amounting to around 40.3 percent of the African total[13]. Nonetheless, the medical and professional health workers that I interviewed in Nigeria maintained that, while experience gained during the previous Ebola case had proved useful in containing Covid- 19[14], the African figures were undercounted because of initial reliance on contact tracing, limited testing and cases of people dying at home. The symptoms of Covid- 19 such as headache, tiredness, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, skin rash, chest pains, breathing difficulties etc are similar to those of other diseases and casualties were often misattributed[15]. Moji, a nurse, had a more interesting take on the subject that she shared discreetly. "A lot of people in Western countries are dying of Covid complications but how do we report deaths based on Covid complications especially in poorer parts of the country? We say he just suddenly dropped dead or she complained of sore throat, chest pains, fever or stomachache and then dropped dead. There goes our Covid complication. It never happened[16]".
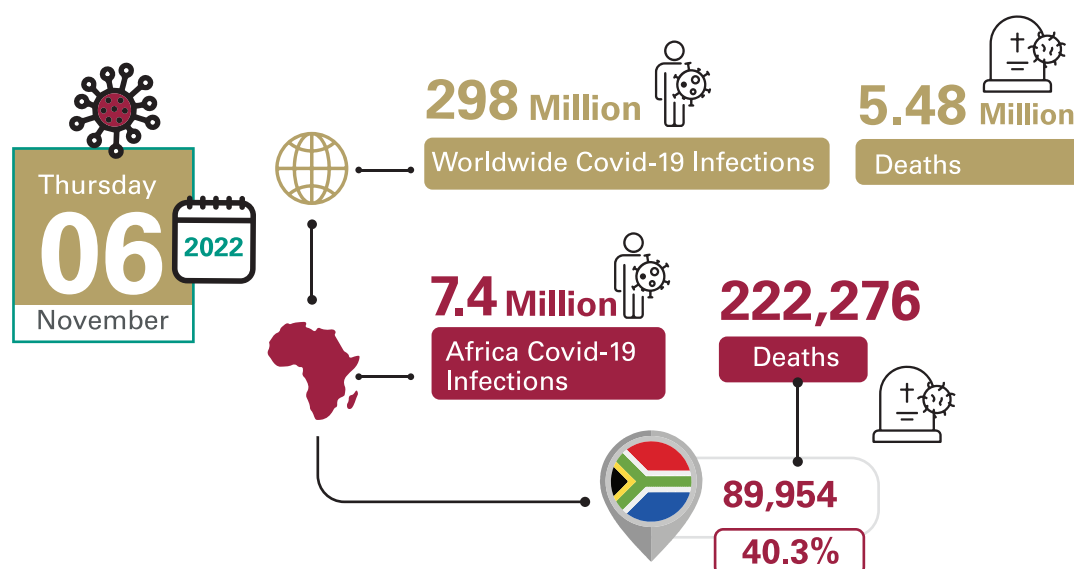
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Research design and methodology is informed by the objectives set forth in the advertisement of the research grant, particularly Section 2.0 of the terms of reference and the scope of services and timelines contained in Section 6.0 of the same. Against this background, desk research and documentary analysis will serve as the main foundation and anchor for this study. Relevant data will be gathered from a combination of sources including books and monographs, academic journals, official documents from government sources, international organizations such as World Health Organizations, CSO reports and other trusted news sources, including established and reputable news, television, internet references and other media sources. The study will also adapt and make use of three important surveys of low and middle-income countries in the Global South, Africa and Nigeria, on the impact of Covid-19 on CSOs. The survey results are consistent with each other and since they were carried out in 2020 and 2021 are also contemporaneous. Information gathered accordingly will be enriched and complemented by key informant interviews with actors at official, CSO and community levels for cross-verification.

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12   Worldometer 'Covid 19 Coronavirus Death toll' https//worldometer.info.
13   Ibid. See also WHO Coronavirus Dashboard, 6 January 2022. https://who.int.
14   Ibid. See also WHO Coronavirus Dashboard, 6 January 2022. https://who.int.
15   One civil society activist also cited a class dimension. 'Covid 19 has become an elite disease. The media and authorities constantly report the death of a prominent figure or the other but not a larger number of the underclass dying in the communities unnoticed and unremarked.'
16   Interview, Bare Health Centre, Ibadan, Nigeria, 4 January 2022.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Nature and Dynamics of Civil Society Response to the Pandemic.

Concern about the spread and effect of coronavirus placed a critical focus on government responses. This is hardly surprising since governments have the primary responsibility for safeguarding public interests and have led the initiative in fighting the pandemic. Significantly however, civil society has also played a critical role in providing services, filling gaps left by governmental institutional voids, inefficiencies, managerial deficits and lack of technical proficiency. At other times, they have complemented or augmented government efforts and instigated and supported community efforts to combat the spread of the virus. In spite of this, the study or existing literature on the COVID-19 pandemic is largely state-centric with only a few notable exceptions documenting the systematic contributions of civil society. Nevertheless, civil society impacted vigorously on the pandemic crisis with a wide range of responses as follows:

a. Caretaker Emergency Relief Roles

People-led mutual responses played a cardinal role in the course of the pandemic. Community action sprang across societies, neighborhood and schools as people in various communities came together and pooled efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and to arrest and mitigate its deadly effects. Civil society organizations had a pivotal role in this process as they rallied communities to address the crisis and undertook emergency relief roles within a framework of informal activism focused on practical problem solving. CSOs took on the crucial role of providing essential services where there were gaps in healthcare provisions and demands for psychological support. Civil society organizations also provided personal protective equipment (PPE), food aid, essential sanitary items etc, filling the void when states were either slow to respond or simply overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the crisis.

One remarkable example was the citizen organized task force in the village of Gumuk Indah in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where the government response to the pandemic had been slow and uncoordinated[17]. The task force, which drew on volunteers that were previously in neighborhood associations and local community building organizations, provided health responses, including health education, hygiene measures, to prevent transmission of the virus, supported people with aid kits and sought to counter the security impact of the pandemic and associated lockdown measures. Mutual aid measures were complemented by organized CSO actions. In Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, charity groups were set up to raise funds to buy medical supplies, food for slum dwellers, disabled people and migrant workers[18]. The situation was similar worldwide[19]. ' In country after country' Mandeep Tiwana, the Chief Programme Officer of CIVICUS observed ' a diverse range of civil society scrambled to meet the needs of communities most affected by the crisis'[20].

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17   Jasmin Lorch and Janjira Sombatpoonsiri "South-East Asia, Between Authoritarianism and Democratic Resurgence" in Richard Youngs, ed., Global Civil Society in the Shadow of Coronavirus. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington DC, September 2020. See also 'Civil Society and the Global Pandemic: building back Different Carnegie Civic Research Network,2020

18   Ibid.

19   In Hong Kong, Caritas Youth and Community Services, Health in Action, Lingham University and the University of Hong Kong jointly organized the Project Ultraviolate to provide efficient UV disinfection services to sterilize living environments. This reduced the risk of community outbreaks in Hong Kong.
See Qihai Cai, et al,' Civil Society responses to Covid 19 Pandemic: a Comparative Analysis of China, Japan and Korea' China Review, Vol., 23, no 1, Feb.2021.

20   Solidarity in the time of Covid 19: Civil society responses to the pandemic. CIVICUS, 5 November 2020. See also CIVICUS: Sate of Civil Society Report 2020.

b. Multilevel roles and new forms of civic activism

This new occupation has involved both new and old civic groups at national, local and community levels. Existing CSOs have repurposed themselves away from their normal activities and embraced positive mindsets characterized by flexibility, innovation, confidence and optimism to respond to the challenges of the pandemics. For instance, some CSOs that prioritized advocacy rights quickly re-oriented themselves to providing essential supplies; food aid, healthcare, information and cash support to meet the existential needs of communities. Simultaneously, new CSOs have risen to complement such efforts and fill gaps left by governments in a context animated by the adoption of a self-help mentality. Increasingly also, the demand for civic activism has risen and new spaces have opened for civil societies to play prominent and multilevel roles in managing the crisis.

For instance, in Zimbabwe, the pandemic presented an opportunity for CSOs to demonstrate that they are focusing on organizing around community priorities and public goods[21]. The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights came to the fore in demanding PPE for frontline healthcare workers. In Harare, the Community Worker Alliance and the combined Harare Resident Association forged a partnership to distribute masks and sanitizers in high-density areas where the working class resides. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network began to use its resources and capacity to monitor government coronavirus response. Economic Justice organizations such as the Coalition for Debt and Development established social accountability and tracking platforms to monitor government and private sector commitments on expenditure and coronavirus response. [22]Likewise, in Tunisia, civil society organizations, with little or no previous experience in public health, mobilized their members and resources to fight the coronavirus[23].

In the process, CSOs gained a greater sense of urgency, acquired a stronger spirit of civic empowerment and deepened their presence and influence as well as their outreach in local societies. By reshaping themselves around practical forms of community action that responds to the needs of the pandemic emergency, civic groups have been able to build new forms of legitimacy derived from activities of direct concern to local communities[24], mitigated the severity of the crises, filled the gaps created by government failings and pushed official authorities to adopt better and more effective health and social responses towards the pandemic.

c. Building Coalitions with governments, local and national authorities.

Also, while governments have imposed restrictions on society as part of initial crisis management strategies, the coronavirus pandemic has also served as an instrument for opening civil society spaces that facilitated social cooperation with national and local authorities and governments on health, economic and social activities, community service provision and a host of other social responsibility issues. The implication is that in certain countries such as South Korea where about one fifth of governmental initiative on the pandemic has been in formal partnership with civil society, civil society will come out of the pandemic with improved ties to government initiatives[25].

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21 Maureen Kademaunga and Otto Sakki 'Reclaiming Civil Society in Zimbabwe' in Richard Youngs, opt cit.
22 Ibid.
23 See Youssef Cherif, Hafsa Halawa and Osge Zinhnioglu 'Coronavirus and Civic Activism in the Middle-East and North Africa' in Richard Youngs, opt cit.
24 It has been observed that CSOs play important roles in volatile contexts and derive greater legitimacy due to government incapability, institutional void and wide range of services that CSOs provide in this context. See Ahmad Arslan, Sammpa Kamara, Ismail Golgeci and Shlomo Yedida Tarba 'Civil Society organizations management dynamics and value creation in the post-conflict volatile contexts pre and during COVID 19', International Journal of Organizational Analysis, June 2021. For a broader view see E.T. Boris, 'Non-profit Organizations in a Democracy: Varied Roles and Responsibilities' in Boris E.T. and Steuerle C.E, ed., Non-Profit and Government: Collaboration and Conflict. ~Washington: Urban Institute, 2006, Salamon L.M. Partners in Public Service: Government –Non- Profit Relations in a Modern Welfare State. Baltimore, Maryland, John Hopkins Press, 1995, Weisbrod. B. The Voluntary Non-Profit Sector, Lanham, Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 1998, Anhheier A.K. and Ben Ner, The study of Non-Profit Enterprise: Theories and Approaches. New York Springer, 2003.
25 See Youseff Cherif, et al, opt cit

Elsewhere, whenever states have partnered with civil society or created an enabling environment for the work of CSOs, efforts to contain the spread and effect of the virus has been more effective. For example, it was observed that in Somalia, Action Against Hunger successfully partnered with the Ministry of Health to promote awareness about Covid using social media and other communication channel to reach vulnerable and excluded groups[26]. In the same vein, Social Good Brazil, a Brazilian human rights group focusing on technology boosted statistical evidence on Covid-19 by connecting data scientists with public officials[27].

d. Creative Communication, including the use of digital technology.

Civil society has also played a vital role by stepping in, where official communication channels has failed, to provide accurate information to people on how to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19 using creative methods and diverse means. These included the accelerated adoption of digital technology, among others, to improve their skills and to work remotely to maintain the online visibility of their organizations and sustain effective communications and outreach in the midst of lockdowns and other restrictions[28]. In Ukraine, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G) NGO Club, Eney, adapted their prevention intervention, called WINGS (Women Initiating New Goals of Safety) to an online format.[29] In Haiti, Beyond Borders, with the support of its partner organization, Pappaza, began creating new resources to promote prevention of violence against women from a distance using tools such as sign language interpretation, an SMS campaign and radio program to supplement in-person activities[30]. In Nigeria, Educare Trust in support of the Covid-19 Global Education Coalition by UNESCO, launched a campaign " For Keeping the Girls in the Picture' to ensure girl's safety, health and continued learning during and after the pandemic. The campaign sought that girls should return to school when they are reopened and where schools are closed girls should continue to learn by other means such as through books, radio, TV, mobile phones as well as digital technology[31].

Where going virtual is not possible, CSOs are finding new entry points[32]. For instance, Challenge to Kenya are using community radio stations, while Strategic Initiative for Horn of Africa in Sudan plan to reach communities with a public address system to share information on Covid-19. In Somalia, the International Solidarity Foundation is raising awareness of female genital mutilation through SMS and voice response systems. Significantly also, CSOs have countered problematic government and other source narratives about the coronavirus and government related efforts.

e. Assisting at-Risk and Vulnerable Groups in Society

An important aspect of civil society response to the conflict was focused on helping at-risk, vulnerable or excluded groups in society adversely affected by lockdowns and policies put in place by governments to curb the spread of Covid-19. The literature has intimated that women faced greater risk of gender-based violence during the lockdowns [33]and that LGBTQ1+ people, migrants and other minority groups have been smeared as sources of infection[34]. The disabled were similarly affected as an estimated one billion persons with disabilities were expected to be the hardest hit by Covid-19.[35]

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26   Ibid.

27   See Pedro Baqui, et al, 'Comparing Covid 19 risk factor in Brazil using machine learning: the importance off socio-economic demographic and structural factors" Scientific Reports,11, Article no 15591,2021.

28   UN Trust Fund Brief on Impact of Covid 19 on CSOs. https://reliefweb.int. See also Saul Mullard and Per Aarvik 'Civil Society during Covid Pandemic: the potential of online collaboration for social accountability' Bergen, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2020.

29   UN Trust Fund op. cit

30   Ibid.

31   Interview, Ibadan, 1st February 2021. See also Keeping Girls in the Picture Educare Trust, UNESCO, 2021.

32   ibid.

33   Shelby Bourgault, Amber Peterman and Megan O' Donnell, 'Violence Against Women and Children During Covid 19 –One Year on and 100 Papers In: a fourth research Round Up' Centre for Global Development, 12 April 2021. https://www.cdgev.org/publication/violence-against -women-and-children-during-covid-19-one-year-and-100-papers-fourth.

34   UN Trust Fund, op cit.

35   ibid.

Civil Society took up these challenges and campaigned to help and protect excluded groups while creating remote services to help vulnerable groups in society. In Mexico, the Institute of Women in Migration provided access to food and health support to at-risk women and girls among asylum seekers and population in transit.[36] Also, the National Network of Shelters expanded its 24-hour helpline and provided extra assistance through social media. In Albania, the Shelter for Abused Women and Girls in Partnership in Streha, a shelter for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women survivors of domestic violence, provided safe accommodation and rented apartments, food, hygiene materials and psychological support.[37] The Disabled People's Organization in Pakistan was heavily invested in ensuring that services continued to be accessible during the pandemic. Beyond Borders In Haiti and Rozan in Pakistan focused on prevention of violence by producing materials in multiple accessible formats.[38]

Similar situations occurred in Africa.[39] In Nigeria, Society for Life Changers and Parental Care in Nigeria adapted programs to reach the most left behind in the pandemic. Moreover, two separate groups of CSOs, including Education as a Vaccine, Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Nigeria, Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women Initiative, Global Rights, Partners West Africa Nigeria, and GBV Sub-Sector for Adamawa State, released two separate policy advisory papers on preventing gender-based violence (GBV), protecting women and girls, and integrating gender into Nigeria's COVID-19 response.[40]

f. Activism over Economic Challenges

Besides, another major effect of the pandemic is that more CSOs are focused on economic challenges involving either immediate concern over post-pandemic recovery or deep-seated consideration of economic models followed by their various national governments. The pandemic has revealed serious failings and structural shortcomings in the economic models followed by various governments across the world and raised important questions about certain elements of globalization. This has engendered a debate on how lessons learnt from the pandemic about supply chains; state capacities and social resilience, can be adapted to enable qualitative improvements within systems or system change. Civic activists have become part and parcel of the attempt to rethink these economic models as they begin to plan for a post pandemic process.

A few examples will serve to illustrate this tendency. In Thailand, the group Wefair, that emerged from the country's pro-democracy protests linked the problem of economic inequality aggravated by the pandemic to the concentration of power in the hands of the royalist elite[41]. A network of more than twenty-five Indian civil society groups conducted a series of online meetings entitled " Reimagining The Future " to debate new economic ideas[42]. In South Korea, 530 CSOs formed a coalition to make the country's economic model more inclusive[43].

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36   Ibid.

37   Ibid.

38   Ibid.

39   It should be noted however, that there is a converse dimension to Corruption risks. One CSO respondent in Mozambique observed that there have been incidences where support offered to CSOs during the pandemic such as PPE and facemasks etc find their way to the streets where they are being resold for commercial purposes. Similarly, another CSO respondent in Liberia claims to have information regarding the sale of vaccines in rural areas of Liberia. He alleges two patterns of activity. First are situations where rural elites pay to obtain them. Second are situations in which those elites pay for vaccines certificates but do not actually receive vaccines. These allegations may be difficult to validate but suggest that a more specific and detailed analysis of the various dimensions of corruption risks would be worthwhile.

40   Center for Public Policy Alternatives. 2020. "Combating the Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives and Livelihood of Nigerian Women and Other Protected Groupings: Part II." https://fatefoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/FATE-Foundation-Techno-Policy-2.pdf

41   Wefair.org. https;://wefair.org

42   Webinar 'Reimagining the Future" Centre for Financial Accountability' September 2020. https://www.cenfa.org/RTF

43   Byo Gyo Jeong and Sung Ju Kim, 'The Government and Civil Society collaboration Against Covid 19 in South Korea: A Single or Multiple Actor Play?' Non-Profit Forum,12,1, January 2021.

The National Students Union in Zimbabwe focused on highlighting unequal access to education that has become more apparent in the course of the pandemic[44]. The Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe also pushed for reforms to address inequalities.

g. Activism involving Political Struggles

Moreover, activism involving political struggles has accompanied activism over economic challenges. Societal frustrations associated with the horror of the public health emergency fed on political discontent and vice versa. Thus rather than displacing such concerns, the pandemic crisis magnified them and was interlinked with more political civil society agendas. The pandemic reshaped civil society actions in relation to human rights and democracy. In Myanmar it was associated with democratic breakdown, in Thailand with autocratic repression, in Hong Kong with the city's democratic protests[45]. Feminist movements in Nepal and Indonesia gained momentum by linking the hike in sexual violence during the lockdowns with authoritarian dynamics[46].

A similar trend was exhibited in the Middle East and North Africa. CSOs efforts in Tunisia, organized in 2020 around the country's ongoing financial and political crises, gained traction in mid-2021 from soaring COVID-19 death rates and the government's botched vaccine rollout[47]. Pandemic-related frustrations gave fillip to the Hirak movement in Algeria as it resumed its opposition to the incumbent regime[48]. Conversely, incumbent regimes in various countries used the pretext of Covid-19 related concerns to support crackdowns on the opposition and fueled further bouts of anti-regime activism. Turkey offered a vivid example of such indirect linkages and it inspired several civic organizations to put increasing focus on the negative impact on human rights of government pandemic responses.[49]

Political activism in Africa south of the Sahara followed the same pattern. In Nigeria, the #EndSARS movement emerged in October 2020, after a video of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) shooting a young man went viral. This movement that was led by the Nigerian youths, brought together a wide range of different actors, agitated by perceived governance failure of the incumbent regime that was linked with the government's handling of the pandemic[50]. In Zimbabwe, the pandemic crisis rapidly increased human rights campaigning and The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum provided services to human rights defenders and citizens whose rights were alleged to have been violated under the guise of lockdown measures[51]. CSOs such as the Heal Zimbabwe Trust, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, the Counseling Services Unit, and the Forum increased support to activists and increased their advocacy for human rights while linking their arguments to pandemic-related injustices.[52]

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44   Maureen Kademaunga and Otto Sakki 'Reclaiming Civil Society in Zimbabwe' in Richard Youngs, opt cit.

45   Jasmin Lorch, et al, op cit.

46   Bibbi Abruzzini and Jyotsna M. Singh, "Offline and Online, Protests Are Sweeping Across Asia," Diplomat, March 1, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/offline-and-online-protests-are-sweeping-across-asia/

47   Cathrin Schaer and Tarak Guizani, "Tunisia's COVID-19 Surge Spells Disaster in More Ways Than One," Deutsche Welle, July 24, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/tunisias-covid-19-surge-spells-disaster-in-more-ways-than-one/a-586135952021, https://www.dw.com/en/tunisias-covid-19-surge-spells-disaster-in-more-ways-than-one/a-58613595

48   'Algerians March on the 2-Year Anniversary of the Hirak Movement' Africa News 22/02/2021. https://www.arab-reform.net

49   See Turkey: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report and Covid 19 Civicus, https://www.org.

50   Adejumo Kabir '10 reasons why the #EndSARS protest gained global attention' Premium Times, 7 November 2020.

51   'Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum calling for Respect of Human Rights and Observance of the law during the Covid 19 Lockdown' News and Press Release, 30 March 2020.

52   See Miranda Rivers and Precious Ndlovu 'Covid Raises the Stakes for Zimbabwe Social Movement' US Institute of Peace (USIP), 24 June 2020.

h. Confrontational Activism to address Corruption Risks

A logical corollary of political activism is more confrontational forms of activism whereby civil society groups have stepped up as watchdogs to monitor government responses to the pandemic. This entails a focus on addressing corruption risks associated with the costs, supply, distribution and managements of palliatives designed to mitigate the negative and brutal effects of Covid-19. As a result, 'CSOs formed coalitions that demanded greater transparency from government-led or initiated philanthropic coalitions in terms of how much money was raised and how this was being distributed to beneficiaries'.[53] For example, a consortium of anti-corruption organizations under the Upright for Nigeria, Stand against Corruption banner, which included organizations such as Action Aid and the Centre for Democracy and Development, issued a press release in April 2020 calling for greater accountability and transparency in the distribution of palliatives and the utilization of COVID-19 funds [54].

Similarly, in Kenya, the Okoa Uchumi Coalition, comprised of organizations such as Oxfam in Kenya, Transparency International Kenya, and the Institute for Social Accountability, issued a press release in May 2020 calling for more transparency and accountability from the government in the management of COVID-19 emergency response funds[55]. In South Africa, Corruption Watch also worked with other civil society organizations via a collective called the C19 People's Coalition to identify and investigate incidences of alleged corruption relating to COVID-19 relief funds[56].

Activism of civic groups at this level also focused on executive powers appropriated by state executives to manage the crisis of the pandemic and basic governance effectiveness and breadth of measures to offset the economic impact of the virus. At this level, the pandemic has galvanized civil society in pushing for far reaching radical change to social, economic and political models. The pandemic crisis magnified imbalances in several countries economic and political systems and CSOs began to push for reforms of social and economic models exposed by the pandemic as falling short of expectations.

i. Civil Society and the Geopolitics of the Pandemic.

Beyond this, are issues related to the geopolitics of the pandemic. The geopolitics of the pandemic has created a dynamic situation with contrasting impacts across countries and across different types of civil society groups. Several of the established democracies including the United States of America have not, at least initially, dealt effectively with the pandemic causing severe reputational damage and weakening the attraction of their political systems among activists in other countries worldwide. Chinese and Russian vaccine diplomacy, combined with what is perceived as the West's vaccine nationalism, has also impacted on CSO views and agendas[57].

53 Shaninomi Eribo 'African Civil Society Organizations: Impact and Responses'. Alliance for Africa Perspectives, Vol.1,2021, African Universities and the Covid 19 Pandemic.

54 Upright for Nigeria, Stand against Corruption, 2020. "COVID-19: Publish List of Palliative Beneficiaries, Anti-Corruption Groups Urge Government." Nigeria. actionaid.org. https://nigeria.actionaid.org/news/2020/press-release-covid-19-publish-list-palliative-beneficiaries-anti-corruption-groups-urge

55 Oxfam, 2020. "Urgent Call for Debt Relief, Transparency and Accountability in Management of COVID-19 Emergency Funds to Ensure they Respond to the Needs of the People Affected." Oxfam.org. https://kenya.oxfam.org/latest/press-release/urgent-call-debt-relief-transparency-and-accountabilitymanagement-covid-19

56 Transparency International, 2020. "In South Africa, Covid-19 Has Exposed Greed And spurred Long-Needed Action Against Corruption." Transparency.org. https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/in-south-africa-covid-19-has-exposed-greed-and-spurred-long-needed-action-against-corruption

57 Vaccine Diplomacy Boost Russia and China in Global Standing' the Economist, 28 April 2021. See also Simon Frankel. Brett and Jamie Levin 'Vaccines Will shape new Geopolitical Order" Foreign Policy, 21 April 2021.

Many CSOs believe that vaccine development has accentuated inequality between the rich and developing worlds, and they tend to blame the West for this. Various organizations including Amnesty International, Free the Vaccine, Frontline AIDS, Global Justice Now, Oxfam International, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and the Yunus Centre established the People's Vaccine Alliance to ensure equitable access to the vaccine worldwide: their campaign has targeted mainly Western governments and pharmaceutical companies[58]. The priority for most African CSOs has been to simply to ensure that the wider population is vaccinated. Hence, several of these CSOs have called for the removal of intellectual property rights on vaccines to facilitate this goal, calling specifically on G20 countries to support the move. The hashtag #NoCOVIDMonopolies has become a popular slogan in African civil society[59]. CSOs in Malawi launched a Vaccinate Our World campaign, which directs anger at the limited reach of COVAX, the global multilateral drive to broaden vaccine access. Indeed the main preoccupation of CSOs in Africa is for more vaccine accessibility for less wealthy countries[60].

As African CSOs have become more critical of Western countries for hoarding vaccines, several of these organizations are more receptive to Chinese and Russian pledges to make vaccines available. In Kenya, public opinion has become more critical of the West and more positive toward Russia, which supplied the Sputnik V vaccine at affordable prices[61]. Over 375 CSOs including an alliance of sixty-three CSOs in Africa have run a campaign pushing rich nations to support the adoption of a waiver from certain provisions of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIP) for the prevention, containment and treatment of Covid -19[62].

Across Latin America, China and Russia have provided medical equipment, donations, and vaccinations more quickly than the United States or EU, this contrast has apparently had an impact on these countries' societal views and by association their political values. In the Middle East, Egypt and Morocco have begun to manufacture the Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines, respectively. The issue of migration, particularly Western governments' decisions to bar the entry of millions of citizens from countries with new coronavirus variants have created significant mistrust among civil society actors.

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58   'The People's Vaccine' Oxfam on behalf of the Peoples Vaccine. https://people'svaccine.org. See also 'Civil Society Organizations calling for Vaccine Access and Equity for all'. Oxfam,11 March 2021. https://panafrica.oxfam.org/latest/press release/civil.society-organiztions-calling-vaccine-access-and-equity.

59   Hallign Agade 'Civil Society in Africa Call for a People's Vaccine" CTGN Africa, 19 March 2021. https://Africa.ctgn/2021/03/13/civil society-organizations-in-africa-call-for-a-people's-vaccine.

60   Macmillan Mphone 'Malawi asked to spend $40 million on Covid Vaccines' Malawi 24, 28 June 2021. https://malawi24.com/2021/06/29/malawi -asked -to -spend-40-million-on-covid-vacines.

61   David Herbling 'Kenyans Pay $70 for a shot of Russia's Sputnik vaccine' Bloomberg, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-30/Kenyans-pay 70-forshot-russia-s-sputnik-vaccine.

62   Access Campaign "Civil Society to WTO members: Support India and South Africa's proposal for a waiver from IP protection for Covid 19 medical technologies'. Letter 15 October 2020. https://mfaccess.org.

6. OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

As indicated above, COVID-19 bred optimism and a new wave of activism in civil society as CSOs were propelled to play active emergency relief roles, build coalitions with governments, local community and international actors, augment state capacities, fill gaps left by governments overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the pandemic crisis, salvage local communities and reshape themselves in an almost revolutionary fashion around practical goals and problem solving.

6.1 Opportunities.

These responses have brought a series of advantages and opportunities that civil society can leverage thereafter. CSO activity and responses to Covid-19 has increased their visibility with the public, improved their relationship with local communities as well as their perceived relevance, credibility, responsiveness and technical competence. At a corporate level, the pandemic experience has also created opportunities for CSOs to work together, enhanced their networking prospects, strengthened their advocacy skills and helped to develop skill-sets that can be applied in building sector solidarity across communities, countries and regions in the context of Covid 19 and its aftermath.

6.2 Challenges.

Simultaneously however, the optimism associated with this environment and its revolutionary re-conception of civil society role must be combined with the debilitating impact of the same COVID-19 experience on the internal operations, staffing, work capacity, program and resource support of CSOs in the same conditions. One major element that marks out the experience of developing countries of the global South in general and Africa in particular, is the severe constraints and dual vision that the dramatic advent of COVID-19 imposes on civil society within these regions. There is also the added stress arising from the diversion of funding support towards Covid -19 relief requirements. The UN Trust Fund assessment of the conditions of CSOs focused on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G) noted that 'majority of CSOs are concerned about operational survival in the face of the global emergency diverting funds from VAW/G related services.

> *In a sample of 44 organizations in Sub Saharan Africa, all 44 requested additional financial support, primarily for programmatic adaptations, ICT and additional expertise to help the organization become more resilient to Covid- 19 and future crisis. Most CSOs funded by Trust Fund currently report a diversion of donor funds from existing projects to Covid- 19 initiatives… CSO staff are (also) personally impacted and need support to work from home….. and additional training or assistance to adapt projects of working in the field [63].*

The evidence of surveys at the global, inter-regional, continental and national levels confirms this overall assessment.


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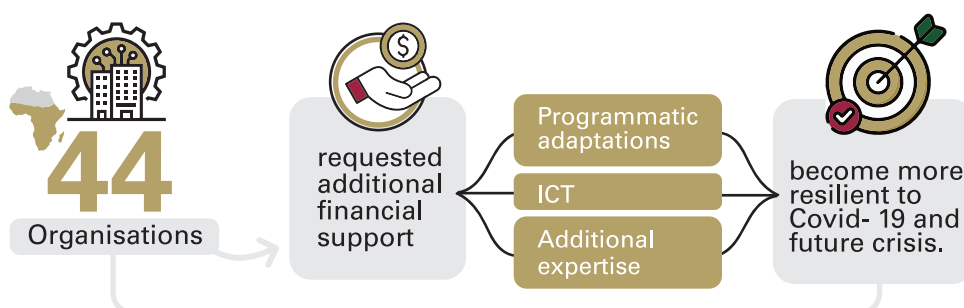
63   UN Trust Fund, op.cit.

6.3   Inter-regional Survey of low and middle-income countries in the Global South.

An independent and self-funded survey of national, regional and local civil society organizations (CSOs), which included 125 CSOs from low- and middle-income countries in Asia, Africa, Southeastern Europe and Latin America, across a range of technical sectors, was conducted by LINC in April 2020, to assess the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the internal systems of CSOs – how it is affecting their staff, ongoing operations, and the communities they serve. The survey revealed that every CSO surveyed has been negatively affected by COVID-19, changing their funding levels, their way of delivering services, and/or internal operations.[64]

In terms of funding, nearly 13% of CSOs surveyed reported that they would have to close operations within the next month without additional funding or more severe cost cutting measures. Two-thirds of CSOs surveyed have taken at least one cost cutting action and three-quarters of CSOs surveyed feared that there would be less funding available for their work in the future due to the impact of COVID-19. The most common request for support to maintain operations was financial of some type, including direct funding as well as flexibility to adapt activities, targets and timelines. Paradoxically, almost 65% of CSOs surveyed reported currently conducting activities to respond directly to the pandemic, most commonly efforts to slow the spread of the virus, distribute food and supplies to families in need, and provide psychosocial support.

In regard of activities, just over 80% reported that they were completely or partially working remotely. The remaining nearly 20% reported being unable to work remotely either due to a lack of IT infrastructure or a need for direct contact with their communities to provide services. CSO respondents emphasized that as important as direct support to combat COVID-19 is, other development problems have not disappeared with the pandemic, and will likely be worse after the pandemic. 95% of CSOs surveyed reported participating in coordination platforms for their work, over 40% of those said coordination was paused due to COVID-19. On operations, all CSOs surveyed reported being impacted by COVID-19, either due to a change in their operations, their funding situation, or their activities.
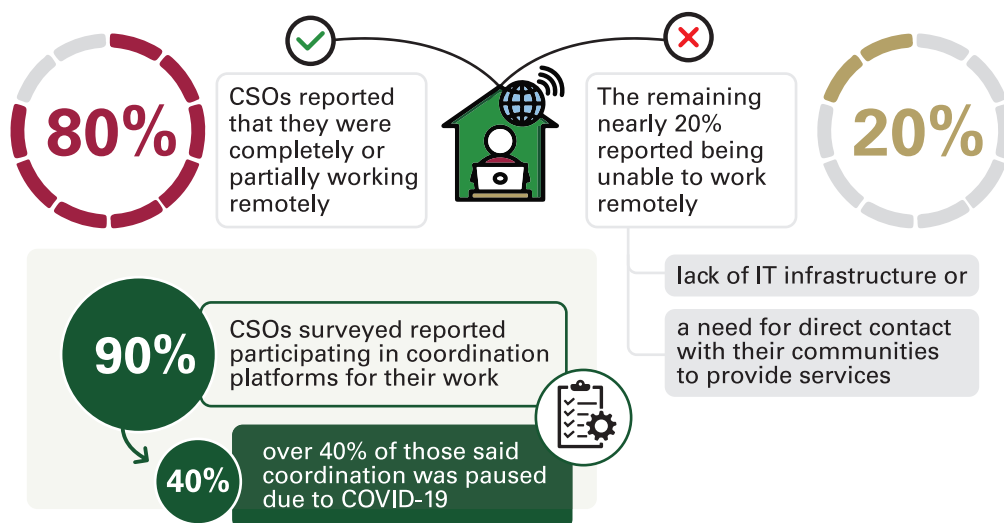
CSOs also noted other specific impacts to operations, funding and activities. On financial resilience, almost 50% of CSOs reported that they would have to close within 3 months without additional funding. These include well-established CSOs with decades of service to their communities. CSO respondents also emphasized that as important as direct support for COVID-19 was, other developmental priorities remain important. CSO respondents expressed significant interest in receiving training, coaching or materials for managing in crises, establishing reserve funds, and developing business continuity plans.

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64   LINC Report 'How Civil Society Organizations in the Global South are impacted by COVID 19' sinapse.gife.org.br. The data on low and middle-income countries is abstracted and adapted from the LINC report.

It is important to observe that the LINC survey is representative of what is happening globally around the world. Accordingly, after aggregating 51 surveys from 47 organizations globally in July 2020, Sarina Dayal found that that the Covid-19 pandemic impacted negatively on the internal operations of CSOs, particularly in regard of financial constraints. Several organizations experienced or anticipated a loss in funding because of the crisis as well as a reduction in philanthropic giving as a result of economic disruption and redirected funds[65].

6.4 The African Experience.

The trend and patterns were confirmed by similar surveys focused on the African experience. A survey of 1015 NGOs from 44 countries by Epic Africa and African NGOs between 29 April and May 2020 revealed that 98 per cent of CSOs reported that COVID-19 had disrupted their operations [66]. 55.6 per cent had experienced a loss of funding while 64.6 per cent expected such loss within three to six months. Approximately, 78 percent believed that that COVID-19 would have a devastating impact on their sustainability. 74 percent of respondents experienced restrictions in the movement of staff, and 79 percent experienced reduced face-to-face interactions with the communities they serve. Other immediate ancillary effects included a reduced number of staff members, increased workloads, greater uncertainty about the future,
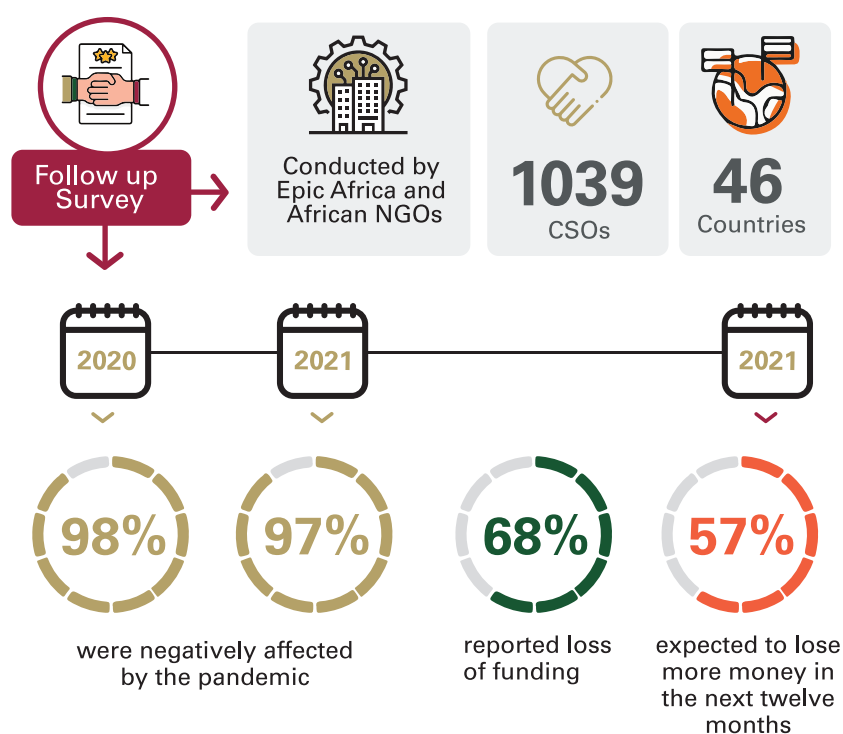

The Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO), conducted another survey → **115** organizations → Working on these issues: health, education, environment, children's rights and protection, youth empowerment, women's rights, empowerment to faith and community-based organizations → **2020** May - June across the **36** states of Nigeria

Survey Findings

72% observed that the greatest short-term impact of COVID-19 on their operation was loss of funding

55% has had to reduce or cancel activities

47% having reduced face-to-face /community interaction

38% having restricted movement

27% experiencing an increased demand for services

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65 Sarina Dayal 'The Impact of Covid 19 on Civil Society' Candid, 30 July 2020. https://blog.candid.org. The 47 organizations include member-based organizations, philanthropy serving organizations, nonprofit support organizations, community foundations, donor advised funds, academia, and corporate institutions.
For an update see also Sarina Dayal, the Impact of Covid-19 on Civil Society, part two, 29 March 2021. https://blog.candid.org.

66 Epic-Africa 'Impact of COVID 19 on African Civil Society Organizations: Challenges, Responses and Opportunities' https ://static.squarespace.com. The data on the regional survey is adapted from and based on EPIC Africa surveys for 2020 and 2021

The Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO) conducted another survey, including 115 organizations working on issues ranging from health, education, environment, children's rights and protection, youth empowerment, women's rights and empowerment to faith and community-based organizations, across the thirty-six states of Nigeria between May and June 2020. The findings of the survey were similar to those to those of the Epic Africa survey. 72 percent of those surveyed observed that the greatest short-term impact of COVID-19 on their operation was loss of funding, 55 percent has had to reduce or cancel activities, 47 percent having reduced face-to-face/community interaction, 38 percent having restricted movement, and 27 percent experiencing an increased demand for services [67].

The CSOs also anticipated that over the next three to six months, COVID-19 would affect their organizations in the following areas: funding (69 percent); reduced or cancelled activities (49 percent); reduced face-to-face/community interactions (42 percent), and increased costs (32 percent) and demand for services (20 percent). In addition, the majority (65 percent) of the surveyed nonprofits reported not having any reserves, and those that did have reserves (31 percent) would need to use them over the next three to six months to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their operations.

A follow up survey of 1039 CSOs in 46 countries conducted by Epic Africa and African NGOs between June and July 2021 had the same results. In 2020, 98 per cent of CSOs were negatively affected by the pandemic. A near similar figure of 97 percent was recorded in 2021[68]. Again in 2021, 68.1percent reported loss of funding while 57 percent expected to lose more money in the next twelve months, with debilitating effects on their ability to provide required community services[69].

Follow up Survey

Conducted by Epic Africa and African NGOs

1039 CSOs

46 Countries

2020 — 2021 — 2021

98% were negatively affected by the pandemic

97%

68% reported loss of funding

57% expected to lose more money in the next twelve months

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67   Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO 2020) 'COVID 19 and the Nigerian Non Profit Sector: what we heard' Nnngo.org. https://nnngo.org/wp-content upload/2020/11/impact-on-Covid 19-1-pdf. The data and discussion here is abstracted from the NNNGO report.
68   Epic-Africa 2021, 'The Impact of COVID 19 on African Civil Society Organizations', https;/allafrica.com. See also Africa. Business https://bit.ly/302SCOg.
69   Ibid. Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Zambia Governance Foundation also found that 67 percent of CSOs feel uncertainty over funders response to delay s in implementation of funds and over 18 percent have had donors decrease or withdraw anticipated funding, Sarina Dayal, 2020, op cit.

6.5   Lessons Learnt.

In summary therefore, the profile of African civil society within the context of the Covid 19 global emergency offers a picture of sharp contrasts. Civil society is characterized by expanded roles, growing enthusiasm and vigorous activity within a general framework of diminished capacity, disruption of internal operations, staff reduction and loss of funding. There is a problem of sustainability and a danger that unless something urgent is done to ensure recuperation of some CSOs they may not survive. This notwithstanding, most African governments did not offer much support to CSOs to lessen the impact of the pandemic or to strengthen their operations or program activities. EPIC Africa 2020 reported that African governments failed to recognize and appropriately utilize CSO skills, experience, and established networks in response to Covid- 19 and that they missed opportunities to leverage their well established social networks, processes and data accumulated over the years to disseminate information, distribute relief to reach communities and achieve greater impact on the ground [70].

The lessen learnt in this context is that addressing a pandemic of this nature and complexity, and indeed, other major, complex and global emergencies, requires preparedness which must be based on planning, effective mobilization of all constituencies in civil society, partnering and assignment of roles that are part and parcel of a framework of structures, processes and methods integrated into a consolidated plan or template for action.

7.   PLAN AND TEMPLATE FOR ACTION

Such a template of action will have the following key components:

i.   Whole of Society Approach

First is an underlining philosophy that is rooted in a "whole of society approach". The "whole of society approach" is one through which government engages all stakeholders, including the civil society, communities, NGOs, academia, the private sector, foundations, international organizations etc., to cooperate and collaborate in tackling the challenges and difficulties created by the pandemic or similar emergencies. The approach calls for effective broad based and inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships and leverages the contribution of partners to be coordinated and complementary in a systematic fashion. This implies a collaborative governance arrangement for collective action that partners with and allows for a specific niche assigned to civil society.

ii.   Responsible and Committed Political Leadership

Responsible political leaders committed to enabling and promoting collaborative governance strategies with CSOs must complement the approach. Such political leaders must lead through direction and practical example. They should maintain constant dialogue with CSOs; publicly underline the value and significance of CSO activity in emergency situations and move rapidly to mobilize their support and contributions in crisis situations, especially those that threaten to overwhelm government capacities as in Covid- 19.

iii.   Agile Intersectoral Arrangements

The approach will also need to be supported by agile intersectoral arrangements involving a mix of formal agreements including contracts and partnership terms where required and feasible as well as informal mechanisms that can be used to accommodate all potential partners. These collaborative arrangements would require clear and common objectives, a suitable regulatory framework; favorable impressions derived from good experiences with pre-existing relationships and dedicated leaderships[71].

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70   Epic Africa 2020 op. cit.

71   See John Bryson, Barbara Crosby and Melissa Stone 'Designing and Implementing Cross-Sector Collaboration: Needed and Challenging'. Public Administration Review, Vol. 75, 2015, pp. 647-663 and Barbara Crosby and John Bryson 'Integrative Leadership and Cross-Sectoral cooperation's.' The Leadership Quarterly, Vol. 21,2010 pp. 211-230.

iv. Structures and Processes

Intersectoral collaborative arrangements would rely on appropriate structures and processes for managing the emergency. These structures and processes must be flexible in view of the diverse nature of civil society and because many CSOs have little institutional and organizational capacity.

v. Priorities, Transparency and Legitimacy.

It is important also that the framework of reference for the collaborative mechanisms should be mutual and transparent. Priorities must be set and mutually agreed upon and all efforts must be made to ensure actions taken at either level do not compromise the value or legitimacy of responses to the crisis or emergency. Where formal mechanisms such as contracts or purchases are made this should be made available on public portals. A spirit of openness and transparency must underwrite all collaborative arrangements.

vi. Effective Communication

Effective communication must be established early in crisis or emergency situations. This is a lesson that is underlined in the Covid-19 pandemic. Information provided in this context must be constantly and regularly updated, made easily accessible and carry messages that are convergent with other public sources. There should also be a flow of regular and reliable information among, between and within partners. This flow of information should offer clarifications regarding action by different parties and reinforce or clarify common objectives. Public investment in this information strategy would be very productive.

vii. Creation of an enabling Environment for Collaboration

Similar investment should support the creation and sustenance of an enabling environment to sustain collaborative arrangements. Emergencies and pandemics recur and a sustainable framework for addressing them that marshal the resources of major segments of society provides value for money. Such arrangements should focus on both the immediate as well as the long term. They should go beyond the requirement of implementing specific policies to include regular meetings and interactions, create bonds of trust as well as sincere and respectful debate.

viii. Support for Recuperating the Capacity of CSOs

Finally, our analysis of the experience of African CSOs in the preceding section draws attention to the need for philanthropic actions and grants from the African private sector, foundations, international organizations and governments for recuperating the capacity of CSOs in order to mitigate the brutal effects of Covid- 19 pandemic emergency and support the creation of suitable frameworks of cooperation or semi-structured processes of formal and informal collaboration that can be used to address current and future emergencies. This would include, among others, capacity-building support to enhance the prospect of relevant CSO interventions, institutional support for CSOs whose functions may be threatened by their Covid missions and programmatic support for local CSOs to prevent and respond to Covid-19 in its various dimensions. The effects of the pandemic poses existential threat to current and long term sustainability of African CSOs and a "whole of society approach" requires that governments invest in this process so that it will have CSOs to partner with in the long run. Thus investment in this regard would be a matter of self-interest rather than charity or generosity.

8. CONCLUSIONS: CIVIL SOCIETY, COVID-19 AND THE POST-COVID WORLD.

In conclusion, there are three final lessons that we can learn from the Covid 19 pandemic.

First, it represents a worst-case scenario. It effects are morbid and devastating in various respects and unparalleled in recent and contemporary history. In terms of reference, it is normally compared to the Flu epidemic of 1918 that was estimated to have killed about 50 million people. However, it could be argued that Covid-19 upstages the flu when one considers phenomenal advances in science and medicine that had taken place since the age of the flu. A situation of full hospital beds and overfilled Intensive Care Units (ICU) facilities with alarming daily death tolls in different communities, countries and regions of the world appears as a modern horror story. Yet worse case scenarios have a positive attribute that they heighten preparedness and preparation and place surviving victims in a state that puts them in advantageous positions to learn and adequately cope with future occurrences. Hopefully therefore, the global and African experience should inform preparedness and encourage governments, public authorities, local and international, private sector and civil society to develop and put in place the cooperative development model of a 'whole of society' approach' to address the challenges of Covid-19 as it develops as well as its aftermath.

Second and related to this is that Covid-19 develops in successive phases as the virus mutates in different forms- ~Delta, Omicron, IHU variants etc. As such, the pandemic in its current shape has become a perennial phenomenon and no one is sure about when it will be laid to rest and how. Even vaccinations have not produced the expected final cures as those vaccinated sometimes again become infected. Thus the requirements have moved from one jab or dose into two and then three. The state of Israel is now experimenting with four jabs. It follows that Covid-19 in its present incarnation is a public health emergency that is enduring.

Is Covid-19 therefore going to become the 'new normal'? The answer is likely to be negative. The panic and emergency will disappear in time as humankind and medical sciences devote prodigious energy to combating the virus. However, Covid- 19 will not disappear and we will have to live with it just as we live with the flu. Consequently, though Covid-19 will not be the 'new normal', the 'new normal' would definitely include Covid- 19. Hence, governments must develop, refine and consolidate their strategy of collective action and collaborative management to continue to address and contain the virus. This approach and template of action will definitely assign tasks and roles to civil society.

Yet it is imperative, as CSO responses in the Covid-19 emergency show, that CSOs cannot be passive and civil society responses to the Covid emergency would involve scrutiny and reaction to government responses. In this context, CSOs will also be required to audit their own experience as organizations and to reflect upon the record and experience of the civil society community as a collective in order to improve performances in the event of 'a fire next time'. Civil society must therefore, assume greater responsibility for the definition of its own roles so that the strategy of collective action will be a community-led engagement rather than a government or community based enterprise.