



LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCE IN THE POST COVID-19 WORLD.

Insights from the Preparatory Seminar series towards the 2020 ARIN International Conference ‘Africa in the Post-COVID-19 World: Lessons for Research and Policy’

ARIN TECHNICAL REPORT No. 003

ARIN/2020/003

Compiled by the ARIN Secretariat

Recommended Citation

ARIN (2020). Seminar discussions on Low Carbon Development and Resilience in The Post COVID-19 World. Victoria Chengo, Kennedy Mbeva & Joanes Atela (Eds). Technical Report No. 003. Africa Research and Impact Network. Nairobi, Kenya.

About ARIN

[The Africa Research and Impact Network \(ARIN\)](#) is an impact platform that brings together a network of scholars and policymakers across Africa to leverage on their work to bring out a unified voice of Africa's research priorities. Modeled as a network, ARIN seeks to leverage on the capabilities of African talented scholars in a flexible manner, and to foster linkages amongst researchers across and beyond Africa in various fields to leverage their knowledge towards Africa's research excellence and impact pathways. This means ARIN is not only focused on the African continent but uses Africa as a base on which to engage on topics within and outside the continent. ARIN's core focus is to engage in peer learning and sharing good transformative research and impact practices targeting key sectors identified as critical for sustainable development. Thematic disciplines include natural resource management, climate change and energy, science technology and innovation, agriculture and forestry, cities and resilience, and trade and mining. These disciplines also intersect with analytical approaches. In addition, the platform is keen to convene dialogues on various research and people topics such as the intersection between COVID-19, and policy analysis.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| ARIN | African Research and Impact Network |
| COP | Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| EU | European Union |
| GCF | Green Climate Finance |
| GCRF | Global Challenges Research Fund |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| ICLEI | Local Governments for Sustainability – Africa |
| LCEDN | Low Carbon Energy Development Network |
| LDC | Least Developed Countries |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contributions |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| TERI | The Energy and Resources Institute |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention Climate Change |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This technical report summarizes the key emerging highlights from the “Low-carbon Development and Climate Resilience in the Post-COVID-19 World” seminar under the Climate Action and Sustainable Energy theme that was held on 30th October 2020. This was one of the preparatory seminars aimed at stimulating discussions and debate to inform the ARIN International Conference titled ‘Africa in the Post-COVID-19 World: Lessons for Research and Policy’ that was held on 18th – 20th November 2020. The preparatory seminars were organized around the three conference themes: Climate Action and Sustainable Energy; Cities and Resilience; Science Technology and Innovation. These are critical areas for Africa’s transition to sustainable developed economies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The seminar involved a brief background presentation on the various research activities and dialogues on non-state climate action and COVID-19, followed by a panel discussion that drew global experts on international environmental governance, low-carbon development, local climate action, sustainable development, climate policy, and green financing. Deep reflections on how global economies have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic transpired, including questions on how countries could better and strategically govern themselves to rescue their economies in a sustainable manner while addressing climate change problems.

The COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in a world struggling to cope with major global challenges such as climate change and development issues. For the African continent, which has for decades struggled with these challenges, much of the impact from the pandemic is economic related owing to the continent’s weak socio-economic safety nets. Various sectors such as trade, agriculture, tourism, and others that are pertinent to the continent’s growth have been affected. It is thus a critical time for African governments to think strategically of how to incorporate post-pandemic recovery plans into the existing development plans towards a transition to sustainable industrialized economies in line with the AU Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The discussions presented fascinating insights around thinking through the kind of crisis COVID-19 pandemic is, and its implications across the board in a sense that contributes to the climate change debate and research that has been carried out for many decades. Important questions on the extent to which the crisis presents both opportunities and challenges to livelihoods and the environment were posed.

In the context of climate action, experts explored the role of non-state actors in addressing the pandemic, the political economy issue across different contexts before and after the pandemic, and the emerging connections between the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, pointing to the low-carbon development transition and climate change.

The following critical findings emerged from the discussions:

- 1. Emerging opportunities for addressing climate change:** Discussions pointed to the emerging positive effects of COVID-19 in terms of environmental impact. Initial evidence shows that GHG emissions and air pollution in general went down within the first few months into the pandemic. While this argument relies on preliminary data, it would be critical to understand how this development could be harnessed as a long-term climate mitigation measure towards sustained climate resilience. It is important to note that if investments or budget movements towards structural changes are not reinforced, there will probably be a strong rebound in emissions accompanying economic growth.
- 2. Strengthened role of non-state actors:** The pandemic has raised a level of consciousness within governments to understand and appreciate the essence of local action to resilience building. Sub-national and non-state actors (especially community networks) have notably played a critical role in supporting livelihoods and businesses especially the poor in Africa at the wake of the pandemic. By their unique local contexts and having historically been working closely with the local communities especially the poor, these networks have been able to provide crucial complementary response to the COVID-19 pandemic through awareness creation and communication, and pro-poor rapid response and learnings. It would be important, however, to foster understanding on how such community initiatives work, and how they can be strengthened and made more resilient.

- 3. Driving economic recovery through green financing:** The pandemic has provided an opportunity to truly transform economies towards a path of green recovery through economic stimulus packages. Economic stimulus is critical, but it should be established whether it is targeted to create new carbon lock-ins or to support green recovery. This is important given the fact that previous financial crises have led to new carbon lock-ins instead of getting the world to the green recovery pathways.
- 4. Supporting the transition towards low-carbon development and climate resilience:** Some of the COVID-19 containment measures such as travel bans and the shift to paperless transaction can be directly associated with climate action and sustainability in the sense of emission reduction. Such a transition would have taken a substantial period of time to happen, and in a process that would require adequate inbuilt infrastructure and governance structures to happen. In addition, such a transition requires the decoupling of carbon emissions and economic growth, even though in most cases the poor and marginalized people tend to be caught in the middle.

In sum, Africa's economic recovery beyond the pandemic needs to embrace climate resilience, a key approach that is central to the attainment of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs as well. The impacts of COVID-19 on climate change and energy access are deep rooted and diverse. The road to recovery calls for intentional mobilization of efforts and resources from the public and government sectors. Deepened collaborations in climate sensitive initiatives will also go a long way in strengthening the transition to a climate smart future. Consequently, the integration of people-centred policies and locally driven technologies in addressing climate change in the face of the pandemic has widely been encouraged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a product of the 3rd preparatory ARIN seminar held on 30th October 2020, designed to stimulate discussions and debates towards the ARIN International Conference titled *Africa in the Post-COVID-19 World: Lessons for Research and Policy* that was held on 18th – 20th November 2020. The organization and execution of the seminar was overseen by the ARIN Secretariat, the ARIN focal points across the four African regions and the 1st cohort of the ARIN fellows. Special acknowledgement goes to specific partner projects that were central to framing the thematic focus areas of the seminar: Strengthening Non-state Climate Action in the Global South¹ funded by the Volkswagen Foundation informed the climate action debates, and the Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS)² funded by the UK-Aid supported the debates around low-carbon development. Lastly, we acknowledge the over 80 participants who actively engaged in the discussion providing thought provoking questions and insights.

¹ [https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/strengthening-non-state-climate-action-global-south-climate-south#:~:text=Strengthening%20Non%2Dstate%20Climate%20Action%20in%20the%20Global%20South%20\(ClimateSouth,and%20businesses%20in%20developing%20countries.](https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/strengthening-non-state-climate-action-global-south-climate-south#:~:text=Strengthening%20Non%2Dstate%20Climate%20Action%20in%20the%20Global%20South%20(ClimateSouth,and%20businesses%20in%20developing%20countries.)

² <https://mecs.org.uk/>

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous strain on global economies, social settings, the ecological environment, as well as the energy supply and access systems that support them. This is in addition to the already significant impacts of climate change, which include changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events. The poorest and most vulnerable people in the developing world especially the African continent are being affected the most. Heightened climate action is therefore pertinent to overcoming the apparent development crisis in the world in general, and Africa in particular, towards low-carbon development and climate-resilient pathways.

As governments try to resuscitate the global economy by injecting billions, if not trillions of dollars, there is an emerging debate on how these funds should be used. Some have noted the need to shift the huge financial stimulus to investing in clean energy, as opposed to supporting fossil fuel energy. Others have noted the need to invest in strengthening the resilience of societies to the impacts of climate change. These debates call for deeper reflections into the COVID-19 nexus.

ARIN organized a series of monthly research seminars between August and October 2020, focusing on building Africa's resilience in the post COVID-19 world. These were preparatory seminars aimed at stimulating discussions and debate to inform the ARIN International Conference titled '*Africa in the Post-COVID-19 World: Lessons for Research and Policy*' that was held on 18th – 20th November 2020. The preparatory seminars were organized around the three conference themes: *Climate Action and Sustainable Energy; Cities and Resilience; Science Technology and Innovation*. These are critical areas for Africa's transition to sustainable developed economies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The seminars involved presentations on cutting edge research taking place in various parts of Africa, panel discussions, and expert opinions. The overall output of the preparatory seminars and the main conference will be a [book volume](#) under the same title, that will be edited by Prof. Mark Pelling & Dr. Joanes Atela.

This report summarizes the key emerging highlights from the “*Low-carbon Development and Climate Resilience in the Post-COVID 19 World*” seminar under the Climate Action and Sustainable Energy theme that was held on 30th October 2020.

1.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the seminar were to:

- a) Explore the linkage between climate change and COVID-19
- b) Discuss the role of research in addressing the low-carbon development, climate resilient pathways, and COVID-19 nexus.
- c) Draw insights from some of the experiences by non-state actors in Africa and the global south at large on climate governance and addressing COVID-19.

2. Approach to the Seminar

This seminar, held on 30th October 2020, was the third of the preparatory series toward the [Inaugural ARIN Annual Conference](#) themed ‘*Africa in the Post Covid-19 World: Lessons for Research and Policy*’. The first seminar in the series was held on 3rd September 2020, and looked at the Imaginaries of Future African Cities beyond COVID-19³, while the second was A call to Rethink Science Technology & Innovation Policies for Sustainability, Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic⁴ and was held on 25th September 2020. These seminars were aimed at convening dialogues among different stakeholders to share and generate knowledge which can inform future research and policy actions.

Prior to the seminars, ARIN convened strategic weekly review dialogues with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers across Africa on various topics centred on discussing the policy and research setting in Africa and the interplay with the COVID-19 experience. More specifically, a dialogue on the role of subnational governments in promoting people-centred COVID-19 response highlighted priority lessons for emergency phase and post-pandemic reconstruction.

³ <https://www.arin-africa.org/2020/10/07/imaginaries-of-future-african-cities-sustainability-and-resilience-post-covid-19/>

⁴ <https://www.arin-africa.org/2020/10/07/a-call-to-rethink-science-technology-innovation-policies-for-sustainability-learning-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Another dialogue outlined some strategic ways in which community-focused networks (non-state actors) are reorganizing their systems to support response to COVID-19 in Africa, and what this means in redefining the future roles and effectiveness of these networks⁵.

The seminar involved a brief background presentation on the various research activities and dialogues on non-state climate action and COVID-19, followed by a panel discussion that drew global experts on international environmental governance, low-carbon development, local climate action, sustainable development, climate policy, and green financing. The discussions attracted over 80 participants from different countries across Africa and beyond, the ARIN fellows and focal points, researchers, practitioners, the private sector, academia, the civil society, among others.

Deep reflections on how global economies are collapsing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic transpired, and how countries are setting aside huge financial stimulus packages to rescue such economies. The thematic topics for the seminar aimed to tie these economic recovery options to climate action. The sections below outline the key insights around the climate change and COVID-19 nexus as highlighted by key experts, starting with a description of some of the direct impacts of the pandemic on the environment and the global economy.

3. Understanding the Climate Change and COVID-19 nexus

COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous strain on global economies, social settings, the ecological environment, as well as the natural resources sustaining them. This is in addition to the already significant impacts of climate change, which include changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events. Heightened climate action is therefore pertinent to overcoming the apparent development crisis in the world in general, and Africa in particular where the majority poor and vulnerable people reside, towards sustainable natural resource management and climate-resilient pathways (Medina Hidalgo et al., 2021). At the center of the debates is the argument on the need to ensure that post-pandemic economy recovery supports climate action and natural resource resilience.

⁵ <https://www.arin-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ARIN-Weekly-Review-003.pdf>

At the onset of the pandemic, there was some optimistic messaging across the media on the effects of COVID-19 in terms of environmental impact⁶⁷. Evidence shows how emissions and pollution went down within the first few months into the pandemic (see Fig 1 below). This has majorly been attributed to the resultant refrained human/social movement and economic activities as lockdowns continue to be imposed across borders. Slowed down travel has led to reduced Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, while the shift to virtual engagement has supported green actions such as paperless transactions. While the COVID-19 containment measures are broadly aimed at creating social protection, improving information flow, and boosting economic resilience, these actions could potentially increase climate resilience and adaptation measures in the face of the pandemic.

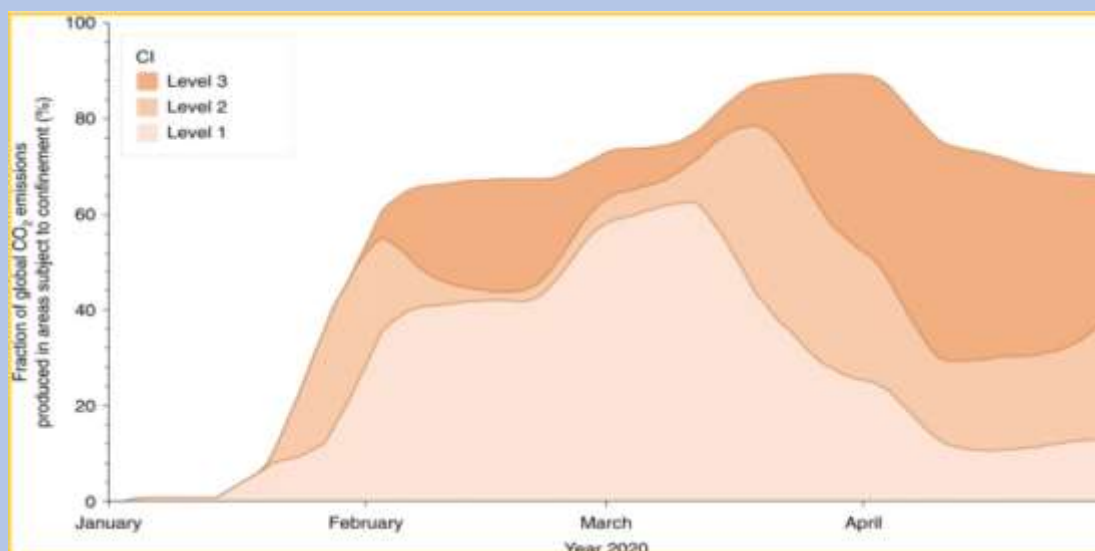


Figure 1: Fraction of global CO₂ emissions produced in areas subject to confinement. Source: Nature Climate Change

On the other hand, the pandemic also presents some negative impact on the environment. Increased solid waste generation from the use of face masks and other protective gear has been reported. Figure 2 below expounds on the two-sided impacts of the pandemic on the environment. It is important to note that if investments or budget movements towards structural changes are not reinforced, there will probably be a strong rebound in emissions accompanying economic growth, as is already the case in China where air pollution cases have reemerged (Zheng et al., 2019).

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7498239/>

⁷ <https://www.unece.org/runcwelcome/issue-based-coalitions/environment-and-climate-change/covid-19-and-environment.html>

For the African continent, the COVID-19 pandemic comes at a time when member countries had prepared development plans to enable a transition to sustainable industrialized economies in line with the AU Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, climate change continues to largely impact the African continent mostly through droughts and floods. The higher levels of poverty across the continent, coupled with the low adaptivity and high sensitivity to climate shocks had informed the earlier projections that the continent would be most affected by the pandemic. Even though the continent has reported far much less infections and deaths than the projected numbers, the economic impacts have been substantial.

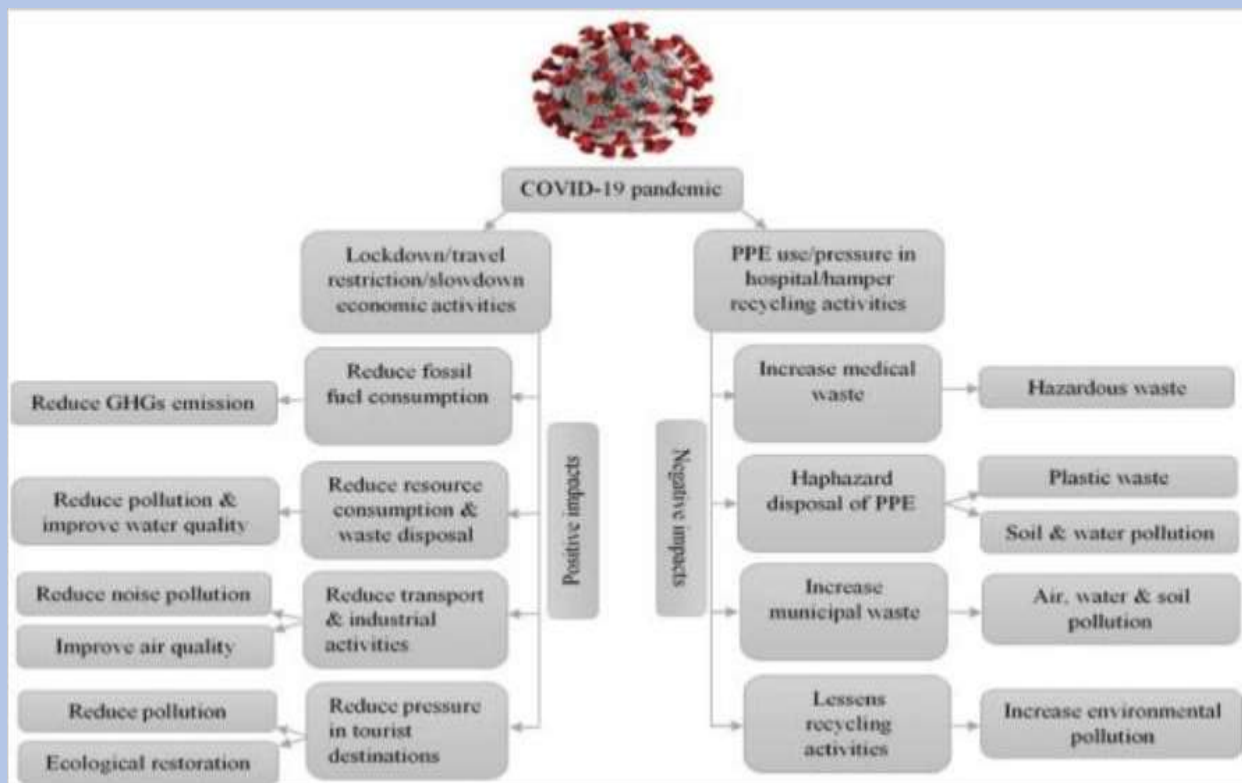


Figure 2: Positive and negative impacts of COVID-19. Source: (Rume & Islam, 2020)

4. Key insights from the discussions

This section outlines the key insights around the climate change and COVID-19 nexus as highlighted by key experts.

4.1 Strengthening Non-state Climate Action while addressing COVID-19

Recent years have seen an increasing interest and emphasis on climate action by non-state actors, shifting the focus from looking at governments only. Currently, there are several kinds of groundswell of non-state international climate action (Chan et al., 2018), coupled with an increasing acceptance of decentralization as a model of governance. This is indicative of a greater potential for mitigation and building climate resilience at the sub-national level and among non-state actors⁸. The impact of non-state climate action is now seen to be very substantial in the sense that a lot of this action is voluntary and, in most cases, localized to address the pertinent issues in the society.

However, a significant information gap has been identified across international databases such as the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)⁹, where a geographical representation of climate action in the developing world has been noted to not be reflective of the actual action on the ground. This ‘visibility gap’ has been attributed to the lack of proper monitoring systems for tracking climate action and the associated impact.

“The German Development Institute is currently tracking non-state action. We have a tracker that looks at some non-state and sub-national climate action, and it is hoped the results on the performance of climate action over the year 2020 will be presented in January 2021 so that it can be determined whether there is a connection to COVID-19 in terms of the performance of non-state actions. There is also a survey out trying to understand which aspects of climate action and activities have been affected, be it positively or negatively. A look at non-state action based on preliminary data shows there is a negative impact on the ground owing to the pandemic.” [Dr. Sander Chan, Senior Researcher at the Global Centre for Adaptation]

⁸ <https://www.teriin.org/article/mainstreaming-non-state-climate-action>

⁹ <https://unfccc.int/about-us/partnerships/current-calls-for-partnerships/data-partnerships-for-the-non-state-actor-zone-for-climate-action-nazca>

Another important concern is how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected climate action, especially the notable momentum and recognition of non-state action. The pandemic has raised a level of consciousness within governments to understand and appreciate the essence of local action to resilience building. Sub-national and non-state actors (especially community networks) have notably played a critical role in supporting livelihoods and businesses especially the poor in Africa at the wake of the pandemic¹⁰.

By their unique local contexts and having historically been working closely with the local communities especially the poor, these networks have been able to provide crucial complementary response to the COVID-19 pandemic through awareness creation and communication, and pro-poor rapid response and learnings. Such initiatives have been dynamic and tailored to local contexts and realities. It would be important, however, to foster understanding on how such community initiatives work, and how they can be strengthened and made more resilient. Moreover, it would be critical to understand how funding towards non-state climate action might have been affected by the pandemic, even though this will possibly be determined over a couple of years.

4.2. Strengthening Local Economic Development and Climate Action Planning

The COVID-19 pandemic seen national governments giving attention to the local processes and creating structures that leverage these actions to inform national decisions. Such structures include the devolvement of response services that link community actions and needs to the national decision making and reporting processes. A case example in Kenya is the establishment of County COVID-19 Social Economic Reengineering and Recovery strategy¹¹ that aims to support small businesses that have been affected by the pandemic. In most cases, this has resulted to better utilization of resources and a national outlook that accounts for subnational actions. These actions and reporting structures could be useful for climate action, given that sub-national actors have continuously played a critical role in climate action even though they have not received sufficient political attention in the past to ensure that such actions are upscaled, reported, and legitimized accordingly.

¹⁰ <https://www.arin-africa.org/2020/08/05/building-community-networks-to-respond-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-africa-through-last-mile-initiatives-authors-kennedy-mbeva-victoria-chengo-and-joanes-atela/>

¹¹ <https://www.cog.go.ke/component/k2/itemlist/category/2-news-highlights>

At the same time, the pandemic has constrained development initiatives both at the national and local government levels. Various government sectors have had to shift focus from the mainstream civil and service delivery to support COVID-19 response operations. This has consequently seen enormous sector budget shifts towards the pandemic response, coupled with restricted community engagement and public participation to an extent.

At the city level, the pandemic has had implications on the social setting, the economic status, the ecological environment, and the policy landscapes of cities across the world. More specifically, cities in Africa have been seen to be more vulnerable owing to the rate of underdevelopment in the continent. Phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change tend to affect the most vulnerable communities, majority of whom live in informal settlements within cities. Thus, it is critical for African cities to streamline their policy/governance settings and adopt sustainable, smart, and green technologies towards building resilience to future pandemics and the effects of climate change. Nevertheless, cities are the major economic hubs in many countries globally.

“At the onset of pandemic, ICLEI introduced an initiative called “building sustainable cities during and after the pandemic”, which over the past few months has created a platform for city leaders - economic and technical - to be able to share experiences, learn from each other, share knowledge and inspire new ways to of building resilience at the local level particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The objective of the initiative is to provide guidance to local governments across Africa on how to respond to a pandemic; to help them to address climate change, health, management, energy, and other sectors relevant to African cities. Through this initiative, local governments and sub-national governments have shared and continue to share their experiences and practices on how to prepare for and both resilience before, during and post crisis.”

[Ms. Nachi Majoe, a Senior Professional Officer on Climate Change Energy and Resilience at ICLEI]

The economic contribution within cities in Africa is far higher than their national population share, and as a result of this, the COVID-19 economic shocks have had a significant impact on cities. According to the Economic

Commission for Africa (ECA), cities in Africa are home to 600 million people and account for more than 50% of the region’s GDP (ECA, 2020). Kenya’s economy growth, for example, is expected to have declined by 5% while that of South Africa expected to have declined by 4-6% in the year 2020 (see figure 3 below). This economic contraction will likely result in a reduced fiscal revenue, from taxes for example, and increased poverty rates, which before the pandemic were already constrained.

Since the onset of the pandemic, many governments have had to significantly lower their taxation rates as part of social relief efforts. This has consequently reduced the availability of revenue needed to support climate initiatives such as waste management, clean energy generation, improved health services, and the much-needed infrastructure.

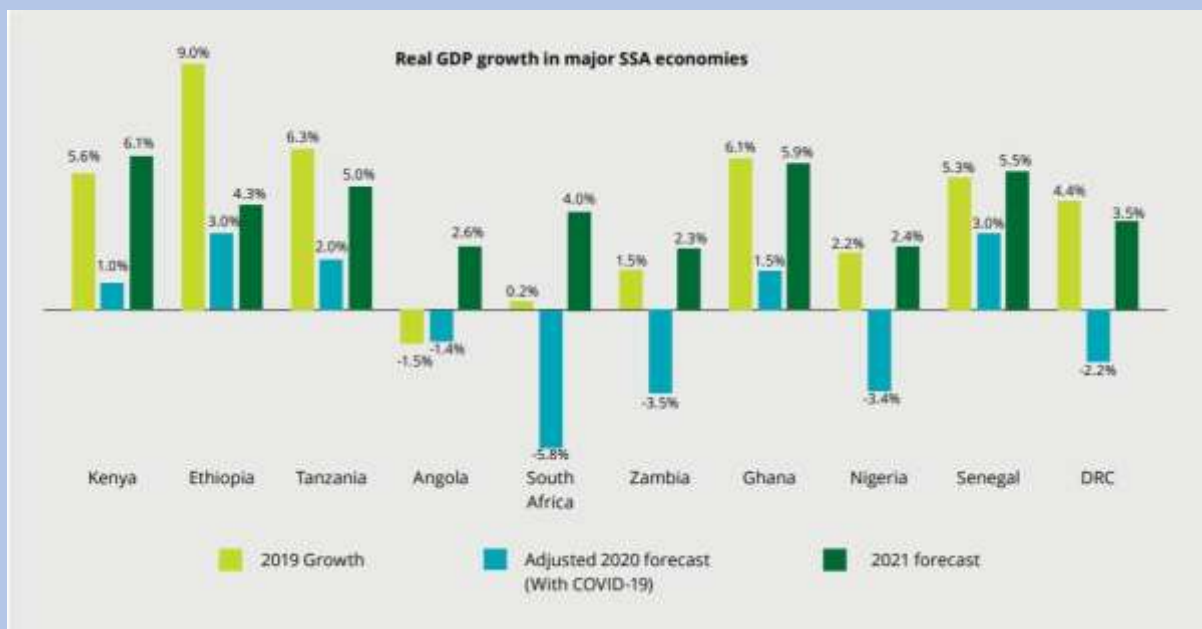


Figure 3: Projected GDP growth in major SSA economies. (Deloitte, 2020)

The International Labor Organization estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to the loss of up to 245 million jobs or more globally (ILO, 2020). The resultant job losses and decline in economic development has affected both the formal and informal sectors. The informal sector is responsible for majority of livelihoods across the African continent, currently estimated to provide 71% of the continent’s workforce, and in alignment to development and climate adaptation priorities (UNECA, 2015).

Ultimately, Africa's economic recovery beyond the pandemic needs to embrace climate resilience, a key approach that is central to the attainment of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs as well. The impacts of COVID-19 on climate change and energy access are deep rooted and diverse. Emerging impacts on trade, revenue, and agriculture will heavily constrain recovery efforts. With many countries already heading towards economic recession, there will be significant diversions in budgets and funding opportunities away from clean energy and climate change adaptation, the dominant financing focus in Africa. Thus, there is an urgent need to decentralize COVID-19 response and strengthen the capacities of local governments, while mainstreaming green recovery plans and climate responsive initiatives.

4.3. Supporting the transition towards Low Carbon Development and Climate Resilience

Looking historically over the last 20 years and the 21st century and comparing different crises, none has had the same type of impact economically or mentally. COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses of the global economy as mass unemployment and other economic struggles continue to be reported across the world. The pandemic has also provided an opportunity to truly transform economies towards a path of green recovery through economic stimulus packages (Bayer et al., 2020). Economic stimulus is critical, but it should be established whether it is targeted to create new carbon lock-ins or to support green recovery. This is important given the fact that previous financial crises have led to new carbon lock-ins instead of getting the world to the green recovery pathways.

Stimulus packages can either be good, bad, and regular. A case example of a regular stimulus was the bail out of fossil fuel and aviation industries by governments from major oil-producing countries including Russia¹², a move which was seen to be incredibly counterproductive from a climate point of view. A good stimulus in this case might mean a well-managed destabilization of industries that are on the long term bad for green recovery. Historical examples include the phasing-out of the coal fired power plants in the Netherlands and UK through a well-managed compensation strategy by the European Commission¹³. This is a great strategy that could be considered by governments in concession with the global development agencies in the COVID-19 stimulus and rescue packages, especially for the African continent where dependency on

¹² <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/04/20/coronavirus-governments-bail-airlines-oil-gas/>

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_863

such aid is high.

“Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the global climate financing landscape was already changing. In the past, the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Green Climate Finance (GCF) were important for countries to address climate change through adaptation and mitigation. These are still improving, but I think they are losing relevance in relative terms. International public support was stable, is still stable, and focuses on adaptation and mitigation, but they represent an increasingly smaller share of financial flows going to countries and being invested in countries. In addition to this, it was clear that international public support (ODA) was insufficient to prevent climate change”. [Dr. Pieter Pauw, Frankfurt School of Finance and Management]

It was argued that most developing countries establish their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and climate action plans under the UN climate negotiations conditional to international support. However, if all the related costs were to be considered, this funding is not sufficient for the NDC implementation. Sustainable finance, a relatively new concept that will soon be included under article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement in the upcoming UNEP’s Adaptation Gap Report, is potentially broader than green finance. Green finance is more about green investments in terms of emission reduction or those that support adaptation, or preventing biodiversity loss, while sustainable finance is not just concerned with green initiatives but ‘less brown’ as well.

From a climate perspective, sustainable finance is critical than climate finance. Moreover, financial support has broadened from just grants to more innovative initiatives such as loans and green bonds that Kenya issues¹⁴, for example, which have broadened the private climate actors and private finance actors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enabled changes that have unsuccessfully taken over 30 years of climate negotiations to push for. Governments have been forced to lockdown their countries, set aside huge stimulus packages, and take on

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<https://www.greenbondskenya.co.ke/#:~:text=The%20Green%20Bond%20Programme%20%2D%20Kenya,Africa%20and%20FMO%20%2D%20Dutch%20Development>

massive debts to support their collapsing economies. The oil and aviation industries that could not be touched by climate regulations have now been hit hard by the pandemic. In addition, the general inclination towards international trade and efficiency is changing as countries lean towards local production and innovations to cut on costs. All these changes would have earlier been restricted at the expense of the economy. Thus, the longer the crisis lasts, the bigger the opportunity to make long term changes to model economic practices.

Seemingly, the focus of climate financing is likely to change. The pandemic has revealed the impacts of risks and how resilience to risks is multifaceted. Countries that had been thought to be less affected are facing the heavy brunt. In the same account that addressing COVID-19 required adequate information campaigns, movement restrictions, enforced social distancing and the like, climate change adaptation and mitigation calls for awareness creation and climate education, long-term strategies in place, and the right science about the future. In addition, addressing interconnected and multifaceted risks requires multi-lateralism, good coordination and buy in from all actors of the society. Multi-lateral cooperation is central to addressing adaptation to climate change on a global scale, whereas, domestically, the entire society must be engaged rather than just expect one sector.

COVID-19 has further imposed uncertainties to international support for mitigation and adaptation. Internationally, immediate response to the pandemic has diverged resources and attention from long term projects on adaptation and disaster risk management. Shifting the focus back towards long-term adaptation initiatives will probably require an integrated COVID-19 and climate change planning. Green recovery packages include mitigation aspects, but adaptation and resilience are of secondary importance.

“A lot of discussion around green recovery is necessary to using these packages for job creation and for longer benefits in terms of climate. If you look at mitigation, for example, investments in renewable energy, isolation in energy efficiency, bicycle infrastructure and so on create a lot of jobs but will have long term benefits that might not necessarily be financially attractive for the private sector to finance. In terms of adaptation, one could think that afforestation or flood defense infrastructure to be economically not the most attractive or have big economic growth in the short term but will create a lot of jobs and long-term benefits”.[Dr. Pieter Pauw, Frankfurt School of Finance and Management]

4.4 Supporting the transition towards Low Carbon Development and Climate Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic has reportedly created avenues for linking resilience to climate change and pandemics. The containment measures that have been implemented to curb the spread of the disease can be directly associated with climate action and sustainability (Rume & Islam, 2020). For instance, refrained human activities such as travel bans have led to reduced emissions, while virtual engagement has supported green actions such as the shift to paperless transactions. Conventionally, such a transition would have taken a substantial period of time to happen.

The transition to low carbon development and climate resilience is a process that requires time and adequate inbuilt infrastructure and governance structure to happen. In addition, the transition requires the decoupling of carbon emissions and economic growth, even though in most cases the poor and marginalized people tend to be caught in the middle (Vavrek & Chovancova, 2016). Statistics in the energy sector in India show that there is already a decline in plant load systems, even though the economic has greatly deteriorated. A similar scenario was observed in the EU, where emissions temporarily declined by close to 20% during the lockdown period (Le Quéré et al., 2020). Thus, it is critical to look at the recovery packages as opportunities that could support low carbon production and at the same time provide leverage in case of emission relapses in future.

“The overarching point about green recovery packages across the world is that many climate activists and researchers have written and demanded that the recovery packages be green. But once the packages were announced, there have been voices of disappointment because the economy has taken precedence over the green initiatives”. [Manish Shrivastava, *The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi*]

From the adaptation point of view, the centrality of various sectors such as the transport sector has emerged, as in the case of India. The mass exodus of people from urban to rural areas after the lockdown was imposed had not been anticipated. This situation unveiled the cross-sectionality of vulnerability, and the centrality of the transport sector to resilience and adaptation.

Evidently, the health sector in any situation would be the backbone of resilience. Thus, there is a need to think of ways to make these two sectors resilient to these kinds of shocks. On the hand, the creation of urban-rural linkages through decentralization of development initiatives and infrastructure would be more useful ways of building local capacities and resilience.

Lastly, behaviour change among the political class and the general population is critical for the economic recovery process. Behavior change is difficult to achieve, therefore transdisciplinary is key to understanding how to bring about these changes. This requires a good balance of scientific and indigenous knowledge, a balanced ability to sustainably utilize available resilience mechanisms, and appropriate behavioral capacity needed to build a climate resilient world.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Africa's economic recovery beyond the pandemic needs to embrace climate resilience, a key approach that is central to the attainment of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs as well. The impacts of COVID-19 on climate change and energy access are deep rooted and diverse. The road to recovery calls for intentional mobilization of efforts and resources from the public and government sectors. Deepened collaborations in climate sensitive initiatives will also go a long way in strengthening the transition to a climate smart future. Consequently, the integration of people-centred policies and locally driven technologies in addressing climate change in the face of the pandemic has widely been encouraged.

The focus on the role of governance is important. What is mostly emerging from the COVID-19 crisis is the centrality of governance to global challenges. However, governance has continued to be misconstrued as avenues for translating policies into action, yet the level of preparation, institutional capacity, and funding remains relatively limited. It is thus critical to focus on the quality of planning at the various levels of government (national and local) across various sectors, including ways of making decentralized governance more permanent and effective in terms of response to COVID-19 and climate change.

Recommendations

- a. African governments need to think strategically on how to incorporate post-pandemic recovery plans into the existing development plans towards a transition to sustainable industrialized economies in line with the AU Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- b. There is an urgent need to decentralize COVID-19 response and strengthen the capacities of local governments, while mainstreaming green recovery plans and climate responsive initiatives.
- c. It would be critical to harness the emission reduction pathways that have been driven by the COVID-19 pandemic into long-term mitigation measures towards sustained climate resilience. Further, reinforcing investments or budget movements towards structural changes will be critical in curbing any rebound in emissions that accompany economic growth.
- d. Recovery packages need to be viewed as opportunities that could support low carbon production and at the same time provide leverage in case of emission relapses in future.

- e. There is possibly a greater potential for mitigation and building climate resilience at the sub-national level and among non-state actors. A fostered understanding on how non-state actors and community initiatives work, and proper monitoring systems for tracking their action and the associated impact is required. Moreover, it would be critical to understand how funding towards non-state climate action might have been affected by the pandemic, even though this will possibly be determined over a couple of years.
- f. African cities need to streamline their policy/governance settings and adopt sustainable, smart, and green technologies towards building resilience to future pandemics and the effects of climate change. Nevertheless, cities are the major economic hubs in many countries globally.
- g. The creation of urban-rural linkages through decentralization of development initiatives and infrastructure would be more useful ways of building local capacities and resilience.
- h. Addressing interconnected and multifaceted risks requires multi-literalism, good coordination and buy in from all actors of the society. Multi-lateral cooperation is central to addressing adaptation to climate change on a global scale.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Programme and Concept Note

- 1400-1410: Welcome and Introduction
- 1410-1450: Panel Discussion
- 1450-1500: Discussant comments
- 1500-1515: Question & Answer Session I
- 1515-1535: Regional Reflections
- 1535-1550: Question & Answer Session II
- 1550-1600: Wrap up

Click here for the [Concept Note](#)

Annex 2: List of Speakers

Moderators

- a) Kennedy Mbeva - Moderator & Co-convener, Africa Research and Impact Network
- b) Victoria Chengo - Moderator, Africa Research and Impact Network

Panelists

- c) Dr. Sander Chan - Senior Researcher at the Global Centre for Adaptation
- d) Dr. Pieter Pauw - Senior Researcher. FS – UNEP Centre of the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management
- e) Prof. Manish Shrivastava - Assistant Professor, Department of Energy and Environment, TERI, New Delhi
- f) Ms. Nachi Majoe - Senior professional officer: Climate Change Energy and Resilience at ICLEI, South Africa

Session Discussant

- g) Prof Ed brown – Professor of Global Energy Challenges, Loughborough University, Low Carbon Energy Development Network (LCDEN)

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