

HUMAN RIGHTS IN A PANDEMIC CHRONICLES: STORIES OF

DISRUPTION AND RESILIENCE



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There were increased rates of teenage pregnancy in our area, and many teenage mothers either dropped out of school or had to have the children taken care of by their grandmothers or mothers. This brought about a lot of stress and conflict within families. For the children who got impregnated by relative, they got married off in other places far away. This is because of fear and societal ridicule.....	72
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Abbreviations

ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution

ACHRP: African Council on Human and Peoples Rights

CERD: Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

CRC: Convention of Rights of the Child

CS: Cabin Secretary

CUEA: Catholic University of Eastern Africa

CAT: Convention Against Torture

DSJC: Dandora Social Justice Centre

EAC: East African Community

GBV: Gender Based Violence

I4C: Innovation for Change

KPL: Kenyan Peasants League

KIJIN: Kiambu Justice and Information Network

MSJC: Mathare Social Justice Centre

MMU: Multi-Media University

SIC: Social Innovation Challenge

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The publication is a deliverable under the Addressing Shrinking Civic Spaces in communities in Kenya Project.

The documentation of these human rights experiences brings together the voices of ordinary community members in Kenya in urban and rural settings. The anxieties of the Covid 19 pandemic on households, learning institutions and communities. The impact of the pandemic, rights violations experienced, individual, household, institutional and community responses to the pandemic and how they responded to these violations as well as community recommendations on handling rights within the context of a pandemic.

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Background

The Human Rights in a Pandemic Chronicles is a deliverable under Haki Nawiri Afrika's Addressing Shrinking Civic Spaces in Communities in Kenya project. The project was implemented with support from Innovation for Change.

Why a Human Rights in a Pandemic Chronicles?

This publication documents the realities of ordinary people in Kenya whose lives have been disrupted by Covid-19. It shares the untold stories of those left behind, the excluded, the marginalised and those whose voices are often muted. It sheds light on the multiple oppressions ordinary lives were going through way before Covid 19.

The most affected by the pandemic were the poor and the marginalised. The pandemic has brought with it a legislative, public health and human rights concerns. The pandemic brought forth the inequalities that exist within countries and communities. The inherent rights violations that have come with the containment of the Covid 19 pandemic has had grave impacts and disrupted lives of people.

This Publication is also an advocacy tool, to hear the voices and community experiences and do something about the situations of ordinary people in Kenya within the context of a pandemic. It is also a preparatory documenting on what to do and what not to do during pandemics.

Defining Human Rights

Human rights are entitlements that human beings have by virtue of being human. Human rights are foundations that enable human beings to live in dignity. Human rights are inborn and legally protected. The principles of human rights are universality, interdependence, inalienable and indivisible. Human rights are related to each other, the enjoyment of one right is dependent on the enjoyment of other rights.

Various instruments contain conduct on protection and promotion of human rights. For example, in Kenya, Chapter four of the Constitution of Kenya (COK) -2010¹ outlines the various rights which include but are not limited to:

- Right to life
- Equality and freedom from discrimination
- Human dignity
- Freedom and security of the person
- Right to privacy
- Freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of media
- Access to information
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of assembly, picketing and demonstration
- Freedom of movement
- Protection of property
- Right to access justice and
- Right to a fair hearing

¹ <http://www.kenyalaw.org/lex/actview.xql?actid=Const2010>

Human Rights in Kenya

Kenya has signed a significant number of human rights instruments. These include; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified on 1st May 1972, International Convention on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) signed on 1st May 1972, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) signed on 9th March 1984². Other international instruments signed and /ratified by Kenya constitute of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) ratified on 21st February 1997, , Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) signed on 13 September 2001 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) signed on 26 January 1990 and ratified on 30 July 1990 and Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified on 19th May 2008, among others. At the regional level, Kenya has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)³ on 23 January 1992 and the Maputo Protocol in 2003⁴.

With the onset of Covid 19, various legislations were introduced in Kenya as part of containment of the virus. These are: Legal Notice No.54 of the Public Health Act (Cap 242). This Legal Notice restricted the movement of personal in Kwale county for 21 days from 29th April

² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=90&Lang=EN

³ <https://www.achpr.org/ratificationtable?id=49>

⁴ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31520-doc-maputo_protocol_on_womens_rights_a_living_document_for_womens_human_rights_in_africa_sub

2020⁵. Another legislation was the Legal Notice No. 53 on restriction of movement of persons and related measures covering Kilifi County⁶.

Public Health

Public Health Act Regulation was made, cited as the Public Health (Prevention, Citation, Control and Suppression of Covid 19 Regulations and contained information to employers, heads of households suspecting persons residing in their premises or an employee suffering from Covid 19 to notify a medical officer, public health officer, a medical practitioner or the nearest administrator or take that person to a medical practitioner or health facility for treatment⁷.

The Regulation further stipulates that precautions must be taken in case a deceased person is suspected to have died from Covid 19 complications. Additionally, according to these regulations, in cases a building is contaminated with Covid 19, the said building shall be de-contaminated. Furthermore, in case of death, every person participating in the burial of a person suspected to be infected by Covid-19, had to be done in compliance with Covid-19 management regulations. According to the Regulation, aiding a person to escape isolation or quarantine for Covid-19 commits an offence liable on conviction to imprisonment

⁵http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/LegalNotices/2020/LN54_2020.pdf

⁶http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/LegalNotices/2020/LN53_2020.pdf

⁷http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=110068&p_country=KEN&p_count=430

for a term not exceeding two months or a fine of twenty thousand shillings.

Examples of other legislations adopted by the Kenyan government included restriction of intercounty movement for example through the Rule 3 of the Public Health (Restriction of Movement of Person and Related Measures) Rules 2020, Nairobi Metropolitan Area Order⁸, all the adjoining areas including part of Kiambu County , Kajiado were restricted and people were barred from moving in and out of Nairobi unless on emergency or part of essential services which included judiciary and medical practitioners. When the Chronicles were being published, some of the regulations had been removed for example cessation of movement in the above mentioned counties.

Covid-19 in Kenya

The first case of Covid-19 was reported in Nairobi on 12 March 2020, a case of a Kenyan citizen who had travelled to Nairobi from the USA via London.⁹ It was a lady and she was confirmed positive by the National Influenza Centre Laboratory at the National Public Health Laboratories of the Ministry of Health. The onset of the first reported Covid-19 case put the country into a frenzy. As with the rest of the world, legislations were put in place to contain the pandemic, with it also came practices aimed at controlling further spread of the virus.

⁸http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/LegalNotices/2020/LN51_2020.pdf

⁹ <https://www.health.go.ke/first-case-of-coronavirus-disease-confirmed-in-kenya/#:~:text=Port%20Health%20Services-,FIRST%20CASE%20OF%20CORONAVIRUS%2>

Covid 19 is not only a health issue but also a human rights concern in the Kenyan context and the world at large. The Public Order Act allowed for the imposition of curfew within a part of Kenya by the Cabinet Secretary-Ministry of Interior and this has been formalised through Legal Notice 26 of 2020. The penalty for failure to observe curfew rules under the law is a fine of 10,000 or imprisonment for a period of three months or both. Sometimes when people get arrested, past curfew hours were forced to part with Kshs 2000, this was from conversations with community members who were not home by the curfew hours.

Rule 3 of the Public Health Rules 2020 empowers the Cabinet Secretary(CS) Health to declare areas as infected and restrict movement into and out of the restricted areas. The National Police Service(NPS) is Tasked with enforcement of these regulations. In the process of enforcement of Covid 19 regulations police ended up beating citizens, maiming them and even killing¹⁰ citizens. The police, without apparent justification, shot and beat people at markets or returning home from work, even before the daily start of the curfew¹¹. In the enforcement of curfew, children were affected in the process. Take for example the killing of Yasin Moyo in Mathare who was shot dead. Yasin was standing at his home's balcony watching as the police enforced curfew¹².

The negative impacts of Covid-19 have adversely affected the mental health of thousands of Kenyans, schools were closed, people lost jobs, spouses resorted to violence to air

¹⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/22/kenya-police-brutality-during-curfew>

¹¹ ibid

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53150397>

out differences and there was a spike in cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV). For some people Covid-19 was a blessing, online marketing increased, food vendors especially those using mobile applications made more profits, those engaged in online content such as educational materials also increased their incomes. In the midst of these, various rights violations were taking place under the cloud of containment of Covid-19.

May adjustments were brought forth ranging from education, freedom of association, closure of public gathering spaces and curfews and partial lock downs. Gender-based violence is on the rise as a result of Covid-19, with women and children being victims of abuse at the household level. There are rising cases of teenage pregnancy as a result of defilement, an example being Machakos county which reported 3,964 pregnancies in 5 months.¹³

Covid-19 and Human Rights Violations in Kenya

Covid-19 resulted to various rights violations. Some violations were as a result of ignorance, others were due to circumstances while others were as a result of power dynamics by security forces and other justice institutions. Kenya is a signatory to various internationally recognised human rights instruments. At the regional level, Kenya is a party the Protocol the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (African Charter)¹⁴ as well as the Maputo

¹³ <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/coronavirus/news/no-school-amid-pandemic-kenyan-girls-fall-prey-pregnancy-risks>

¹⁴ <http://kenyalaw.org/treaties/treaties/44/Protocol-to-the-African-Charter-on-Human-and-Peoples>

Protocol¹⁵ which has various provisions for protection of women. Nationally, the Kenyan Constitution (2010) spells out various human rights under the Bill of Rights.

Community Voices on Human Rights and Covid 19 Realities

Human Rights in a Pandemic Chronicles: Stories of Disruption and Resilience is a collection of the voices of ordinary Kenyans who grappled with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic and continue to do so to date. This is a reflection and a celebration of the little wins in different communities, the learning of new skills, communities coming together times of adversity, youth becoming creative to adjust to a new normal and human rights defenders seeking justice for affected communities.

Hear the stories and from them, the diversity of coping mechanisms that ordinary Kenyans adopt.

¹⁵<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/ProtocolontheRightsofWomen.pdf>

Covid 19 and the Elderly- by Piles Maundi-Muvuti, Machakos County

The elderly population is a very vulnerable population when it comes to Covid-19. Due to aging, their immunity is low. Majority of elderly people were confused by the government directive of stay at home and closure of religious institutions.



It was very scary for me. All my life I have never heard of a situation where churches are closed. I do to church to connect with my God. As an elderly person, we love to go to

church. We could not go to the merry go around meetings (*kikundi*¹⁶), I missed my friends. I had to stay at home and was very stressed.

¹⁶ Kikundi is a group of people coming together to pool resources for personal and collective development



AIC Uamani –a place of spiritual refuge for the local community in Muvuti –Machakos County

Covid 19 and Economic Upheavals

Covid 19 Economic and Social Disruptions - by Lilian Omondi-Administrator -Nairobi

With Covid-19, limited restrictions on movement was effected, curfews were ordered, social gatherings were also prohibited and in our office, we resorted to working from home. This confined me to one environment, which played tricks on my mental well-being. Wearing masks was also quite tasking and uncomfortable to say the least, living in constant fear of contracting the virus became the order of the day.



The disruption brought about fear of getting infected, constant worry of being isolated from family members if one contracted the virus and this brought about anxiety and panic attacks. There was need to adjust my expenditures because the future ahead seemed bleak as the workflow was not in abundance. This is also as a result of closure of most work spaces and restrictive movement including the stay at home directive.

Working from home was also not smooth, as we were fully dependent on the internet which would sometimes be slow or in other circumstances there would be longer periods of power outages and therefore work got stalled.

Not being able to attend burials of close relatives and other ceremonies due to movement related restrictions and limited number of people attending such functions affected my emotional wellbeing. As wearing masks was mandatory, this brought about an added expenditure.

I must also commend that hygiene highly improved as washing hands and sanitising was observed. To adjust to the new normal, I was surrounded by my nuclear family and they provided a great source of comfort and happiness especially with the indefinite closure of schools during the first wave of the pandemic. This meant spending more time with my children and we did so many activities together. I resorted to yoga to keep my mind off things, I learnt new skills like photography, social media I must confess was also a place I found myself reverting to whenever I felt down.

Among the challenges I faced was that daily household expenditures skyrocketed as the entire family was confined to the house and food ratios were being depleted very fast.

The ban on inter-county movement affected movement of both people and goods including food produce. The local vendors were also selling their products at inflated prices as they were also suffering from limited movement due to restrictions and could not adequately restock their supplies as some were getting produce from other counties into Nairobi. Nairobi is a large market base. The ban on movement of food was however removed after sometime as food is an essential product.

The closure of school indefinitely also brought about challenges because majority of schools resorted to online learning, this was challenging for me because of unstable internet and constant power outages.

Visiting patients in hospitals was limited to only person and this was mentally torturing if one had a patient admitted in hospital. The patient would feel so isolated which might result to them not having the will to live. Also most hospitals were full and therefore admissions were impossible in case you had a patient who was ill.

Leila Barasa -Entrepreneur, Uthiru-Nairobi

My name is Leila Barasa I'm an entrepreneur. When Covid 19 started, sale of second hand clothes (*mitumba*) was banned by the government.

Gikomba¹⁷ was closed down. There were fewer *mitumba* clothes and the available ones were very expensive. In a



family we have to support each other as a couple. With my business deteriorating, I could not contribute to supporting my family. When my income went down, my children were affected including expenses on food and school fees.



Gikomba Market-Nairobi

¹⁷ Gikomba is an open air market

Eunice Omondi-Entrepreneur, Nairobi

Covid-19 disrupted the flow of income since most of my customers relied on printing work from learning institutions and churches which were shut down to avoid the spread of Covid-19 in public places. My business involves offering training on computer packages, typesetting and design. It became difficult to pay bills and make ends meet, since there was little to no income for a long period of time leading to accrual of debts and increased stress levels.



I adjusted my expenses on transportation, food and internet, purchased less airtime and concentrated on basic needs only. The curfews and lock downs were imposed most of my customers avoided coming to the city centre to avoid conflicts with authorities, which in turn cut down my income as well.

My recommendation for handling future pandemics of similar magnitude is that open communication is important globally and avoiding conspiracy theories which hinder progress and achieving the WHO's goals in stopping the spread of Covid-19. This will also help in avoiding the kinds

of deaths that were experienced as a result of misinformation.

Youth Innovativeness

**Covid 19 and Entrepreneurship -Benaiah P. Benaiah P.
Wepundi, Entrepreneurship, Part time Blogger and
Student Leader-Catholic University of Eastern Africa**

At a personal level, I'd say the pandemic was a bitter-sweet

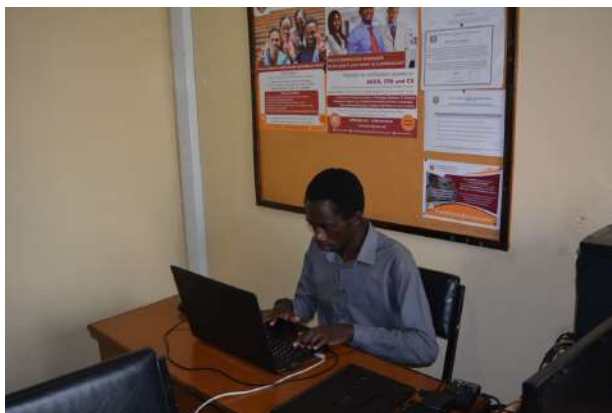


affair. Bitter because of the devastation the pandemic caused. I may not have lost anyone to the pandemic myself, but I saw friends lose family. We also lost staff at CUEA.

Additionally, the standards of living shot up, considering the fact that the pandemic changed how business is done. For us particularly, we joined campus at a time when the pandemic was at its peak. We moved into a new environment where we were literally taking care of ourselves during hard times. As far as learning is concerned, we had to adopt a blended form of learning. Getting accustomed to online learning for the first time was not as easy. The financial implications that come with online learning were also a challenge. In general, campus in the times of a pandemic has been tough. On the flipside, being a tech entrepreneur, the pandemic came as a blessing in disguise. There was large-scale adoption of tech, and for us

at EasyHouse Tech, that provided an opportunity for us to innovate.

We developed a system to help students locate accommodation and managed to settle over 1500 students. Working remotely also helped us cut on our costs and build a team stress free. Financial constraints might have been a problem, but in a way, the pandemic gave us ground to sail through.



Using ICT to generate applications for service provision during Covid-19

Loss of Livelihoods by Jackline Achieng, Mwimuto-Kikuyu

The hotel industry was heavily affected by Covid-19.



International travel was banned as every country tried to protect its citizens. Both domestic and hotels catering for international tourists suffered. Many hotels were closed, while some were able to continue operating when borders re-opened and flights resumed others closed for good.

I used to work in a hotel and had an income which I managed to take care of my family. When Covid -19 struck, we were told to go home and would be called back when the situation improved. All the workers went home; it was difficult to maintain them when all potential customers were staying at home. To date I'm very unstable. I only do menial (*vibarua*) jobs from time to time I'm yet to get a job. Nowadays I wash clothes for people in order to survive. Life is very difficult for me to date.

Education Sector

Covid 19 Trauma and Disrupted Learning by Mourice Onyango-Law Student, University of Nairobi

My name is Mourice Onyango. I'm a third year student at the University of



Nairobi (UoN). I was born and have lived in Dandora Phase 4 for the better part of my life. Addressing the impact of Covid-19 on my life, all I can say is that the change I had to undergo was unprecedented.

The pandemic caught the whole world by surprise. It shook the status quo globally with every nation rushing to close its borders to protect its citizenry. Globally and locally, people lost their jobs and even sadly people lost their lives.

I saw videos of people falling down on the streets and bodies being moved in trucks as hospitals and morgues became filled and overwhelmed. We witnessed mass burials like those last seen in the Nazi reign, but this time the enemy was unseen. Scientists agreed that the virus was spread through contact and was airborne, there was no debate as to its ferocity, and the videos spoke volumes. I was scared, if the technologically and economically advanced countries were facing such turbulence, what would happen to us? Surviving the pandemic looked like an impossible thing. As the numbers increased, my fear grew.

One by one, we experienced Covid cases, deaths followed along.

The government acted swiftly and closed all learning institutions. This happened on a Monday. This was to reduce all forms of physical contact between persons. To me social distance was just a laughable concept as it was impossible in Dandora. The community here(Dandora) lives in plots and storey buildings. One toilet and bathroom is shared by at least six households composed of at least six members.



Houses in Dandora

That roughly translates to twenty-four people sharing the same social amenity. How practical was social distance in this case. Our living space is already congested as it was and with all the students at home, we were all squeezed in our houses.

The government had recommended a quarantine for 14 days for those who displayed any symptoms, we could not afford the space. We lived by the grace and fear of what was to become of us.

I had to reconsider my position with regards to my education plans when the pandemic hit. I was in the last lap of my semester when the schools were closed indefinitely for a period of about six months. This translated to six months of time wasted and lost to Covid-19. When classes finally resumed, they were done online through a system that was hitherto alien to most of the students. It was a new experience, one that did not positively appreciate from the onset.

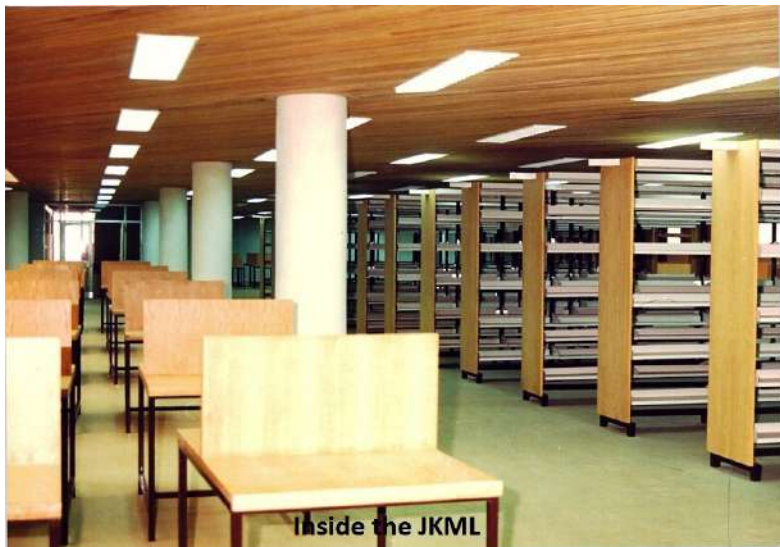


Street art in Dandora-Nairobi

First of all, my home environment not one that a student can concentrate. Children and secondary school students including university were all at home, the noise while children were playing was a hindrance and disturbance during lessons. There were other disturbances as worshippers trooped once in a while with songs and praise music.

Secondly, the law profession is highly dependent on one's ability and affinity to read books and not just books but books by renowned authors and jurists. These books are super expensive and it would definitely cost an arm and a leg to just acquire one. The University of Nairobi(UoN) provided these books in abundance and freely through its library. Now that the schools were closed the library remained inaccessible even as the semester continued. I had to make do with online articles and a few books that I could scrape off online. It was a daunting task, as I tried to keep track of my classes at the same time making sure I was useful at home. The mental pressure was immense as I just imagined all the responsibilities that weighed on my shoulder. Coupled by the responsibilities at home and my studies, I also had to think of ways to supplement my family's income.

Nothing beats the feel of ready a hardcopy material. All my life I have been so accustomed to reading hard copy material that you could say I was opposed to soft copy materials. Well, Covid-19 forced me to shift my mentality and align in such a manner that I could digest soft copy materials. It was a radical shift and to me it was similar to undergoing some form of withdrawal only that I did not have the luxury of time.



*Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library at the University of
Nairobi(UoN)*

Lecturers were rushing in to finalise their syllabus and in their own word recover the lost time oblivious of the challenges we as students had to deal with at home.

Sometimes I look back and I'm surprised that I did not have a mental breakdown. Online classes also meant that I needed internet bundles. Averagely, this translated to around Kshs 100 per day just to acquire bundles. Sometimes, I missed classes due to lack of time and sometimes due to stress. The school did provide bundles but Telkom network is so poor in Dandora. I had to look for other means. With businesses being crippled, it was a hard task trying to solicit money for bundles. Above all, it was an additional burden to an already bad situation. All these compounded and added weight to my worries regarding my career.

Apart from the financial and mental turmoil, I felt the pangs of Covid-19 first-hand. Just as many Kenyans, I grew sceptical and challenged the idea of Covid. That was until I became its victim. The experience is not one I would wish to narrate or wish upon anyone. Fighting for my life under a ventilator did open my eyes to the reality of many people in my area were oblivious about. Dandora has water in plenty, yet still few people washed their hands and if they did, it was without soap. Fewer people were wearing masks and even fewer sanitised.

Being a survivor, I was worried that the recklessness would lead to even more cases in my area. One thing for certain, a lot of people did survive Covid even without knowing they were infected. The question is just how many were as lucky?.

Covid-19 in Dandora

My community at large felt the pinch of Covid-19. Most of the residents in Dandora survive hand to mouth. Some have *kiosks*¹⁸ in which they sell their wares, others sell *mboga*¹⁹ etc. The Nairobi curfew and lockdown which lasted for quite some time impacted negatively on the residents. Most of them could not get their wares to sell, others were laid off as companies sight to save amidst the pandemic. It was a tough time. For most of the residents, there was no hope. The financial stress obviously reflected and manifested itself in several ways. Entertainment joints were closed countrywide meaning there was no way to release stress.

For those who depended on the church for guidance, those too were closed. Wives were abused and there began a rise in cases of GBV, and men too had to face the music from their wives who were frustrated by the stress of providing for their families.

As families got financially strained, children started looking for ways of to fend for themselves. They took menial jobs such as collecting garbage in the estate for a fee. Of course the love for money is the root of all evil. Having been accustomed to earning an income, it was difficult for some of them to go back to school when schools were re-opened in 2021. Worse still, some of them turned into crime.

¹⁸ Kiosk is a small shop operating within a neighbourhood

¹⁹ Mboga is a Kiswahili word for vegetables

Even sadly, was the fact that children were at home for a longer time, meant that there were pre-exposed to sexual violence. Most of the high schoolers in my area got pregnant during the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic and are now parents. This means that some of them have left school to be parents, which translates to be denied a vital right (the right to education).



Scavenging at the Dandora dumpsite

It is often said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop, and the devil, well, he is always roaming around looking for something juicy to devour. It is during this Covid period that the unsafe of drugs skyrocketed in my area.

The most common one was bhang(marijuana), and school children sunk deep into it. It wasn't weird to see a form two student staggering home to beat the curfew drunk in cheap liquor brewed by women who wanted to survive in The youth were not spared either. It is a miracle that no one went blind as a result of those liquors.

I can attest that during the Covid-19 period a lot of people were stabbed to death mostly by school going children. The rate of crime grew high creating suspicion in the society.



A residential area near the Dandora Dumpsite-Nairobi, this area became a no-go zone due to high crime rates with the onset of Covid -19

Now, the Dandora community is a volatile one, and if worse gets to the worse, the law is taken into people's hands. As so, those suspected or found robbing anyone were stoned to death.

The Constitution is very clear as to the process of trying suspects, right from arrest to prosecution. This was not the case. Here, once you were caught in the act and sent the saviour or to hell, either way they stoned you to death.

It was not new to hear of such deaths in the dumpsite²⁰ area. In fact, this became a no-go zone. The crime rate surged so high that residents forced their way into the local police station -Kambanga. The murders had to stop and this to the police translated to cleaning the streets(swoops). The following week, became a week of multiple crack downs in Dandora and Mowlem area. The hard criminals met justice, this time not with stones but guns. Police gunned down a couple of youths, some were known hard criminals. In my area, some were just victims of circumstances. Whether they were guilty or not, it will never be known.

The Kenyan Constitution assures us of access to justice. Furthermore, it promotes the spirit of Alternative Justice Resolution(ADR). This was well adopted in Dandora during the Covid-19 period given the lockdown and lack of trust of the police. Some disputes were resolved through the residents (court) committee example in the Elite Court - where I reside, a case came up and the Court Committee (residents in the housing facility heard and determined the case.

²⁰ Dandora dumpsite is the largest dumpsite in Nairobi

This was a step-up as a form of justice and was well received by the parties involved and they felt a sense of ownership in the decision arrived at. Needless, to say a lot of injustice was meted during the Covid period by opportunists. Not just in Dandora but countrywide, some may even never be recorded and functions of courts were suspended in the in 2020 as part of Covid 19 containment Kenyan government directive, more injustices especially in relation to the law took place.

Covid-19 is real and if you don't believe it, just look around you, you will see its manifestation.

**Covid 19 and Children by Annette Kendi- Resident,
Kangemi -Nairobi and member of Kenya Peasants
League**

COVID-19 really brought a lot of disruption especially



school going children who couldn't access the e-Learning, closure of market lead to loss of employment and also Covid-19 regulations also lead to closure or dismissal of some workers from companies. Cases of GBV increase so rapidly , in addition to early pregnancy

among the children living in shanties to increased poverty.

Since most children couldn't access e-Learning around where I stay my friends and I engaged the children especially the candidates by buying exams papers and also engaging them in daily homework which brought a positive impact as most of them gained momentum of reading and engaging in daily school work. To supplement my personal needs and family income, I engaged in *kazi mtaani*²¹ which not only supplemented my family's income but also the students we engaged them in reading by buying them reading materials.



People selling their wares at Kangemi market

²¹ Kazi mtaani is a Kenyan government initiative where youth engage in clean-up of their localities and get paid. The programme targets unemployed youth

In Kangemi , families faced so many challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions. There was restriction of movement and this hindered especially those who selling imported goods lost access of market, also lock down in some areas hindered the movement of food stuffs and this resulted to raise in price of some food stuffs. For example food was expensive at Kangemic market. With time however, the regulations on food transporation from different counties were relaxed.



Groceries at Kangemi market

In better responding to future pandemics, governments especially the third world countries should at least to put in place the budget of emergency disaster of such pandemic just in case citizens don't suffer or depend on develop

countries which bring them to high repayment rate loans which might lead to colonialism of the third world countries due to loans incurred.

Covid 19 and Students by Mike Matanga-University of Nairobi



Covid 19 was a tough blow on me and a blessing in disguise at the same time. When the news of Corona Virus hit our country, our university was shut down (University of Nairobi). Most of my classmates travelled back to their homes mostly outside Nairobi, I was among the few students who remained in Nairobi -a marked “red zone” due to the increasing Covid 19 infections at the time. I was staying in Eastleigh South.

I had to abruptly change my social life. The friends I normally interacted with were many miles away from me. However, we could interact over the internet, thanks to WhatsApp and Facebook. I was economically impacted by the pandemic as I had to limit the amount of money I spent at home. Living alone was tough, I had to meet my basic needs including the monthly rent.

Back in school life had been easy since I had cleared my accommodation fees and I used to run small business selling shoes. At my new place, I had no economic engagement that would raise money to meet my daily needs. Within two months I had spent all my savings. I started living on credit and would not sustain such a life for long.

I was compelled to search for a temporary job that would help me pay rent and buy food. Getting a job was not easy, given that I'm a student and many businesses had been closed. Fortunately, I secured a job and was able to meet my financial needs. Working fulltime interfered with my classes.



Students in a class at the University of Nairobi

Our university had rolled out an online learning system. Consequently, I deferred some of my units. The impact of Covid-19 was negative to some. For example, most people lost their jobs and depended on menial labour with low rates. For instance, a friend of mine who worked in a bank got fired and had problems raising his young family. Many people found it hard to afford basic needs, also there were alarming cases of Gender Based Violence(GBV).

Lynne Effie-Youth member, Kenyan Peasants League

Covid-19 made life more difficult and hard as a student. I



lacked so much and it even led to some other students who suffered from lack to indulge in stealing,

which became a habit.

The disruption made me and others look down upon myself. I could no longer believe in myself.

Being a student had to stay at home and engage in other income generating activities which was hard due to unequal supply of goods, also being raised by a single mother during that time was so tricky especially those who depended on buying and selling food stuffs. Markets were affected by government's directive to close markets and this really disrupted the living habit and had to adopt a new living style as we had to sometimes depend on one to two meals a day.

To cope with the disruptions of Covid-19, I started selling liquid soap and helping my mom in selling of clothes. The closure of schools and businesses affected me very much.

My recommendations in handling future pandemics is to create more opportunities and the government should put in strategies that ensure that people are able to live a by average life (be able to survive and live in dignity).

Rescheduling of Academics by Gakono Maryann Nyawira-Student, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Covid-19 disrupted my everyday life by increasing



transport fee, the wearing of masks and the stay at home directive. With the presence of the virus, people had to adapt to a new life, for example no hugging, limitations in attending

traditional ceremonies and church gatherings, there was also job losses.

The challenges that I faced were inability to travel for example when I was supposed to undertake my attachment in Nairobi, I could not travel due to Covid-19 restrictions and had to postpone and decided to go for the attachment after the lockdown which lagged my studies as I could not travel from my residence to Nairobi. The coping mechanisms I used were, I tried to eat health and well balanced meals and exercise regularly.

The world can be more prepared for a pandemic in future by ensuring that every citizen is vaccinated and they are following the Covid-19 Protocols for example avoiding overcrowded places, use of sanitisers etc.

**Education Disruption from a Teacher's Perspective-
By Lilian Oloo Okal-Board Member, Toy Library
Association of Kenya and Africa Link-International
Toy Library Association(ITLA)**

Covid 19 interfered with my activities. As a teacher, I had



to stay at home as schools were closed since March 2020. This resulted to loss of income. With the closure of schools, most teachers lost their jobs since employers couldn't keep up with overhead

expenses. Some schools closed down completely, never to be re-opened.

The adaptation strategies that worked for me and enabled coping were provision of psychosocial support to children who could afford online classes. This enabled bridge the gaps created between some learners and teachers and the anxiety children had.

I undertook community visits and outreach programs, providing families with food, books and toys for their children. This helped to give children opportunities to play and read.



A toy library

My proposed recommendations to handling education in pandemics include putting strategies in place to mitigate the impact of future occurrences of such pandemics. In addition, parents and communities should be empowered and equipped with skills and knowledge to complement learning.

Lost Opportunities by Alfred Abuka -Founder-He for Her Initiative

Covid 19 affected my education, I was not able to finish school on time. I engaged in community activities during



lockdown and this affected my mental health because of handling many Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases. In addition, some of my sources of income were cut

off. Distance from family and friends during the lockdown also affected my mental health.

The impact of Covid-19 related disruption resulted into my going into depression, the late graduation also cost me some opportunities due to lack of academic papers (graduation certificates). The mechanisms I adopted in coping were seeking psychological help and doing workouts. Loneliness from family made me focus more on charity events and sanitary pad drives.

For the future, the world can be more prepared through having well-articulated policies that are implemented by the government on disaster and calamity management, local mobilisation of resources to support programmes that boost livelihoods, partnership and collaboration between government civil society organisations in handling calamities.

Covid 19 and Learning Adjustments by Peter Ogonyo- Student, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Covid-19 is amongst the most severe viruses which has really had a great impact to our lives. It has really affected me in person and also the larger society physically, socially and economically. It has really disrupted the normal learning system. Before the Covid outbreak, most of the institutions conducted their learning physically. With the outbreak of Corona virus, I personally faced challenges in using the online platforms due to lack of ample knowledge to use the system.



On the same note, it has also helped most of the institutions to resort to online learning and online job operation. Through this, the institutions have been forced to train their staffs and students on how to operate online. Personally, I gained ample knowledge on how to operate the online platforms not only within my learning institution but during other online sessions.

With the outbreak of Covid-19, most of the people learnt the benefits of good hygiene. At individual level, really practised the culture of hand washing each and every time I went out and even when indoors.

Covid-19 has also interrupted the world of work and led to loss of the jobs. Before the closure of schools due to Covid-19, I used to teach in a secondary school around when the pandemic broke out, the students went home and I lost my source of income. I had no option but to stay at home.

Covid 19 and Uncertainty by Judy Awori-Youth member ,Kenyan Peasant League

Being a student, I had just finished my high school I wanted to continue with my further studies but the government



was forced to close all schools to avoid the spread of Covid-19. My parents' source of income was affected, as the company where my father worked, not afford to pay their salaries. I had to look for something to do to earn money, luckily, I had a

chance to work at the *Kazi Kwa Vijana*²² to be able to contribute to my family expenses.

The Covid-19 disruptions resulted into school drop outs , especially for the girl child which led to high rates of early pregnancy. In my locality, markets such as Kangemi and Kawangware were closed , this led to high prices of food resulting into people eating unbalanced food due to inability to afford food.

²² Kazi vijana is a Kenyan government clean up initiative targeting unemployed youth

The levels of poverty increased, many people lost their jobs and did not have money to buy food to a point where the Kenyan government intervened to give out food and money. There was a rise in the number of drug abuse among teenager and older youth, this impacted on their health, mental status and some drifted into theft. A high number of GBV cases were identified, women were being abused physically, emotionally and mentally by their husbands since most of them were breadwinners in their families.

To alleviate community suffering, my friends and I contributed money to buy pants and sanitary towels and distributed these to young girls from vulnerable families. We taught these girls how to make multi-purpose soaps in order to earn income, we also taught them how to save and involve themselves in merry-go-round groups (*chama*). We also carried out sensitisation about rights. These activities helped make the girls in the community busy and protected them from involving themselves in transactional and commercial sex.

In effective management of future pandemics, the first role goes to the government. The government should set aside budget money for emergency disasters like drought, heavy rains, outbreak of disease so that as a country we should stop depending on super power countries such as the USA for food, money and medicine including vaccines all the time.

Readjustments and Anxiety by Audrey Nabifwo-Student-Catholic University of Eastern Africa

As we all know Covid-19 has its challenges and advantages.



It has disrupted my day to day activities. I was not able to interact with my peers and my family members due to the wide spread of the disease and the preventive measures implemented by the government. The pandemic led to the closure of entertainment place like swimming pools and sports centre. I would read books and watch TV during my leisure time to be entertained. The Covid related disruption led to separation from family members. Fortunately, this helped and I learned to rely on

myself.

Covid-19 has its challenges like increased mental illness such as depression and stress because of the changes that had to take place. Also closure of schools and market place due to the wide spread of the disease and not being able to travel to different places due to curfew.

To better prepare for the future, my recommendation is the need to improve local technology in order to deal with such a pandemic or something much worse. We should also

improve our food production and come up with more preventive measures to manage health sector.

Covid 19 and Anxiety by Grace Mitchellle Oginga -Student, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

My name is Grace Mitchellle Oginga, I'm 19 years old, a Kenyan. I'm a student at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) studying counselling psychology. By the time Covid 19 surfaced, I had completed my form four national examination and was waiting for my results to join university. Covid 19 affected me in so many ways starting with my physique to mental health, emotional state, social life and much more.



I lost a lot of weight and at one point I was so sick, I got hospitalised for weeks. I was on and off hospital many times changing my drugs as the previous ones cause me reactions. I got drained physically and emotionally so much that I couldn't have control over my emotions, mood and attitude most of the time. I developed irregular eating and sleeping habits.

I love interacting with others so much, but when lockdown was announced I couldn't have that opportunity anymore. I was pushed to resorting to communicating through phones I did not own because at that time I used to communicate

using my sister's phone. After I got my own phone it was hard coping with the virtual world because I'm not a social media person, when I did get used to the virtual world (due to the prevailing circumstances), I got addicted until I lost interest in interacting with other humans due to the bulk of online content. I lost touch with most of my friend which resulted into us drifting apart. By the time we resumed classes we were totally different persons, almost strangers.

Academically, schools were closed and we were shifted to online learning which was a challenge because I'm not much of a computer expert so I was still learning how to use the device. Also I had to buy a lot of airtime in order to be able to attend my online classes and do me researches and assignments on time for submission. At that time income wasn't really stable so I had to cope with the fact that I would miss some of my classes. There was lockdown in Nairobi, no one could move in or out so I had limited learning materials as they were in another county where my parents were residing. It was also a challenge because whenever I got sick, I had to get a letter first in order to get out of Nairobi.

To adjust, I involved myself in indoor activities like doing simple work outs, dancing and also singing. I taught myself to become less attached to people so that even when I do not get into contact with my classmates for a long time I won't feel guilty. I learnt to appreciate time and its value.

I feel like the government even though it was taken by surprise, the state let control slip past its hands. The committees that were set up to manage Covid-19 should be active not only in times of a pandemic and disaster but also enough funding and equipment used to facilitate processes in handling Covid-19 should be available at all

time.

Access to Justice

Covid-19, Access to Education and the Justice System by Evans Wamiru-Law Student-University of Nairobi, Member Haki Nawiri Afrika

My name is Evans Wamiru, I'm a student at the University



of Nairobi and also a member of Haki Nawiri Afrika. The impact of Covid-19 was overwhelming, we had to learn online this means paying school fees but having to learn online. Parents were working hard to pay bills. Health wise I'm glad none of my family members was affected. Living in an informal settlement, which is congested, always anxious on who will be the next statistic.

In relations to education, I was affected, access to bundles and educational materials was a challenge. Economically, it was a challenge, you had to work to earn money. Many students deferred their courses.

Adjusting and coping mechanisms I used, having learnt and understood that Covid-19 is here to stay, personally I started my own small business, where I could serve people from a small cyber café, online writing which could help me earn some money. Schooling, the only way we could resume was by online learning, the school has also helped provide data bundles to attend classes, the networks another problem altogether.

One of the challenges I got was the university closed and we were not getting lot of responses at the beginning of the pandemic. After the school closed we did not know what to do. My parents lost their jobs during the pandemic and with my small business I could support my parents. Gikomba market was closed and people could not go there, there was no shipping of *mitumba*²³ into the county and people had to prioritise on food and not buying food, as a result of this my business of selling second hand shoes suffered.

At the community level, there was abuse of power, many young men got arrested. At times young men would be beaten up when the police were enforcing Covid-19 Regulations. At the police station you find other people without masks. You get arrested because you don't have a mask, you even find the police arresting you does not have a mask and when you question this they beat you up. There were many injustices happening with children at home, there were cases of teenage pregnancies.

My parents had to figure out how to work from home. Wearing masks everywhere, sanitising and keeping social distance to prevent the pandemic. Also interesting as part of the coping mechanism, I also realised there is a lot I can

²³ Mitumba refers to second hand clothes

do in the home setting. I started writing reports for different people and at the same time continue with my classes, it was a good way of coping.

I learnt a lot during my judicial attachment. Going to court was very tricky process during Covid-19 when you had accused persons more than three. When in court you are given a date until the courts resume physical sitting. Imagine someone being given five (5) virtual mentions, mentions since 2021 simply because they were told courts were crowded.

Being tried virtually was also difficult because you cannot cross examine a witness. You will be told the witness is unable to attend or have connectivity challenges. Being tried virtually is also a challenge because you can't cross examine a witness, you will be told wait, sometimes the accused persons from remand prisons were unable to attend at the time.



Court symbol

GBV has been happening especially with the informal settlement. Most of the people lost jobs, it got tense when there was not food in the table, children want money and children making demands on their parents.

At our Justice Centre (Kiambiu Social Justice and Information Centre-KIJIN) we had to set up Gender Desk to address GBV issues, people did not have a mechanism for venting out. We had cases of women being beaten by their spouses. Most of the cases reported were of GBV which involved fighting among the spouses.

Economically, I got to start a small business running a cyber café. This helped provide me with a source of income and also helped supplement my family's income. Due to the closures (schools, universities and cessation of movement and disrupted livelihoods /jobs) people could come to my cyber café to get movies to watch at home. I got to do online writing and reports for local community members for a fee. This helped keep me going. I still engage in this enterprise to date.

In rural settings, people think they are segregated from people in the city. To rural communities the assumption is that Covid-19 is for people in cities, the rural people do not feel they are at risk because they have access to fresh air.

My recommendations on access to justice is that the courts should allow paralegals to represent other persons in court which need representation. ADR is really a good way to go, but only in petty offences because otherwise, there will be recidivism.

The country has to make justice to be administered virtually more accessible because of technicalities of

accessing internet. Court can be made to operate remotely where accused person can come to a virtual room and access this in court instead of using their mobile phones which is expensive.

On GBV there is need to empower more CSOs, to enable effective make follow ups on the identified cases.

Women and Girls

Responding to impacts of Covid 19 in Arid and Semi-Arid Land(ASAL) -Wanjiru Mburu, Socially Keen Optimists Redefining Isiolo(SKORIS) Lab

Covid-19 had negative effects on the girl child. Some got defiled, others got impregnated, while many faced violence at home from the very people who were supposed to protect them. Isiolo is classified as an Arid Semi-Arid Land(ASAL) region and forms part of Kenya's Northern frontier.



In Isiolo, we started a campaign as an initiative run under a partnership of six organizations in Isiolo County to raise awareness on period poverty and promoting menstrual hygiene and easy, sustainable ways of accessing the required resources through provision of dignity packs and access to information.

This was after an evident and statistical gap where most girls have not been getting essential supplies such as sanitary towels due to poverty and the hard financial time presented by the Covid-19 crisis, also, a number in Isiolo, have reportedly been lured into trading sex-for-money to buy pads, leaving them pregnant or infected with Sexually Transmitted Infections(STIs). Cognisant of these challenges we rolled out a mobilization campaign to ensure easy access to sanitary towels to ensure the girls “maintain their dignity.”

Every Girl's Dream, Radio Baliti, Isiolo TV, Dress for Change Initiative, NIBC Entertainment and Jajabdhū Femme which are all youth led organizations, came together with a common goal of ending period poverty and creating a platform to inform, educate and empower their society from the misconceptions and misinformation around menstrual matters and sexual and reproductive health



rights. Our aim was to reach 10,000 girls and young mothers all across the 10 wards of Isiolo County.

Community based Menstrual Dignity campaign

Along the way we got new friends and partners who supported our campaign who came at such a timely moment for *Hifadhi Hadhi* Campaign²⁴ and combining



²⁴https://www.facebook.com/HifadhiHadhi/about/?ref=page_internal&_rdc=1&_rdr

efforts in the fight against all forms of violence against women.

Menstrual health campaign

The general public supported the initiative through crowd funding on multiple platforms both offline and online. Local organizations too donated both in-kind products and cash to facilitate a successful campaign. We were very happy to partner with Centre for Rights Education and Awareness(CREAW) during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence held in 2020 in Isiolo County where we visited rescue centres and schools in Kinna, Oldonyiro, Ngaremara, Burat, Bulapesa and Wabera wards during the Covid-19 pandemic to teach and engage girls on sensitisation on the virus and to distribute dignity kits which included sanitary towels, inner garments, masks, sanitizers and soap.

The Drawing Dreams Initiative and Pathways International based in Laikipia bolstered us up with dignity kits and their amazing team building activities that we replicate today in our mentorship. As we supported girls in menstrual hygiene and sanitation we did not forget to include the concept of conservation in our efforts to climate action where Isiolo Conservationists Trust spearheaded the tree planting activities and we also got to integrate positive environmental management skills in our time with the girls. We look forward into moving ahead with this cause in the coming years as we roll out more impactful projects. Along the way, we have learnt from our mistakes and added new skills which we look incorporate in the future projects alongside prospective partnerships.

Women and Debts by Susan Owiti- Kenyan Peasants League(KPL)

Covid 19 had and continues to have negative effects on women. With the restriction on movement, many women lost their jobs, for those who were doing small businesses, there were less customers. Many of the potential customers had lost their jobs and did not have money to spend. Kenyan Peasants League provided spaces where women could talk to each other and also deliberate on GBV including conduct referrals and follow ups on the identified cases.



A women's forum organised by Kenyan Peasants League

The most affected were women and girls. When schools were closed because of government's directive on Covid-19 containment, mothers also became more stressed as children stayed at home.

The household budget became strained because both parents were not engaged in any income generating activities. This resulted into an increase in debt within families. Most women were getting loans through their mobile phones and were even unsure of where they would get money to repay these loans. It therefore meant that the amount of debts within homes accumulated.

As Kenyan Peasants League (KPL), we responded through providing educational support to children from informal settlements in Kangemi. Each parent/guardian would contribute Kshs 10, and we would use this money to buy past examination papers and pay teachers in the community. The teachers were mostly students who had finished their form four and others were in college but came back home due to institutional closures during the pandemic. We also provided free tuition and sanitary pads to girls. As a result of our intervention, 3 children have proceeded to secondary schools and there is remarkable improvement in the academic progress of all the children who were part of KPL's tuition program.



Menstrual health session organised by Kenyan Peasants League

Our intervention also helped reduce the number of teenage pregnancies as children were not idling at home but taking attending classes.

Covid 19 through a Sexual and Gender Based Violence Lens by Beth Mukami- Dandora Social Justice Centre

As a grassroots activist, I went through burnout due to the impact of handling Covid- 19 Sexual and Gender Based Violence(SGBV) cases, especially the rise of child molestation and defilement cases , incidences of physical gender based violence and in some cases femicide. I really faced challenge in accessing safe houses and holding facilities for survivors since there were a lot of protocols prior to getting the survivors into these facilities and most of these spaces were full. In addition, there were also many cases of teenage pregnancy which we were unable to effectively handle.



The introduction of night (7 pm-4.00am) curfew led to high incidences of joblessness as people were laid off from work , other sectors affected were businesses operating at night which had to close down, a lot of workers from informal settlements were rendered jobless. This was an indirect trigger for GBV as it brought about a lot of conflicts within households and spouses were unable to manage these economic losses. A lot of people were unable to pay house rent which led to rise of street families and street children. Many people went into depression and resorted to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.

Education also affected for a whole year and this made a lot of children to be depressed , some of them had no option other than to turn to child labour and child prostitution .

Many children dropped out of school and to date many view school not as a basic need but as a luxury. There was also a lot of fear and panic as well as stigmatisation once a person was confirmed to be Covid-19 positive. People were also not allowed to carry out traditional burial rites, there was also no time allowed for people to mourn their dead and this left many households traumatised. The coping mechanisms I adopted included offering counseling services and making follow ups on cases of rights violations.

To date, many problems still exist in my community (Dandora) for example there are a lot of teenage mothers yet to get any form of support, a lot of people are still jobless and trying to survive, there is also confusion with Kenya's education system. Furthermore, there is a directive from the Ministry of Education that all teenage parents to be accepted back in school. Vaccination was also introduced and slowly people are accepting it. For the majority of Kenyans however, life is yet to return to normal.

Farming

Covid 19 and Farming by Hellen Yego-farmer, Uasin Gishu

Covid-19 disrupted our day to day living because of the restrictions imposed on movement. This brought shock, fear and animosity. Closure of schools caused children to be at home unexpectedly. The closure of school affected us and our children. Food budgets went up. Uncalled idleness and other indiscipline cases soared. Poor businesses resulted from closed markets, this also generally led to high cost of living.



We faced multiple challenges for example closure of supermarkets meant loss of sales of farm produce, resulting in wastage and loss of incomes, in my case the weekly markets in our locality such as Moiben, Ziwa and Merewet.

The coping mechanisms I adopted were adhering to Covid-19 Protocols in order to curb the spread, concentrating on food production to minimise hunger, especially production of short season crops. I had to adjust on my shopping to avoid crowds and not getting caught up in the curfew.



Threshing millet in Eldoret

The pandemic is a catastrophe that cannot be easily detected and so the world can only act immediately without delay.

Covid 19 and Smallholder farmers -Peter Nzioka, Farmer, Kaani Ward, Machakos

Covid disrupted my day to day living. The government directive (cessation of movement) led to limited movement. Personally, I was alert at all times to keep social distance, even with loves ones, close friends and even at places of worship. I lost business contracts, lost friends and some extended family members.



The restricted movement led to loss of income for me as a farmer. The closest markets Kaseve and Machakos markets were closed at the start of the pandemic and this led to heavy losses for me. My greatest challenge was not being able to meet my family's income demands including basic needs.



Kaseve market-Machakos

I adjusted through using locally grown consumables which are safer and more nutritious for a better immune system.



A farm in Muvuti-Machakos County

Covid 19 and Rural Communities by Joyce Mutei, Muvuti-Machakos County

Covid 19 negatively affected rural communities. Many rural communities in Kenya depend on Nairobi and other towns for their supplies. Nairobi city is also where the bulk of the market for farm produce is.

When Covid-19 cases started in Kenya, among the first things to happen was closure of markets.



For example, in Machakos, Machakos and Kaseve markets were closed. It was said that markets were spreading Covid-19 because of people coming together.

Many rural communities depend on local markets to sell their farm produce. With the closure of markets, many families experienced heavy losses. Many farmers in rural areas do not have electricity and fridges, many people either had to eat their farm produce or throw them away because of rotting.



Machakos market

I operate a shop here in my village, Muvuti. Many of my neighbours, especially women were sending their children to my shop to take goods on credit. As a mother, I could not deny them food and other necessities such as sugar and flour. Many people were taking cereals on credit promising to pay later when things normalised. Many families went without food.



Goats rearing in Kaani ward –a source of income for many farmers in Machakos County

People were very scared of Covid-19 and when the government s gave the directive to stay at home , many farms were left unattended.



*A farm in Muvuti-Kiima Kimwe ward-
Machakos*

As a women group , we could not meet. We have a women group with 300 members, we carry out merry-go-around and also engage in extracting stones for sale. With the restricted movement, we could not sell the stones as many of our customers come from Nairobi.



Women engaged in stone extraction and crushing in Muvuti-Machakos County

We could not collect money for the merry-go-around because we did not have incomes. Many women and children suffered. Todate many women still have arrears and owe the women group money.

In many households in Machakos, many women were victims of GBV by husbands. Many lost their jobs and some could not go back to work. These frustrations were vented on women and children within the household. Many were being beaten by their husbands but could not leave. Many pregnant women were afraid to go to hospital for antenatal care because of fear of Covid 19. There was a lot of misinformation about Covid 19 bringing about anxiety.

There were increased rates of teenage pregnancy in our area, and many teenage mothers either dropped out of school or had to have the children taken care of by their grandmothers or mothers. This brought about a lot of stress and conflict within families. For the children who got impregnated by relative, they got married off in other places far away. This is because of fear and societal ridicule.

Covid-19 and Urban Farming -Mercy Nthiga, Farmer - Utawala

I'm a mushroom farmer in Utawala-Nairobi, I also sell groceries. The cessation of movement, closure of hotels and international travel affected me as an urban farmer. Urban farmers in Nairobi often were supplying hotels with farm produce. The stay at home directive left many workers without sources of income.



Prior to Covid-19, I used to supply mushrooms in hotels in the city centre and in Parklands. But with the closure of hotels, my business was affected. I could not sell my farm produce and suffered heavy losses.

As a family we could neither consume all the mushrooms we produced , nor consume mushrooms on a daily basis. Today, my business is yet to recover as some of my customers stopped their operations permanently.



Mushroom weighting

When schools closed and children stayed at home , I had to look for alternative ways of earning income. Leaving children at home for long periods on their own was risk. Some started abusing drugs in the process. My son started abusing drugs and I was not aware. Because parents were busy looking for how to fend for families during when the pandemic was at the peak, many parents did not monitor what their children were doing.

My proposed solutions to addressing urban farming in the context of future pandemics is the government to provide support to smallholder farmers especially those producing mushrooms, consumers to be sensitised to consume organic food and provision of support to access markets.



Packed mushrooms ready for delivery to customers

Covid 19 and Civil Society Engagement by Leonida Odongo-Co-founder, Haki Nawiri Afrika

Covid 19 affected our work. The government directives on staying at home and the restrictions on inter-county movement (cessation of movement) directive by the Kenyan President meant that we could not visit communities out of Nairobi. It also meant that our work had to shift online excluding critical voices in the rural areas from engaging, partly because of inability to access smart phones as well as network challenges. There was also the fear of contracting the virus especially during gathering , this was irrespective of keeping social distance.



As a human rights and development practitioner, the best engagement with communities is physical engagement, you can be able to see how the community feels, the reactions are visible as opposed to zoom or other forms of online engagement. How can a 60-year-old or 70-year-old engage on zoom?. Furthermore, the number of people to be engaged in our activities were restricted and this meant for example that if you were carrying out a sensitisation it had to be for less people. Organisational finance flows were adversely affected as we could not raise funds to carry out any activity.

To adjust , we switched to online spaces to continue with human rights and social justice work. In line with this ,we organised various online platforms focusing on shrinking civic spaces, human rights, climate justice as well as food justice.

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Climate justice dialogues

The online space enabled us reach more participants beyond our borders. It enables exchange of information and building networks. It also enabled Haki Nawiri as an organisation to share best practices that were working for us in Kenya. To date , some of the partnerships built during the onset of Covid are still beneficial to us.

Shifting to online operations were also costlier and of course there was and still is the zoom fatigue. In addition, multiple meetings were happening online thus we were unable to effectively participate in all these engagements, it became overwhelming.

Fortunately, we managed to organise several physical dialogues touching on shrinking civic spaces and also held human rights and paralegal training sessions for students and out of school youth in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Some of these activities were done with reduced number of participants. We also co-organised sessions with partners in Africa and beyond through Twitter and Google Meet.



Student-police dialogues organised by Haki Nawiri Afrika provided students and out of school youth with spaces to raise their justice and legal rights concerns especially in the context of Covid-19.



Student-Police dialogue –Kenyatta University students



A student-police dialogue session

Haki Nawiri Afrika also organised psychosocial support session to address the mental health and stresses brought about by Covid 19. These sessions targeted youth within institutions of higher learning.

We also got provided the student community with spaces for psychosocial support and resilience through talk therapy. Benefiting students were from Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and Kenyatta University. This helped many students relax, cope as well as adjust to a new normal. affected. Access to funding became a hurdle and many project ideas had to either be shelved or abandoned.



HAKI NAWIRI AFRIKA

PRESENTS
A DISCUSSION WITH THE
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Shrinking Civic Spaces: A view from the Global South

Join the Zoom Meeting at
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The panelists include:

Andrew Young, Kenya		Najma Juma, Tanzania	
Beth Mukami, Kenya		Dickson Mugisha Emanzi, Uganda	
Wanjiru Mburu, Kenya		Mary Wanjiru, Kenya	
Leonida Odongo, Kenya		Alex Kasumba, Uganda	
Boniface Maina, Kenya		Moderators will be Leonida Odongo and Sharon Ndeto	

All are welcome!!!

Online dialogues as part of addressing shrinking civic spaces incorporating voices from the East Africa region



*Psychosocial support session for Kenyatta University and
University of Nairobi Students*



Psychosocial sessiona at Catholic University

Haki Nawiri Afrika organised training sessions on human rights and paralegalism to enable community members defend their rights and also have basic knowledge of the law. This helped enhance capacities of students and community members from Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi, Masinde Muliro and Zetece University.



Human Rights Education session

Furthermore, students , grassroots activists and out of school youth were provided with paralegal training to enable them understand the law , provide basic legal advice in the community , carry out advocacy as well as monitor and report cases of rights violations in their different communities.

The participants represented Kiambiu Social Justice and Information Centre(KIJIN), Dandora Social Justice Centre(DSJC), World March of Women,Mathare Social Justice Centre(MSJC) as well as university students from South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU), Multi-Media University (MMU), Kenyatta Univeristy(KU), Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and UoN.



Paralegal training session-Shaurimoyo, Nairobi

From a human rights perspective, Covid continues to affect communities as many people who lost their jobs are yet to find work, others who lost their businesses are yet to get stabilised and families who were affected by GBV are yet to get support and justice. Within communities people continue to suffer from the impact of the Corona virus.

Experience of Informal Settlements by Ann Wanjiru- Mathare Legal Aid and Human Rights Advocacy (MLHRA)

It impossible to implement some of the Covid 19 Regulations in informal settlements .For example social distancing because the houses are very small and crowded.

It is very fortunate that there were no many deaths repoted in informal settlments due to Covid 19.Many people living



in informal settlements in Mathare were affected by the stay at home directive , many are invovled in petty trading or undertake menial jobs such as in constuction(mjengo) and clothes washing (dhobi) in areas such as Eastleigh.Covid 19 meant job losses for many families .There were high cases of Gender Based Violence , as an orgnasaiton-Mathare Legal Aid and Human Rights Advocacy (MLHRA) in collaboration with partners , we provided food to vulnerbale households including those with small children and

persons living with HIV.

We organised sessions for women , to dialogue and enhance their coping mechanisms .We also worked together with the local administation , specifically the chief's office during home visits .We also provided updates to community members about Covid-19 because there was a lot of misinformation and anxiety.

Various organisations came together to provide support to communities in Mathare for example Save the Children and Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO).



Mathare informal settlements



Kiambiu informal settlements



The Nairobi River snaking through Kiambiu informal settlements

Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted families and enhanced rights violations under the guise of enforcing Covid-19 guidelines. Various changes have taken place in terms of handling the virus. Curfews have been lifted and people can carry out physical meetings but maintain rules of social distancing, wearing masks and sanitising. Some people benefitted from the pandemic, used their ingenuity to develop for example technology and gain incomes from their innovations. There was and still is an uptake of technology. However, despite these changes many people are still suffering from the impacts of Covid-19. More support is needed in vulnerable communities to cushion them from the adverse impacts of Covid 19. More funding need to be allocated to various civil society organisations working with the most vulnerable in different communities. Furthermore, entities working on human rights, social justice and shrinking civic spaces require more support because communities suffering from marginalisation are more vulnerable to human rights violations.

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About the Authors

Human Rights in a Pandemic Chronicles: Stories of Disruption and Resilience is a documentation of the experiences of ordinary people in Kenya, whose lives and aspirations were disrupted by Covid 19. It is an array of the various rights violations which occurred and how communities were responding at the local levels. The compilation is a call to be more human in the advent of a pandemic. It is a collection of the voices often muted and placed on the margins when there is a catastrophe. It is a call to celebrate the heroes and the heroines in our communities who combated and continue to confront the negative impact of Covid 19 on the most vulnerable groups in society. It is also an advocacy tool on what to do and what not to do during a pandemic

Leonida Odongo is a Kenyan social justice activist with vast experience in grassroots organising, advocacy, movement budlighn, adult learning methodologies and participatory research. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Nairobi and is currently. A seasoned trainer, Leonida organises community engagement activities through trainings and experiential learning sessions. She also nurtures university students across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to understand social justice and put what they learn into practice. A freelance writer, Leonida has a passion for documenting community experiences relation to social justice. Leonida is also a featured Change Maker an Encourager and a Vocal Contributor at World Pulse, an online platform connecting women globally.

Beth Mukami, born and raised in Dandora, is one of the founding members of Dandora Community Justice Centre, she is a community leader and a political strategist.

Beth volunteers and advocates for children and women rights. She undertakes capacity building and life skills in her community and beyond. She is also involved in ecological justice and planting indigenous trees in her community, since her locality is host to one of the largest dumpsites in Africa. Beth also runs a community library which acts as a safe space for boys and girls.

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