



Impact of COVID-19 in Africa: A scenario analysis to 2030 (July 2020)

Conclusion

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Conclusion

This study has sought to explore the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa, looking out to 2030 in terms of income, debt, poverty and some elements of the SDGs. The report is necessarily incomplete. It has, for example, not dealt with the food security crisis in the region that the World Bank estimates could follow a contraction in agricultural production of between 2.6% and 7% and reductions in food imports. It has also not fully unpacked the implications of large reductions in FDI as expected by the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

Nor has the report looked at the potential for social protection programmes to support workers, especially those in the informal sector. These could include measures such as cash transfers, in-kind transfers (food distribution), social grants to disabled people and the elderly, wage subsidies to prevent massive layoffs, and fee waivers for basic services.

The report finds that the pandemic is set to erase much of the progress made in the fight against poverty in recent years, setting back the attainment of the 2030 SDGs and Agenda 2063.

At the time of concluding the report, it is expected that the health situation will get significantly worse as infections and mortality rates from COVID-19 increase before they improve. However, it also offers the continent the opportunity to learn from the experience of others. Bad as it is, high mortality is not expected to be the main driver of suffering in Africa. That will largely come from the economic impact of COVID-19.

To avoid another lost decade, as in the 1980s, appropriate policies need to be implemented to mitigate the pandemic's short-term negative socio-economic impact and to boost long-term growth. Policymakers should, therefore, strengthen national health systems and improve access to water and sanitation. Africa also needs to use digital technologies to accelerate its economic structural transformation. All of these should be underpinned by good governance and will require substantial debt relief.

This report sought to outline alternative prospects for Africa amid unprecedented levels of uncertainty, on a matter that changes on a daily basis. Some of our assumptions are certain to be proven incorrect and will need to be modified as our understanding of the unfolding pandemic improves.

Governments, civil society, and the business community need to forge a shared response to one of the greatest challenges humanity has faced in recent decades. It is our hope that by taking a long-term perspective rooted in available evidence, we might contribute to a sensible and effective response.

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About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director of the ISS. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees and head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the ISS. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

About African Futures & Innovation

Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.