

ALLIANCE FOR AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP
DIALOGUE SERIES ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN AFRICA

Preamble

As nations continue to come to terms with coping and finding solutions to the challenges that have beset them with the onslaught of COVID-19, the AAP Management Team is proposing to establish a dialogue series with speakers including the Vice Chancellors, researchers and other relevant staff at AAP consortium universities, as well as representatives of the public and private sector, funding partners, think tanks, and NGOs, among others. The media partner for the series is University World News (UWN) to increase awareness of the event and engage a wider audience to participate. UWN will advertise each dialogue and will have a journalist interview the panelists and write up 2-3 stories following the dialogue. The objectives of the proposed dialogue series are to:

- a) Strengthen collaboration of AAP consortium work in this time of the crisis.
- b) Catalyze dialogue and share research and innovative thinking around key issues in the age of COVID-19.
- c) Increase awareness of African universities as knowledge brokers/leaders on the continent.
- d) Ensure that investment in universities post COVID-19 is on the agenda of African governments, the private sector, and donors.
- e) Establish a small group within the AAP consortium to lead follow up actions.
- f) Identify funding opportunities that will support identified activities.

A “thought piece” on Higher Education in Africa and COVID-19 based on the discussions during the dialogue series will be produced and shared with AAP consortium Vice Chancellors, governments and funding partners.

Background

The infectious coronavirus disease (COVID-19), caused by a newly discovered coronavirus that started as an outbreak in China near the end of 2019, has now developed into a global pandemic. At the end of March, for the first time since the COVID-19 epidemic started, the number of new cases outside of China was greater than inside the country. By 9 April, according to WHO, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases globally was 1,436,198 with 82,837 new cases within 24 hours; the total number of deaths was 85,522. The total number of confirmed cases in Africa at that same period was 8,837 with 690 new cases in the last 24 hours and a total of 349 deaths (WHO, 2020). It is likely that the worst is yet to come in Africa, as the world faces one of its worst challenges ever. What is clear is that the data from many countries is not reliable due to a lack of testing capability, political expediency and the clinical characteristics, most notably a long incubation period of up to 12 days during which infected people may be asymptomatic. However, it is a fact that this pandemic is growing exponentially (WHO, 2020). It is important to contain and prepare to mitigate further outbreaks, particularly in countries with struggling or under-resourced health systems. It is imperative that countries work collectively to support each other

and leave none behind because of enlightened self-interest in preventing and controlling ongoing infection and spread, but also to take an equitable approach to world health (AfDB, 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic has also had a great economic effect on global markets. As infection rates rose, so did panic across financial markets, as economies drastically slowed down, and severely disrupted supply chains. Wall Street had a global sell-off; the S&P 500 index of US companies fell by 11.5% the week commencing on February 24, the worst week since the 2008 financial crisis (Zezeza, 2020). China, which was effectively in economic lockdown for a month since the Chinese New Year, resulted in global manufacturing downfall. The supply chain consequences even though real, affected some sectors and assets more than others, from commodities such as oil to supply chains vulnerable to such interruptions as those that cause problems for just-in-time auto manufacturing (Zezeza, 2020). The economic effects have already been felt in Africa as demand for raw materials and commodities has declined and Africa's access to industrial components and manufactured goods from the region has been hampered.

Almost all countries in Africa have now reported cases and have various levels of shutdown plans to control and manage the humanitarian challenges of the virus. Universities everywhere are impacted with the growing, urgent need to "shelter in place" and slow the spread of COVID-19. Higher education institutions have closed their campuses and, in some cases, making an emergency transition to online learning. While it is supposed to be temporary, it may not be as short-term as there is no guarantee how long the pandemic will last. With mass high school and university closures in an increasing number of countries, concerns about the implications for future student enrolments and ultimately the impact on institutional cash flow are high on university leaders' agendas. While universities are well versed in dealing with the consequences of major global political and economic events, the challenges posed by COVID-19 are of a completely different order and require multifaceted, institutional-wide responses backed by supportive government policies and interventions. What has become clear in the varying levels of preparedness of institutions around the continent, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inequalities that persist across the African higher education system as a whole, and within countries themselves.

Despite these challenges, many AAP consortium universities have taken the initiative and responded with developing rapid test kits, manufacturing protective gear (face shields and masks) and hand sanitizer, providing clinical and psychological care to patients, and developing visual maps of the epidemic for rapid decision making. These successes need to be amplified and further collaborative action for research and programming planned.

Dialogue Series structure

The AAP will facilitate the dialogue series using the webinar format of the virtual platform zoom on topics that are of relevance to the African continent and the consortium universities specifically. There will be one to three speakers for each dialogue, which will last up to a maximum time of 90 minutes:

- 1) The moderator of the series will introduce the panelists (each panelist should provide a brief ½ pg bio of themselves) for 3 mins

- 2) The moderator will provide opening remarks that contextualizes the topic of the dialogue for 5 mins
- 3) The panelist will provide their opinions, responses of their universities and any relevant research available about the topic of the dialogue. Each panelist will have 10 mins to present their points (they can use powerpoint slides and speak to them) or just present live.
 - a. Any specific technology challenges and needs should be clarified with the AAP so they can be addressed as far as possible.
- 4) After the panelists contributions, the moderator will ask them questions received by attendees during the registration process for 10 minutes
 - a. During the registration process, AAP will request attendees to provide questions they would want to ask the panelists and the moderator will begin with those questions after the panelist contributions.
- 5) There will then be a brief break for about 5 mins or so. During this time, AAP can project slides with your University logos for advertising the members of AAP. These would need to be received 5 days prior to the event.
 - a. During the presentations, the audience will have an opportunity to ask further questions. These will be compiled during the break.
- 6) After the break, the moderator will continue the Q&A session for another 10 mins to have audience involvement. He will conclude when there is about 3 -5 mins remaining.
- 7) For the last 3 mins, the AAP coordinator for the specific dialogue will thank the moderator and panelists and remind the audience of the next dialogue, date and speakers.
- 8) There will be a practice session at least 3-4 days prior to the dialogue to test the technology.
- 9) AAP will create a whats app group for each dialogue session for quick feedback as needed.

Audience

The target audience for the series includes vice chancellors, academic staff and students at African universities; leadership and academics of other universities globally; representatives of the public and private sector in Africa; funding partners, think tanks and NGOs with interest in Africa's development.

Proposed dialogue series topics and dates

The proposed topics for discussion during the dialogue sessions are indicated below. The speakers will be finalised after recommendations and contacted by AAP staff or focal points.

| Date | Topic |
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| April 29 th 2020 | The Global COVID-19 Pandemic: Responses and lessons learnt from African universities in the AAP |
| May 13 th 2020 | The future of continental and international collaboration after COVID-19 |

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| June 10 th 2020 | Potential challenges of student recruitment in the age of COVID-19 |
| May 27 th 2020 | The economic, food security and livelihoods impact of COVID-19 in Africa |
| June 24 th 2020 | The psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on university faculty and students |
| July 8 th 2020 | COVID-19 Impact in Africa: Opportunities for partnership and engagement 1) Capacity – platforms, training of staff and students 2) Infrastructure – devices, software & internet access 3) Resources – scholarships for student recruitment 4) Research – biomedical, socio-economic, & policy implications 5) Societal learning & coping |

References

World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report – 80. Website accessed April 9th 2020: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200409-sitrep-80-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=1b685d64_2

Zeleza P. 2020. The coronavirus: The Political Economy of a Pathogen. Website accessed March 22nd 2020: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/coronavirus-political-economy-pathogen-paul-tiyambe-zeleza/?fbclid=IwAR0GDL3UXzAoeS9m3BEkPJo_VvTtQzRyIf75Eea0LNOiCgB_OdIBJm4Q5SU

African Development Bank (AfDB). 2020. African Development Bank Group unveils \$10 billion Response Facility to curb COVID-19. Website accessed April 9th 2020: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-group-unveils-10-billion-response-facility-curb-covid-19-35174>