



**Pandemic Preparedness
and Resilience: *Covid-19*
*Lessons for Now and
Future***

KEYNOTE SPEECH

By

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Summary

- ▶ Background of Speaker
- ▶ Background on COVID 19 situation
- ▶ Situation on the African Continent
- ▶ Situation in the United States
- ▶ Reality in Kenyan Colleges
- ▶ Reality in Kenyan Schools
- ▶ Implications about Research
- ▶ Way Forward



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- ▶ Professor of Environmental Studies & Geography
- ▶ BSc and MS in Geology
- ▶ PhD in Water Resources
- ▶ Studied in 4 universities
- ▶ Has taught in 2 universities
- ▶ Commentator for Voice of America, BBC and KTN
- ▶ Has been keynote speaker in at least 3 international conference
- ▶ I have been a Carnegie Visiting Professor at 2 Kenyan Universities

COVID SITUATION: Background

- ▶ COVID-19 appeared from “nowhere”
- ▶ Predictions and modelled warned it would happen but nobody took it serious
- ▶ Started by killing thousands leading to worldwide panic
- ▶ When precautions were announced most countries lacked basic supplies like masks for ALL citizens
- ▶ When precautions were announce many developing nations lacked money for basic supplies

My personal experience with COVID

- ▶ For ONE YEAR and 3 months, I stayed mainly confined to my home study.
- ▶ 4 times a week I made a 7 km walk, while walking I avoided meeting anybody directly, crossing if somebody approached me on the same side of the road.
- ▶ I was one of the earliest to get my COVID vaccine, and as soon as I got my second vaccine, I went to Kenya for Summer holiday in 2021
- ▶ 3 siblings, 8 cousins, 7 nephews, 3 nieces and many many friends got COVID. 95% of them fully recovered.

What is RESILIENCE?

- ▶ the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

“BOUNCING BACK”



COVID SITUATION in Continental Africa

- ▶ With projections of tens of thousands dying very few African countries had adequate ICU and HDU hospital beds
- ▶ As many were mourning others were planning how to capitalize and profit from the pandemic
- ▶ Without a precedent most of the planning and modelling had a good element of guess-work
- ▶ The “take-off” of the pandemic in African countries was SLOW as air-connections to African nations
- ▶ Even though African countries had the option to protect “foreign arrivals” in countries like Kenya, infected foreign travelers from Italy and China arrived.

Kenya COVID-19 by November 21st

New cases and deaths

From [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#) · Last updated: 2 days ago

 Kenya

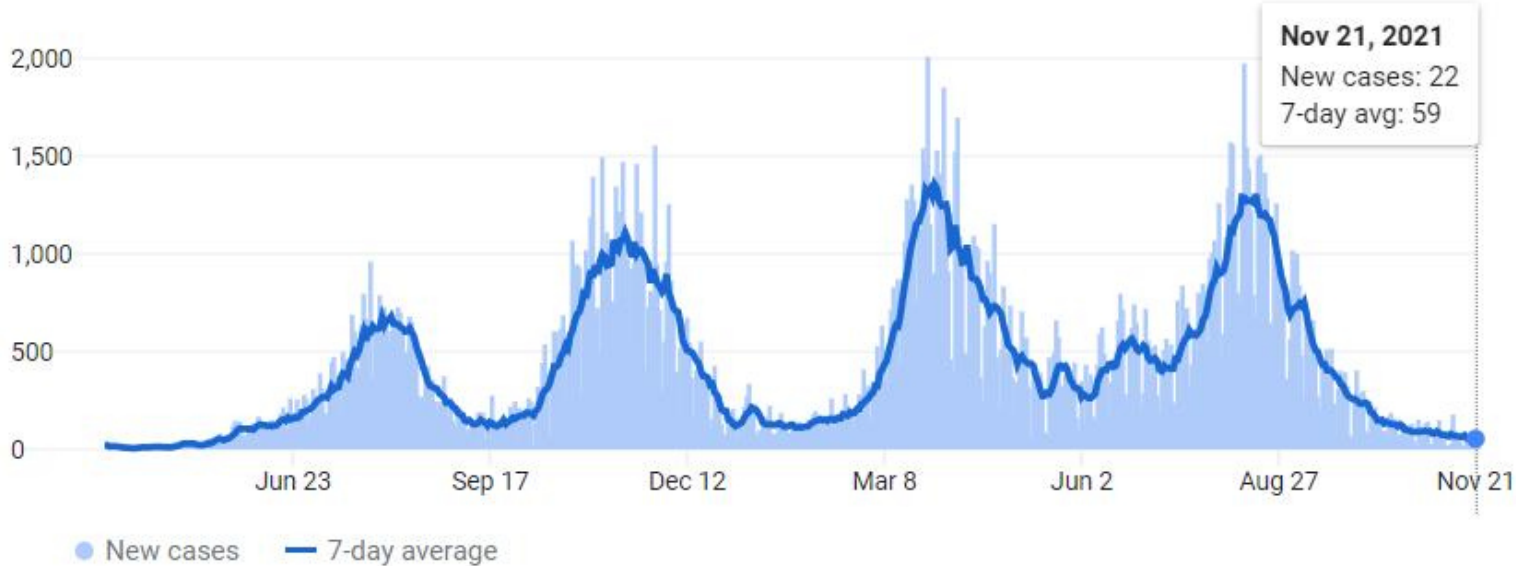
Total cases
255K

Deaths
5,330

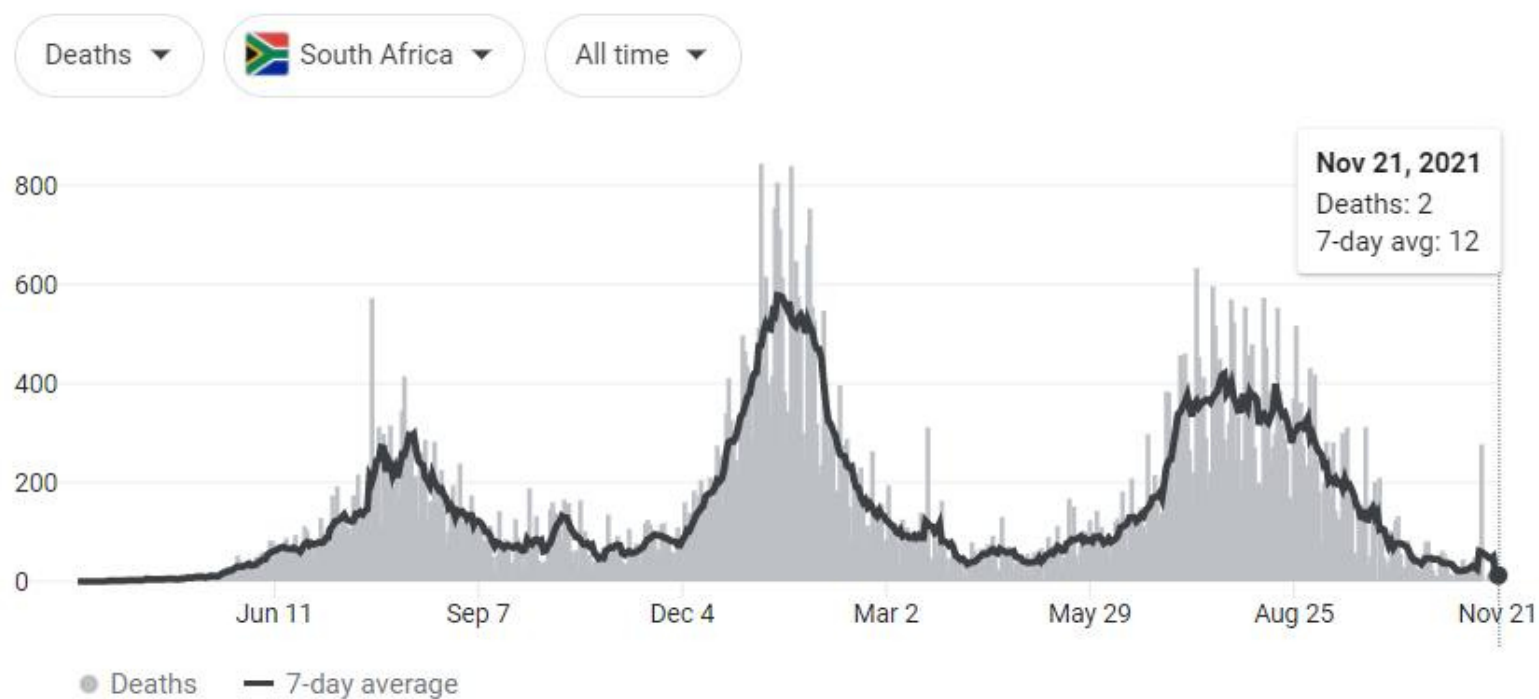
New cases ▾

 Kenya ▾

All time ▾



South Africa Covid-19 Situation Nov 21



Each day shows deaths reported since the previous day. [About this data](#)

Situation in the United States

- ▶ COVID's announcement was received with a lot of DOUBT
- ▶ Misinformation from Social Media contributed heavily to doubts and politicization
- ▶ State governments were caught unprepared and many hospitals lacked adequate amounts of face masks, gloves and ICU beds
- ▶ The US Federal Government's stand's politicization and attitude did not help the situation
- ▶ Schools and colleges were closed and classes went ONLINE
- ▶ Massive politicization led to more misinformation resulting in confusion


United States COVID Data

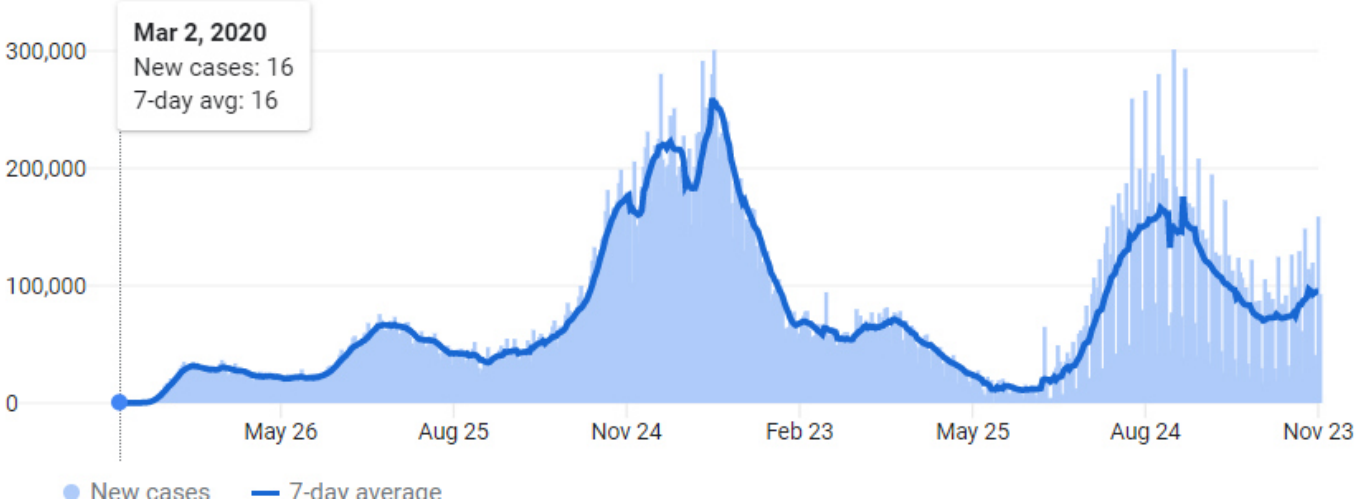
From [Our World in Data](#) and [The New York Times](#)
updated: 2 days ago

 United States

Total cases
47.7M
+31,372

Deaths
770K
+126

New cases ▾  United States ▾ All regions ▾ All time ▾



Reality in Kenyan Colleges

- ▶ Like many state and public institutions Kenyan universities and colleges announced measures in reaction to the pandemic
- ▶ In many instances face to face classes ended and universities were required to offer online long distance classes
- ▶ Like most universities and colleges in the world, few lectures had prior training in **software (like Zoom)** and lecturers had to go through a learning curve.
- ▶ Kenya is NOT as electronically astute and network connected as developed countries and hence the adaptation was not as seamless.
- ▶ A cohort of BOTH lecturers and students had mixed results in adapting to ONLINE classes.

COVID - World Statics (Africa Missing)

Cases










259M

+607K

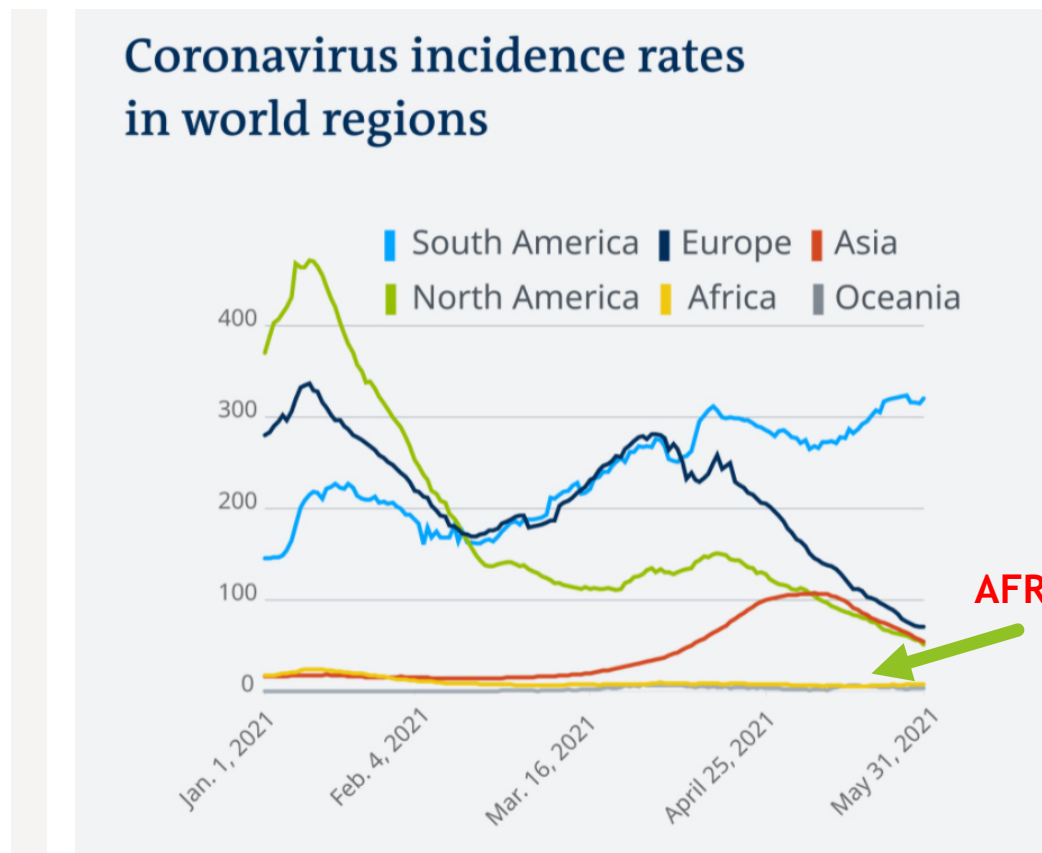
Deaths

5.17M

+8,030

Location	Cases↓	Deaths
 United States	47.9M +92,785	775K +1,474
 India	34.5M	467K
 Brazil	22M +10,312	613K +284
 United Kingdom	9.93M	144K
 Russia	9.24M	262K
 Turkey	8.63M	75,443
 France	7.61M +32,591	121K +52
 Iran	6.09M	129K
 Germany	5.52M	99,773

COVID - AFRICA LOWEST in the World



Reality in Kenyan Secondary & Primary Schools

- ▶ Most schools were not electrically equipped, and if they were some had challenges in bandwidth
- ▶ Many instructors were not trained in use of long distance software
- ▶ Many Kenya homes do not have adequate bandwidth (and in many cases most homes have NONE)
- ▶ Parents were not psychologically prepared to accommodate their boarding school and in general school going kids to learn from a “home based “ environment.
- ▶ Lack of coordination between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and police enforcers created strain as everybody sailed in “uncharted waters”

Implication on Research - BEFORE

- ▶ The last pandemic in Kenya was the Spanish Flu of 1918, none of the modern Kenyan researchers had an excellent handle in connecting the two pandemics.
- ▶ The 1918 Flu occurred when Kenya was still British East Africa and half Kenya was in Uganda. Not even ONE secondary school had started in Kenya
- ▶ Kenyan researchers were facing the pandemic with inadequate background data not experience.
- ▶ No Kenyan researcher anticipated competition from BOGUS research from social media NOR a GULLIBLE CITIZENRY willing to listed, believe and embrace WILD RUMORS and BOGUS RESEARCH from social media.
- ▶ In Kenya pharmaceutical products are not universally available, no background data prepared the government to make medicines available

Implication on Research : NOW

- ▶ COVID related issues have been a “Gold Mine” for research, real research findings will help to counter MYTHS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES and OUTRIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA fabrication
- ▶ Interrogation of real current research will help to inform government and give it data to drive policy
- ▶ Unlike the situation “Before” real research findings will help to build resilience, as you have realistic benchmarks
- ▶ Research findings will beget more research in all areas
- ▶ Research findings will create **new connections**, **new emerging areas**, and **new foci** that will help countries to address another pandemic if it ever shows up

INNOVATION DURING COVID

- ▶ “Desperate circumstances call for desperate measures” and the Covid-19 was not an exception
- ▶ In Kenya different universities, jua kali craftsmen and undiscovered geniuses led in innovation of new types of beds, protective gear, and experimentation with herbal remedies
- ▶ It would be great if the innovation that occurred during the COVIDS pandemic was preserved for posterity.
- ▶ This conference and others should highlight ALL the innovations accrued from COVID for posterity



PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID

- ▶ “Fear-of-the-Unknown” was the biggest impact of COVID-19, this one spared NEITHER “medics” nor “academics”, with lack of previous studies and precedent many professional were sailing in uncharted waters.
- ▶ WILD RUMORS, HALF TRUTHS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES and OUTRIGHT LIES the majority fronted thro’ social media took centre stage.
- ▶ CURFEWS, SHUT DOWNS and RESTRICTIONS OF TRAVEL led to PANIC and many individual resorted to “criminal innovation” to get around all manner of restrictions.
- ▶ “CROWDING” in homes, as families huddled together during curfews resulted in “domestic strife” and sometimes broken homes.
- ▶ On a positive note fathers or parents absent in evening got a great chance to BOND with their children at home.

ECONOMIC IMPACT of COVID-19

- ▶ Restriction of movement and business activities led to an economic slow down and less revenues for many informal businesses
- ▶ Loss of revenues to low and middle income families meant less circulation of money and many businesses shut down at the height of COVID
- ▶ Fear of infection generally kept away people from hospitals, and some private hospitals experienced a slow down in business.
- ▶ AS people resorted to home-based medical solutions (many herbal) a new industry of herbal remedies picked up, even formal pharmacies stocked herbal remedies
- ▶ Social institutions like churches and bars had less attendees and their income went down

SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID

- ▶ COVID restrictions and precautions dictated for less human interaction
- ▶ For many months many people stayed indoors and this led to a new paradigm shift for communities where human interaction is an integral part of culture.
- ▶ COVID restrictions and precautions led to less sports activities and close down of gyms and stadiums.
- ▶ On a positive note, with many institutions going “virtual” many citizens were able to ascend the “learning curve” of electronic interaction.
- ▶ With many students having to learn thro “Virtual Education” there may be a renewed renaissance of online distance education.

KENYA vs TANZANIA : COVID Implications

- ▶ Kenya is a neighbor to Tanzania, a country whose COVID open-ness policies were diametrically opposed to Kenya and most of the rest of the world.
- ▶ Whereas Kenya and Uganda restricted movement, imposed curfews and sometimes shutdowns, Tanzania did not. It will be of interest to see what the open Tanzanian economy means to its trade relations with Kenya especially agricultural products
- ▶ The proximity of the two countries provides an opportunity to compare, contrasts and evaluate the psychological, social, economic and education experiences of two countries, with Tanzania serving as an experimental control.

BURN-OUT

The INDIRECT CONSEQUENCE of COVID was BURN-OUT

- ▶ The negative outcomes of unaddressed compassion fatigue.
- ▶ Burnout has observable symptoms.
- ▶ Burnout is a diagnosable disorder.

- ▶ The World Health Organization has upgraded its definition of burnout for the 2022 edition of the *International Classification of Diseases*, calling it “an occupational phenomenon” that comes from “chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”.

Tips for coping and practicing resilience.

- ▶ Give grace. Allow yourself to dial down your expectations of yourself and others a bit. Give yourself and others grace.
- ▶ Keep up your social connections. Those connections can mean the world.
- ▶ This is the time to stay in touch and supportive of each other. Check in on others: family members, friends, classmates, colleagues.
- ▶ It's important to notice when you're stressed, to name it, and to acknowledge it. Just doing that helps us begin to relax and start to think of what we want to do about it.

SCHOOL FIRES : Indirect Consequence

- ▶ Education Cabinet Secretary George Magoha on Thursday, November 18, admitted that his ministry was partially to blame for the recent school fires.
- ▶ In responding to questions posed by nominated MP Wilson Sossion, Magoha listed the congested school calendar as among the school-based causes of the school fires.
- ▶ "The need to cover the curriculum within a shorter period might have occasioned over-teaching during the weekend, early mornings and late evenings," he explained.

SCHOOL FIRES : Indirect Consequence

- ▶ Consequently, time slotted for co-curricular activities was partially consumed in class, which resulted in negative pressure on students.
- ▶ Learners were then denied the opportunity to engage and interact outside the school environment besides the breaks that involved the entire school.
- ▶ The CS further blamed the fires on communication breakdown between the students and the administration. He stated that the unrest could be a way of communicating underlying irritabilities.

KEMMSA Corruption Scandal

- ▶ Kenyan investigators are to recommend the prosecution of at least 15 top government officials and businesspeople over the alleged misuse of millions of dollars meant for buying Covid-19 medical supplies, the BBC has learned.
- ▶ The probe uncovered evidence of tenders being allegedly given to politically connected individuals and businesses.
- ▶ The government received about \$2bn (£1.6bn) in aid and grants to fight Covid-19. But health workers have complained about a shortage of public protective equipment (PPE), saying their lives are at risk.
- ▶ Investigators from Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) say preliminary findings have shown that several laws on public procurement were flouted during the awarding of the tenders.

This CONFERENCE

- ▶ The conference will bring together leading scholars in educational research, to share your findings in virtual media
- ▶ This conference is an opportunity to obtain and document research findings relating to psychological, educational, social and economic impact of COVID on educational institutions.
- ▶ This conference is an opportunity to obtain and document research findings relating to impact of COVID on learning processes.
- ▶ This conference is an opportunity for governments to obtain documented research findings and data, that will shape policies rather than rely on hearsay, second hand information and irrelevant data from foreign countries

RESILIENCE: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- ▶ We need to research WHY COVID rates were LOW in AFRICA, was AFRICA just lucky?
- ▶ As the COVIDS rates lower, and as restrictions are removed, we need to research on resilience in Kenya and neighboring African countries
- ▶ Research results out to inform African government on what directions and measures to take
- ▶ Epidemiology needs to be introduced as a REQUIRED General Education class at university, and elements of it should be taught in High School
- ▶ Every Kenyan school, college and government institutions need to be staffed by several counsellors, to address the issue of stress management during pandemics.