THE YOUTH CAFÉ

FORD FOUNDATION

FINDING YOUTH-LED SOLUTIONS TO COVID-19

Lockdown Live

PREFACE

At *The Youth Café*, we are very passionate about the youth (18-35) and their role in driving change in the world. This report exemplifies our dedication to our mission of driving change through empowering society. It is a result of the hard work of different teams of *The Youth Café* and our associated partners.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the fundamental logistics of our lives. We felt it was our duty to spark conversations on the issues that have emerged across platforms as a result of coronavirus. These conversations were meant to help us cope with the situation as well as find solutions to emerging problems. We believe that the insights in this report will shed light on youth perspectives of the experience of COVID-19 and help identify global and local issues and solutions that people are experiencing in different countries around the world. These insights are of value to researchers, educators, parents, governments, and, of course, other young people.

The Youth Café, in partnership with the *Sussex Writes team* from the University of Sussex (UK), invested their time, knowledge, and resources to make the **Lockdown Live** series successful. This report is generated to expose the issues that were discussed in the webinars and our plat -forms collectively to inform and empower the youth during the pandemic on learning, misinformation, and mental health. The issues discussed herein were raised by youths and show the possible solutions that could be developed. The section on COVID-19 futures links the current situation to future possibilities through actions and behaviours that the youth themselves can undertake.We hope that our young team's hardwork proves of interest and use to our readers and supporters. Just as our common goal is to create awareness and inspire change, we hope that we will remain united as we face the challenges that life brings forth. We thank all of our partners in this project and all of the participants who impacted our work. Again, we thank you for your involvement in our work, and we wish you an insightful read. Thank you for the time you are taking to read this report.

You inspired us, and we hope to inspire you.

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Willice Onyango
Director, The Youth Café

Lockdown Live Impact Report

THE YOUTH CAFÉ

Lockdown Live : Finding Solutions to COVID-19

GENERATED

105
Videos (Including
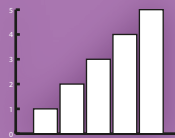*15 Zoom Webinars)*

4
Expert Interviews

53
Participants/Panelists

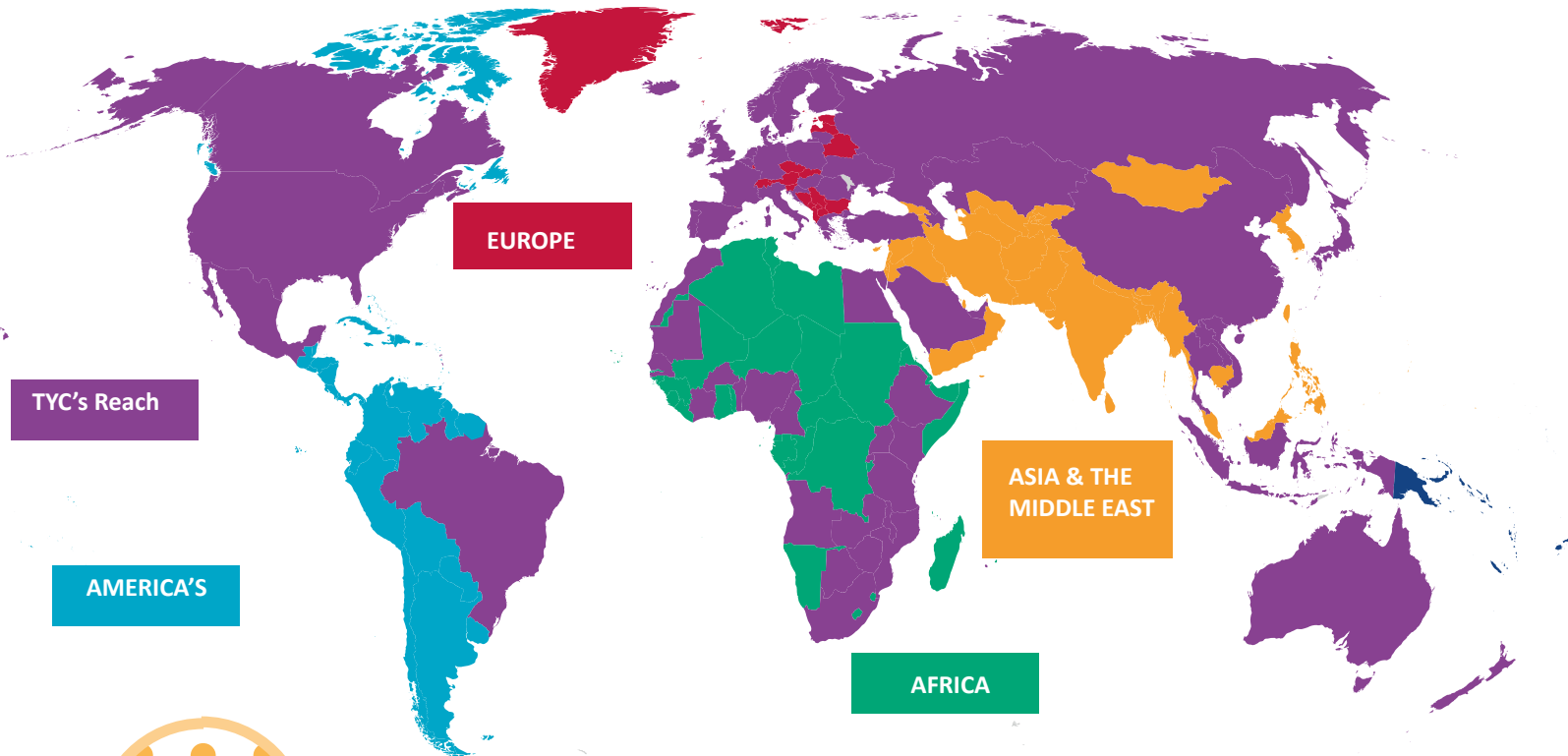**100+**
Social Media Posts

745,000
Impressions

105,000
Facebook Live Views

#LockdownLive #VoiceoftheYouth

THE YOUTH CAFÉ   Sussex Writes

THE YOUTH CAFE'S REACH

EUROPE

TYC's Reach

AMERICA'S

ASIA & THE MIDDLE EAST

AFRICA

+14000 Individual members
+900 Organisational members
+50 Members of Staff

8 Cross sectoral focus areas

80 Countries reached

Annual Portfolio of +1 million USD

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

On 13th March 2020, the history of Kenya shifted as we recorded the first COVID-19 case. 21st June marked 100 days from the day the pandemic hit the country, and the ministry of health has recorded 4, 738 cases of coronavirus in total since then .
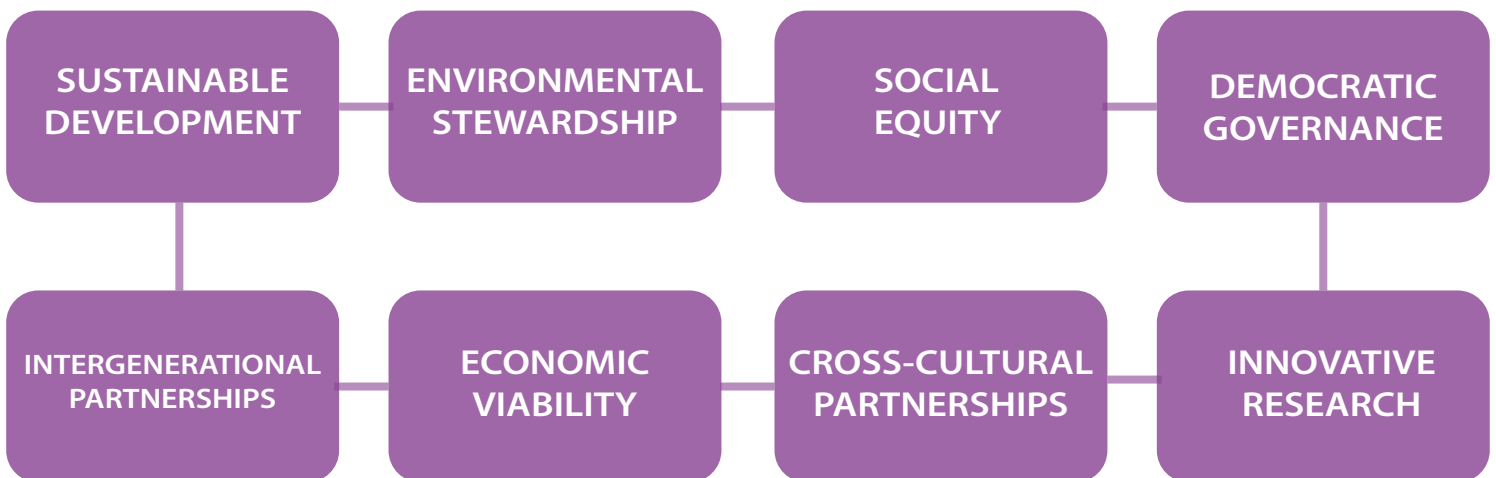The novel disease was encroaching our life and causing various undesirable changes not only in Africa but around the world. It was thus necessary to develop measures to counter the challenges that the disease has presented and also develop strategies to survive the new normal created by COVID-19.

The Organization

The Youth Café is a youth-led, pan-African nonprofit organization founded in Kenya in 2012 and incorporated in 2014 as a company limited by guarantee. Our strategy has focused on today's youth bulge in Africa, seeing it as an opportunity for development and economic growth. Working across eight program areas critical to Africa's youth. The Youth Café models, inspires, informs, and advances youth-led approaches for:

FIGURE 1: THE YOUTH CAFE'S PROGRAM AREAS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	SOCIAL EQUITY	DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE
INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	ECONOMIC VIABILITY	CROSS-CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS	INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

To date, we have reached 1.6 million young people across Africa. We pride ourselves in our commit -ment to elevate youths and their quality of life. Even with the challenges we are facing, we believe that the youth remains to be an integral part of the country's prosperity. The Lockdown Live program reported here is in line with the organization's effort to fulfill our purpose.

Ministry of Health, "Kenya Marks 100 Days Since That First Case of Covid 19 Nairobi, Sunday June 21, 2020," accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.health.go.ke/kenya-marks-100-days-since-that-first-case-of-covid-19-nairobi-sunday-june-21-2020/.

Themes in the Report

We saw governments invoking executive powers and calling for extraordinary measures, such as lockdowns, quarantines, and increased surveillance in response to COVID-19. In the absence of sunset provisions, civic space contract and freedoms of assembly, privacy and expression may be negatively affected, silencing young people's calls for change. Moreover, these unprecedented restrictions by governments can leave advocates less protected against attacks and threats. Thus, following The Youth Café COVID-2019 Policy, we launched **Lockdown Live**— a series of webinars aimed at strengthening the meaningful engagement with the youth, amplifying their voice and actions in supporting the expansion of civic spaces and advancing civic engagement. This was achieved in collaboration with creative writing students involved with *Sussex Writes* at the *University of Sussex* and S*OS Villages Kenya Youth.* Sussex Writes gives students at the University of Sussex a space to ex -plore their talents, with the aim of sharing a love of literacy and creativity with the wider community and with the ultimate aim of widening participation into higher education. They are represented by members from the UK, Nigeria and Indonesia.

The series featured a global exchange of experiences, problems, ideas and youth-led solutions to the COVID crisis both now and in the immediate future. The global aspect to the conversations invites collaboration between the twelve nations represented during the conversations and dismantles bor -ders in new and vital ways in order to address a global crisis. Through this webinar series, young people from Africa and around the world had the opportunity to exchange ideas and strategies amongst themselves and other stakeholders. Youth representatives discussed the impact and conse -quences of the current COVID-19 pandemic on civic spaces. Young people also presented successful examples of their contribution to the COVID-19 in their communities. The webinar was carried out in parts where youths developed ways to deal with COVID-19 and the upcoming issues. During these webinars, the youths came up with ways to initiate learning and to encourage the youth to increase their skills during these trying times. This report presents the programs that The Youth Café has taken in information articulation, mental health, and learning during the lockdown period.

Lockdown Live Process Chart

The project team from The Youth Café and Sussex Writes were determined to develop Lockdown Live as a reliable and informative series to educate and inspire conversations. Below is a figure that represents the actions they agreed upon for actionable input during the process:
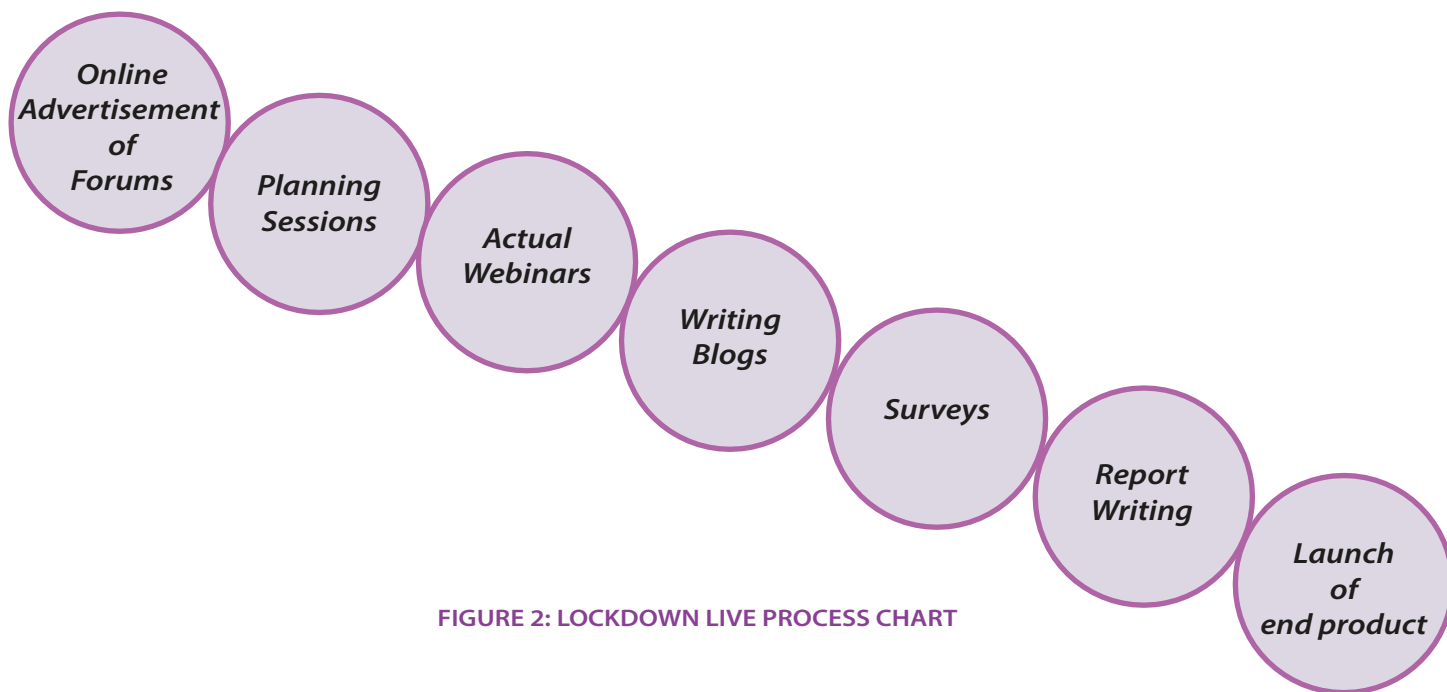
The initial stage involved producing and sharing digital posters in order to create awareness about the series. The posters were posted on social media platforms, specifically Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. During the planning session, key people in the project came up with questions and con -cerns they would love to address during the webinar. After adequate preparation and insight into the goals of the series, the actual webinars took place where candid conversations on various themes were used to generate new knowledge.

Participants were then urged to write perspective blogs which are published on the website while some were incorporated in this report. This report is thus a product of participant views, webinar discussion with experts, blogs, baseline and impact survey and Optimized Search Engine (OSE) research. The launch of this research during the Youth month (August) was an intentional decision to model and inspire youth participation in issues that matter.

Tapestry of Evidence

The organization has committed its resources towards advocacy and uplifting the youth. Below are some referential images which are evidence of the work we were doing during the lockdown:

LOCKDOWN LIVE

MONDAY, JUNE 12th
12:00pm UK
2:00pm KENYA

Finding Youth-led Solutions to COVID-19

The first in a series of Global Youth Events brought to you by TheYouth Café and Sussex Writes

#1 LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

THE YOUTH CAFÉ
Empower | Amplify | Connect

Webinar Series on
Young People and COVID-19
THE YOUTH CAFE Response to COVID-19

Topic: COVID-19 101, Separating Fact from Fiction

Sheku S. Kamara
Creative Entrepreneur, Filmmaker and THE YOUTH CAFE Creative Designer
|Moderator|

Stacey Fru
THE YOUTH CAFE Ambassador
|Key Speaker|

LIVE
facebook.com/TheYouthCafe1

#YouthAgainstCOVID19

Thursday 7th May

3 p.m. East African Time

#TheYouthCafe
Empower | Amplify | Connect

Join The Youth Cafe and Sussex Writes as we discuss

The Internet and Digital Misinformation

On our third session of
Lockdown Live

"A conversation with the young people, for the young people"

Friday, 26th June
12pm UK time
2pm EAT

LIVE

THE YOUTH CAFÉ
Empower | Amplify | Connect

Sussex Writes

LOCKDOWN LIVE

THE YOUTH CAFÉ
Empower | Amplify | Connect

Sussex Writes
a student-led creative writing programme
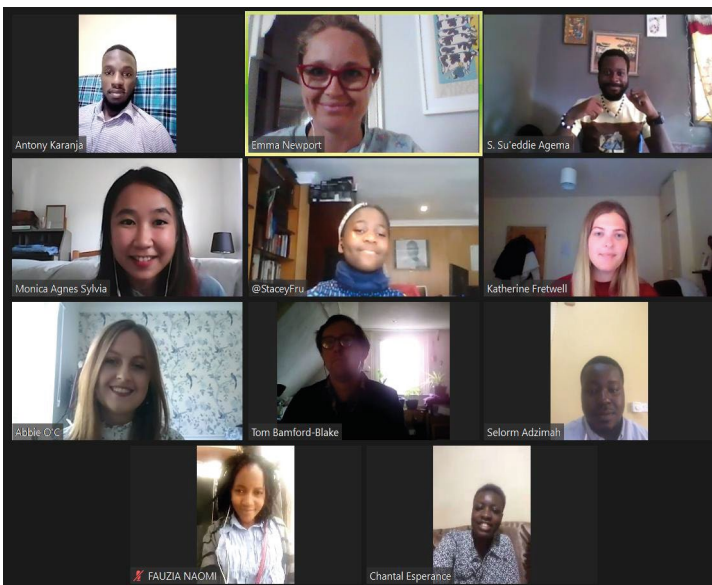
#2 Mental Health during the COVID-19 Crisis

FRIDAY, JUNE 19th
Facebook Live

The second in a series of Global Youth Events brought to you by The Youth Café & Sussex Writes

12:00 GMT
14:00 EAT

Over 35 Global Youth Participants

CHAPTER 1: LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

Introduction

As a highly communicable respiratory disease, COVID-19 has resulted in bans on public gatherings in a number of countries. which has made schools change their learning schedules to fit the growing challenges. Schools have made unforeseen and abrupt alterations like school closure and suspension of learning for others. While some schools decided to embrace learning through lockdown, it is a challenging and adaptive issue that teachers and students have to grapple with in this period (Reimers et al., 2020). An annotated form of education to engage students through digital means is elevating the capacities of educational institutions and how they deliver content to learners. The pandemic has demanded the elevation of professionalism for teachers and technological acuity for students.

The immediate effect of COVID-19 on higher education has been the suspension of formal learning in schools (IESALC, 2020). Other effects are the increasing the financial costs to families as many schools have not waived the fees for students despite the inability to attend classes. In state-funded schools, lack of resources for students and staff for undertaking online teaching means that many students are going without formal education during the school lockdown. These unprecedented changes in the education system have forced people to be creative in supporting their learning initiatives. Public policies have also changed as governance initiatives try to accommodate the changes. Overall, the youth have had to alter their daily routines as they adapt to the new normal. In this chapter, youths talk about the challenges they have experien-ced during lockdown about their education.

> "We now need to begin reflecting on and identifying ways of rebuilding in the wake of the crisis. Young people today will carry the legacy of this crisis forward. We hope to ensure that this legacy is not merely a burden but a chance to do things differently".
>
> Dr. Emma Newport, Founder of Sussex Writes

LOCKDOWN LIVE
#1 Learning in Lockdown
Friday. June 12th
12:00pm UK
2:00pm KENYA

> "The global crisis is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. [...] Lockdown Live is giving a space for young people to work on solutions and share best practices to address this pandemic".
>
> Mr Willice Onyango, Director of The Youth Café

Friday.
June 12th
12:00pm UK / 2:00pm KENYA

LOCKDOWN LIVE
#1 Learning in Lockdown

Dose of knowledge
Prioritizing Play over Pen and Paper: What COVID Can Teach Us About Education.
By Emily Askew

On March 18th, the UK prime minister announced the closure of nurseries, schools, and colleges "until further notice" in order to prevent further spread of COVID-19 across the country. The daily routines of children, and their parents/careers, were overthrown to the pandemic's ruthless path through the nation. So, on the Friday, school-gates closed on formal education in the UK, as we knew it pre-COVID. Across the globe, educational establishments have taken similar precautions as we battle with Coronavirus, and children have been absent from their institutions of education from as far back as January. But by how much are children truly 'missing out'? With a tragic global death toll of over 468,500 (as of June 22, reported via John Hopkins University tracker) the world seems geared to a negative mindset but some adaptations made during this time open up
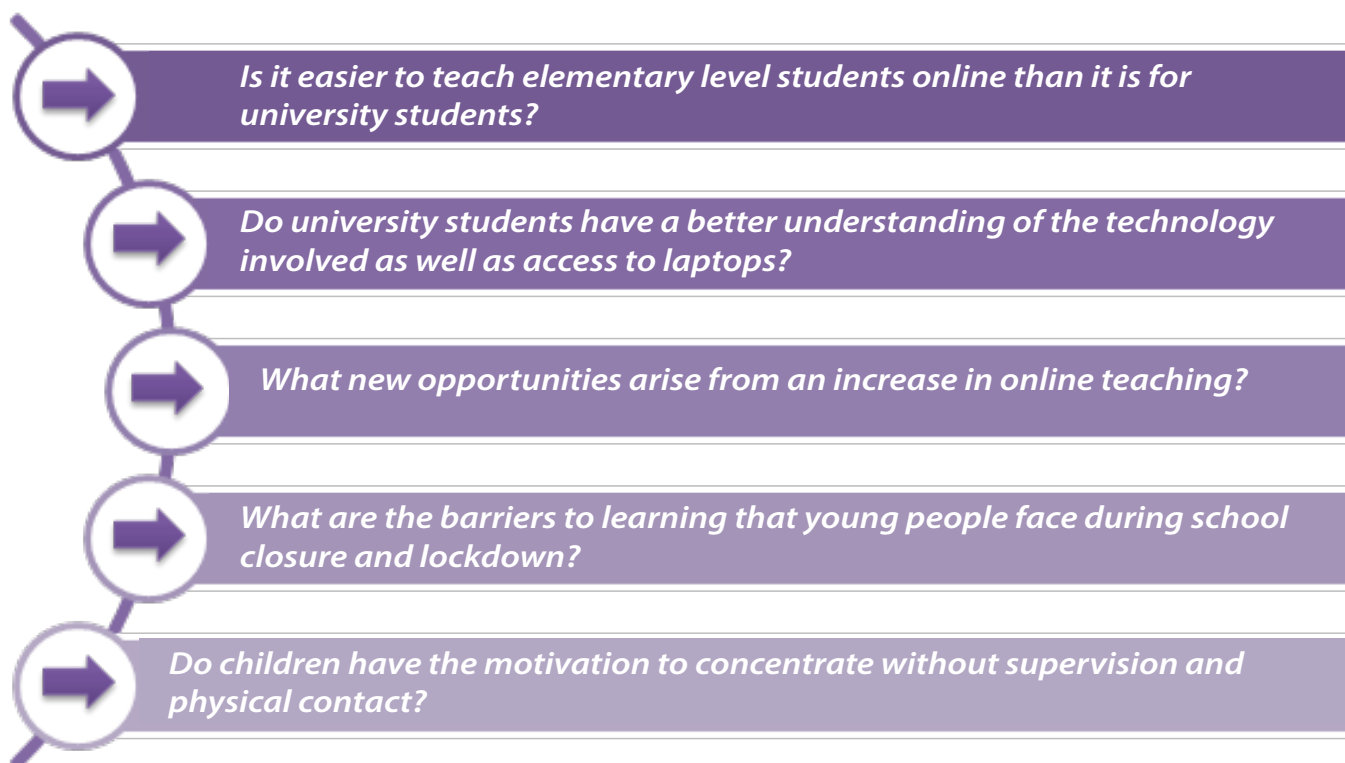
conversations of change and progress, rather than for just the immediate protection for our current climate. There, of course, remain hugely influential factors upon educational advantages, such as socio-economic status, familial setting, individual circumstances of the children and family, offering vast avenues of debate regarding educational influences. Nonetheless, (in a very generalized perspective) with the majority of chil -dren in the UK not currently attending their usual educational facilities, practices of play and instinctive exploration have, to varying degrees depending on these factors, replaced the strategic formality of assessment criteria across the board of education...... (*Continued in -Our Perspectives*).

Webinar
Pre-meeting

On 8th June, in preparation for the webinar on 12th June 2020, The Youth Café assembled to brainstorm the issues that the youth were facing regarding learning in lockdown. The questions that lingered during the session were:

FIGURE 3: ISSUES WITH LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

Is it easier to teach elementary level students online than it is for university students?

Do university students have a better understanding of the technology involved as well as access to laptops?

What new opportunities arise from an increase in online teaching?

What are the barriers to learning that young people face during school closure and lockdown?

Do children have the motivation to concentrate without supervision and physical contact?

Since the pandemic changed the curriculum and the way learning was traditionally done, it was necessary to have this conversation with the youth who make a high percentage of learners.

Meeting
On 12th June 2020, the youth talked about the changing sphere in learning for students and teachers. participants explained that the pandemic had changed the way they interact with their teachers and how classes were conducted. This change has called on institutions and teachers to work harder in en -gaging their students. Below are some of the issues raised in the conversation on school curriculums and COVID-19 during the webinar.

Jennifer: As the founder of Teach for Change Nigeria, I wonder how students in public schools will catch up to their private school counterparts as access to laptops and phones is an issue. Unfortunately, similar outcomes are expected.

Emma: In our primary and secondary schools, a history of substantial budget cuts have left us with few resources and more significant needs. The UK, in general, is resigned to finding more creative solutions to technological access. The assumption is that everyone has access.

Su'Eddie: In Nigeria, most students in secondary schools were heavily reliant on school resources. Now that they are closed, access to the internet and reading materials is posing a challenge to learning.

Emma: The BBC has expanded its free educational resources, using radio and the internet as well as television.

The above comments are proof of the new challenges that students combated due to Coronavirus. The privilege of social class was presented in the affordability of phones and other technological devices. Digital learning requires access to digital devices and internet connectivity, which is a luxury for some students. Those that cannot afford to get these services constantly miss the opportunity of learning amid the pandemic. The dependence on mainstream learning institutions has made online transition harder since the access of resources is limited.

Njoh: In Cameroon, WhatsApp group study is hindered by a lack of electricity supply. Younger students are distracted and need support from parents to learn from home. Most parents are either unavailable or illiterate.

Candy: Let us not forget that lecturers and tutors have similar issues of access to computers and networks. This totally disables education as they cannot deliver. We have taken teachers for granted in the past, and it is time we influence policy change to improve learning and take care of teachers.

Maureen: Gender-ascribed roles put female students at a disadvantage as most time at home is spent in doing house chores. Children, in general, have a responsibility to assist at home, thus pressed for time to concentrate on school work.

Emma: The attainment gap is evident in the UK as our country is led by a group of privately educated people from the same school, in a country of 60 million people. At one point, old Etonian Boris Johnson's cabinet consisted of two-thirds privately educated people, when only 7% of the population attend private school.

For some countries, despite schools providing online resources, the lack of basic amenities such as water and electricity is limiting students' access. Prolonged power outage or lack of basic needs is putting some students in compromising situations where they have to choose between helping at home, seeking paid work and seeking an education. COVID-19 has exposed the intersectionality of social issues affecting us. Issues such as gender, poverty, and regressive political decisions have manifested in the challenges of learning.

Emily: I studied sociology at A-level in the UK. The educational focus is something I am really passionate about. The attainment gap is mainly between genders, race, and socioeconomic status. As access becomes more difficult now, huge concerns open up to try and close the gap. Online learning is one such solution, but only if people can get access to internet and technology.

Emily B. : I, for, example, due to my health issues, would not have applied for university education at all had I not been offered online education

Muratcansen: Our mobile operators and the government give cellular data to students for online classes. It is not enough for every month. Worse off, certain students lack the phones or laptops to even use them.

Njoh: Parents are putting the lives of their children at risk by having them hawk things in the streets of Cameroon.

Cynthia: In Meru, Kenya, the hubs for illicit brew continue to make money off child prostitution. The parents of these children just punish the children as the cartels bribe local law enforcement to comply. Children here would be much safer at school than at home.

Students from low and middle-income countries are also facing a moral, economic and social issue due to COVID-19. Lack of income for families has made children resort to manual labor, which could endanger the lives of children. While emphasis from the health sector is to stay home during the pandemic, bending such guidelines for children endangers them even more.

Antony: Exams in Kenya have not been moved despite these inequalities. This, again, is a difference between universities and other students. They would be more versed in dong exams online.
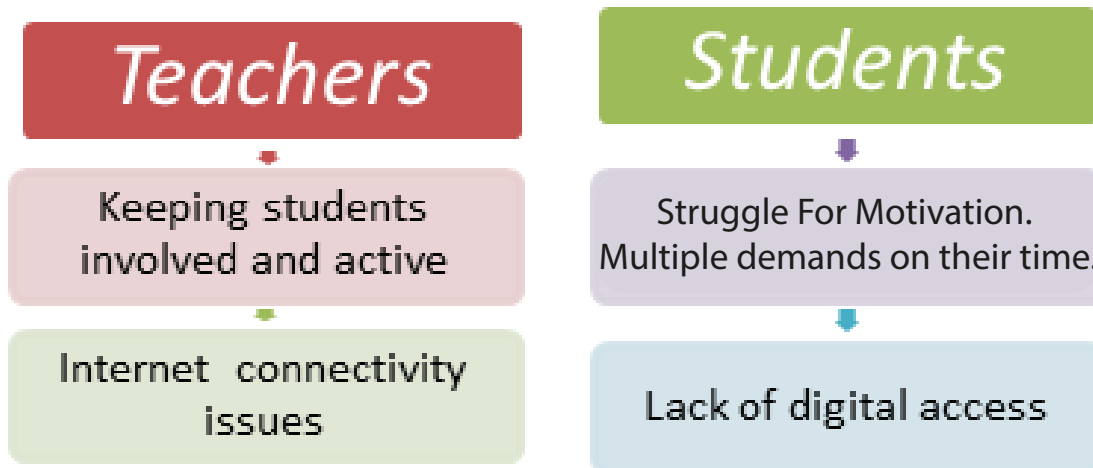
Candy: Should schools open in September, how social distancing would be implemented given the overpopulation in schools. The teacher-student ratio is not good to support smaller class sizes.

Emma: in terms of solutions, there are three ways to look at it, HOW small immediate ways can have a considerable impact, WHO we need to put the pressure on, and WHAT policies need change.

Cynthia: A teacher friend of mine and I are thinking of small-sized tuition classes offered at an affordable price daily, at the convenience of the students. With this money, she can cater to her needs as she is temporarily unemployed, while I earn enough to buy bundles for my university studies.

Su'Eddie: WhatsApp has been posing a challenge, so most teachers depend on televised shows or those aired on radio.

Even though learning in lockdown suffices for some students, conversations on what should be done after lock -down are revealing other major challenges. The teacher-student ratio is high in Kenya meaning that many schools are over-populated (Biwott, M., & Kimwolo, D.A. [2020]). There is a high risk of getting Coronavirus if the government decides to release students to school despite the prevailing disease. Policy making for ministers has to include a range of solutions that are actionable for the ongoing changes.

Teachers	**Students**
Keeping students involved and active	Struggle For Motivation. Multiple demands on their time.
Internet connectivity issues	Lack of digital access

As presented above, the conversations in the webinar took the depth of the issues that learners are facing today. It is evident that the pandemic has taken a toll on learners at different levels of education. The discussion showed that many students are having a hard time coping with learning at home. We discovered that many learners in were going through a crisis in balancing their chores at home and their responsibilities as students. There is an intersection of gender and learning during lockdown since many female students are culturally ascribed house chores. The issue for teachers is not only to ensure learning but to advocate for gen -der sensitivity during this period. Finding the sweet spot between house duties and learning initiatives is made even more challenging by the lack of technology access-which has become the primary method of teacher-student communication.

Bold reads: About 60% of the world's student population has been affected by country closures, UNESCO

Our Perspective

The pool of talented youths in our organization wrote blogs on the issues discussed in the series. Youths continued to disclose the way their education programs had been affected by Coronavirus.

(Continued from –Doses of Knowledge by **Emily Askew***)*

...As students of all ages across the UK geared up for their summertime exam season, the closures meant that even the earliest of exams were canceled for many students: 11-year-old pupils could not take their Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) that have, for many years, faced criticisms regarding their authenticity and true effec -tiveness as a results system. Further along the chain, 16 year-olds and 18 year-olds have had their exams for qualifications of general education (GCSEs), and Further Education (A-levels or equivalent) halted, instead of replacing results with average prediction grades. Politically, schools have missed out on their most important term - the one that produces the quantitative evidence of their 'success.' So what have children been doing, since March? Well, this, again, is very dependent on individual circumstances. Many reports in the media have highlighted the risks for child protection during this time: many children use educational establishments as their safe haven, and safeguarding procedures are unable to hear these children when they're in a lockdown at home. Similarly, educational inequalities have become a prominent concern for teaching associations, where

wealthier families might be able to afford private tuition during these times, for example, and put their children in a higher academic position. But in a more positive light, lockdown, in general, has given the world a slower pace - fewer people are out working strenuous long days away from home, and students of all ages have been out of the educational rigor . For children who are currently in school (as of 1st June, children were allowed to return to reduced-size classrooms), the lower ratios of students to teachers, and greater utility of outdoor learning spaces, combined with the relaxed learning content has given the opportunity to launch a more ex -ploratory platform for education and a much more accessible opportunity for educators to prioritize student wellbeing. For children who remain at home, similar experiences can be had: children have had the chance to learn, first-hand, about the processes of infection, the importance of hygiene, and the history of such valuable sciences. An 'adventure' in the park can open up a thousand opportunities, given a chance (that we now seem to have). Street after street of houses are decorated with children's' artistic creations of rainbowed thank-yous for our wonderful system of key-workers and National Health Service - this very practice has a multitude of educational conversations behind it, and a plethora of inspirations for young minds.

Of course, it is vital to recognize that this is NOT the experience of everyone - many children will have suffered through missing the routine, or protection, of their schooling, and it is essential that we recognize this, to high -light the true value of our amazing educators across the world. But, the temporary erasure of a strict, fast-paced, and standardized education has allowed teachers and parents alike to relax the strictest curriculum and introduce alternative teaching methods. While assessment processes will not be excluded permanently from teaching and learning processes, and the current COVID climate has forced education to take a new spin on how they learn, what they learn, and why they learn it, both in and out of school. People around the globe have taken this time to recognize and appreciate precisely what they value. I think the world's education systems should take a similar note, too.
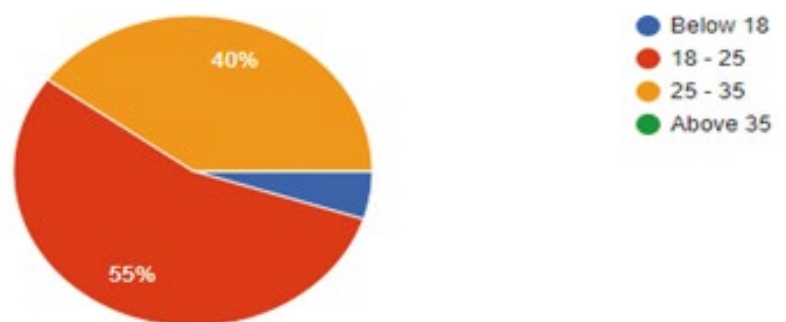
Participants' feedback

The majority of participants in the Lockdown Live series were between 18-25 years, which is the average age for high school and university students and so represented those in upper years of high school or at University. The conversation on learning during lockdown resonated with them deeply. Grappling with the impacts of COVID 19, many

FIGURE 4: LOCKDOWN LIVE FEEDBACK

- Below 18
- 18 - 25
- 25 - 35
- Above 35

students have resorted to finding creative ways to stay active even while at home. Actively learning from home while relying on online resources has been a relief for some people and a challenge for others. Many people were impacted by the discussions we had surrounding learning during a pandemic. In their words:

"Discussing global problems, both those I have personally experienced and those which I have not, broadened my understanding of people's experiences in lockdown and the ways education has been affected. This has given me a much wider understanding of what steps need to be taken to make education accessible for all"

– Participant, impact survey

"Hey. To state the obvious, education is one of the sectors that has been affected the most by the COVID -19 pandemic. It is during these times that I have realized that it is only a small percentage of us that have access to e-learning facilities. The youth are at the core of this issue, as students in high schools and universities and as young professionals in the education industry. I think it is an area that the youth can rise up and develop solutions for ease of access to online learning, bearing in mind that this pandemic might not resolve as fast as we thought it would. #ariseandshine "   - Marie Simonna on Facebook

"I learned different perspectives on the current crisis; learned about student needs and concerns that will feed into my future teaching practice; developed skills in online discussion moderation; met some amazing new people"   - Participant, impact survey

Young voices need to be heard. Our series on "Learning in Lockdown" was successful owing to the high involvement of youth in the activities. The youth are informed and active in finding solutions to modern-day problems. The feedback that the youth gave on the effects of learning in lockdown will act as the planning ground for generating solutions after curbing the pandemic.

Recommendations

The success of Lockdown live and specifically learning in Lockdown can only be seen through actionable points that were developed during the discussions. After creating awareness and conversing with different panelists, the following solutions were developed for the short term or long term challenges of Coronavirus on education.

1. Learners could take advantage of the free online learning resources in different websites and YouTube.

2. Learners without constant access of online resources could form alliances in their capaci -ties to bring fellow students together and learn through discussion in small groups.

3. Governments in different countries should develop ways to support online learning like providing internet bundles and technology hardware to students.

4. Parents should actively play a role in their children's life to guide young people in their educa -tion and help prevent the effects of social problems.

5. Economic support for workers during COVID-19, especially working families, will lead to better educational outcomes for young people, as poverty remains the biggest issue for learn -ing in lockdown.

6. Using radio and mobile phones is important in areas without internet and for people without computers or laptops.

7. Students can learn new skills, especially using technology, that will help them in future work places.

CONNECT

"**Fauzia Naomi** a fourth year awaits graduation this year 2020, an undergraduate student of Economics and Statistics at the University of Nairobi. She has a keen interest in youth empowerment and women leadership. Her dream is an Africa where every woman and youth are free from poverty, having access to opportunities for employment and decision-making platforms while ensuring no one is left behind.

She is also passionate about African prints and is a strong aspiring entrepreneur in African interior designs. She is a firm believer in big dreams and realizing them."

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*"Many students in the UK are also struggling to maintain their studies in a Covid-19 world. Some university students without access to the technology needed to continue their education off-campus have been advised to take a leave of absence until they can resume their studies in-person. The issue has been taken with this move, which appears to demonstrate (intentionally or not) preferential treatment to students who have access to laptops and WiFi or the financial means to obtain it". - **Emily Bailey**

AMPLIFY

*"As students of all ages across the UK geared up for their summertime exam season, the closures meant that even the earliest of exams were canceled for many students: 11-year-old pupils could not take their Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) that have, for many years, faced criticisms regarding their authenticity and true effectiveness as a results system. Further along the chain, 16 year-olds and 18 year-olds have had their exams for qualifications of general education (GCSEs), and Further Education (A-levels or equivalent) halted, instead of replacing results with average prediction grades. Politically, schools have missed out on their most vital term - the one that produces the quantitative evidence of their 'success". –**Emily Askew**

"**Maureen Mwihaki Mwangi** is a first year student pursuing a diploma in Broadcast journalism at *Kenya institute of mass communication*. She is very passionate about writing and her work has frequently appeared on Daily trends Kenya.

Her posts are alwayspacked with real life situations and experiences ranging from social, economic and political current affairs affecting youth. During her free time, she loves taking photos, reading, broadcasting and editing content. She also volunteers at her college radio station as presenter."

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"**Peter Mungi** is a final year student at *Kenyatta University* pursuing his Bachelors in Sociology- Gender and Development Studies. He has a special interest in advocacy, social Justice and gender Integration for the less advantaged in communities. He wants to see a Kenya one day, where the less advantaged take part in decision-making processes and are part of their social transformation and development.

He strongly believes that the only way the less advantaged can be empowered is to amplify their voices and provide safe spaces for them to actively participate in their own development while appreciating the role of gender in these processes and platforms. Peter loves sports, spends most of his free time playing football, and occasionally writes"

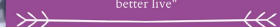**THE YOUTH CAFÉ**
Empower | Amplify | Connect

EMPOWER

"**Neffat Mungai** is a student of Criminology at *Africa Nazarene University*, in his last academic year and awaiting graduation in October 2020. He is very passionate about social justice for the most vulnerable in the society. He is an active sports young person, loves art/culture and adventure.

He believes the world can be a better place for everyone regardless of race or cultural /background if only each one of us became more tolerant and accountable. He is ambitious and hopes to find his space in forums to engage the diverse society and use his voice to ensure the voiceless are heard, understand their rights and have access to opportunities available while ensuring everyone deserves a better live"

THE YOUTH CAFÉ
Empower | Amplify | Connect

CHAPTER 2: MENTAL HEALTH

Emma Newport
Lecturer at the *University of Sussex* and Director of *Sussex Writes.*

"Mental health is defined as "a state of well-being whereby individuals recognize and realize their abilities, are able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their communities" (WHO, 2003).

Introduction

Health is a comprehensive matter that includes the physical and mental state of a person. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the physical health of peo -ple and their psychological abilities as well. Although the focus of many institutions has been in the physical state of human beings during this period, mental health is equally important to help people cope with subsequent problems. Developing countries are facing an immense challenge since they don't have a strong support system for mental health issues. Indeed this was a topic that was vehemently relevant and ideal during this Coronavirus pandemic. The Mental Health Policy developed in Kenya, as a guide towards good health by 2030, has propelled capable organizations to seek ways of tackling mental health in the country (Ministry of Health, 2015).

The guiding principles of mental health action in The Mental health Policy, which is approved by WHO, embraces participatory methods to tackling mental health (WHO, 2005). Participatory methods in solving mental health involve collaborative dialogues as a way to get more knowledge and deliver information. Considering that drastic change is a trigger for mental instability, COVID-19 demanded that people start conversations on mental health and how it affected them. In conjunction with Sussex Writes from Sussex University, we invited youths from all over the world to join us in conversations on mental health. This chapter presents the combined knowledge of all the platforms we used to discuss mental health.

Webinars

Pre-meeting

In preparation for the second phase of Lockdown live the Lockdown live team discussed the way forward in navigating the webinar on mental health.

ISSUES THAT CAME UP

1. Self-Diagnosis - Due to narrowed access to psychological help.

2. Behavioural Reactions to COVID-19 - Resigned attitudes, no productivity, powerlessness and hopelessness, and thus, dissatisfaction with life.

3. COVID-19 Circumstances - Job loss, grief, routine change, child care, financial struggle and future plans change.

4. Generational Stigma - "Millennials are over-reacting" mentality towards health issues.

5. Gender based violence and COVID-19.

FIGURE 5: MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19

We understood the impact of mental health in our life and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Lydia Turner, a qualified psychological therapist at the University of Sussex, shared her insight on the pandemic during the series. Expert discussion forums prove to be impactful and effective when developing new knowledge. During the webinar, panelists asked Dr. Lydia Turner questions on matters mental health in a subsection named "Ask an Expert".

Meeting

Dr. Lydia Turner:
I am a consultant psychological therapist at the Univer-sity of Sussex, UK. My interest in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) means that I am interested in how people think, react and do in response to how they feel. I do and teach.

Katherine Fretwell:
We have been using technology a lot in staying connect-ed with friends and family. We would like to know how this increase in the use of tech and the move to online has impacted people's lives.

Dr. Lydia Turner:
I think it has some good stuff and bad stuff about it. Tech-nology can be an avenue to express how one feels without identifying themselves, yet it could be used to mask one's feelings. People nowadays love that they do not have to walk into a room and have talked to strangers. Yet at this time, those that lack access to technology struggle to work or study.

Dr. Lydia Turner expertly led the discussion on mental health, sharing knowledge on how the pandemic has affected youths and various ways to cope with the situation. She urged people to understand that despite the digital migration, the internet can be both destruc-tive and informative. Technology has made it more comfortable to have friends and connect with others but it can destroy the natural connection that is inspi-red by physical contact.

Esperance:
Do you foresee any changes with regards to approaches in children's and young people's mental health treatments due to the current situation?

Dr. Lydia Turner:
It is challenging to deliver at this time as my patients are anxious to see me, but many are happy to speak to me over a video platform. I think mental health treatment may move to the online platforms.

Antony:
In our preliminary discussion, there is a gendered dimension. Men are affected by their silence, leading to spikes in self-destructive behavior while women are affected by taking on too much. How can we remedy these differences and help the genders? Are we too binary in our approach to mental health?

Dr. Lydia Turner:
I think we are too binary, and we need to be thoughtful because there are patients who do not identify themselves in a binary manner. This may vary from culture, but we need to be careful about our observations. According to my experience clinically, women do seek help more often 2/3 versus 1/3 of men. Men also find it harder. Prince William is running a cam-paign that aims to encourage men using football. Genders communicate differently; girls may verbally express – "I feel/I think…" while boys express non-verbally through behavior. It helps to observe, be diverse in the access and reserve judgment. In the UK, there is a lot of bureaucracy and systems are so westernized and compartmentalized that they do not treat a person as a whole person. Some of my doctoral students have been creating free videos to help reach out to others, which it has helped.

It was enlightening to discuss how COVID-19 has chan-ged for mental health professionals and the glaring changes that have occurred. Anxiety has gotten the better part since many youths are grappling with fear of losing their life. Even then, there are distinct differences in the way women and men seek mental help. While wo-men tend to express their feelings and emotions often through words, men communicate non-verbally through action. Mental health help in different places should con-sider these differences in the planning and execution of mental services. However, even without structured help for mental health, it is necessary for women and men to have group discussions that may translate to relief.

Katherine Fretwell:
How do we help others while protecting ourselves while we might be involved personally with those who are struggling?

Dr. Lydia Turner:
We may not be the best to help out. It is essential to encour-age them to find help and be that non-judgmental voice. We

We need to understand we cannot change people. Our function is to be supportive. For them to change, they need to change how they think and behave. If they do not change and keep pouring out their distress onto us, then it is no good for us, and we need to set boundaries at this point.

Peter Carter:
What are some of the best practices to deal with being in Lockdown?

Dr. Lydia Turner:
Maintaining a routine is good for us. Waking up at a reason-able place in the morning and going to bed at a reasonable time. Incorporate meal times so that you still maintain phy-sical health. Make time for work as well as things we enjoy. It is important to add something that gives us a sense of achievement. Make sure that you are not isolated; online chats, quizzes and conversations would help.

Even with the necessity to support each other and de-velop foundational groups, Dr. Lydia turner explained that of more importance is protection of our mental state. People should understand that giving support for others should not supersede their peace and wellbeing. At this trying time, ensuring that there is a clear plan for how to spend the day may help people develop a sense of order and accomplishment. Even so, time for relaxation and catching up with friends and family should also be emphasized.

Esperance:
Overall, what advice would you give young people on matters new normal?

Dr. Lydia Turner:
We need to accept there are things outside our control. We need to be kind, patient and considerate with each other as well as ourselves. Let us not catastrophize this.
This is not going to last forever.

The youth must talk about mental health at this time, considering that there is a new normal that is both terrifying and unpredictable. Additionally, anxiety may be caused by the many information sources bombard-ing with information on COVID-19, making people

acutely aware that they are amidst a pandemic. As much as the information is necessary, it can lead to more negative thoughts than positive ones. Dealing with the resulting stress is necessary to prevent a rabbit hole of negativity in the society.

"The youth should normalize vulnerability among them since that would inspire deep connections among friends and society. Stigma on mental health is one of the giants that inflate mental health in society. Talking about the challenges brought by Coronavirus with a supportive group causes a feeling of safety, which is necessary during this pandemic."
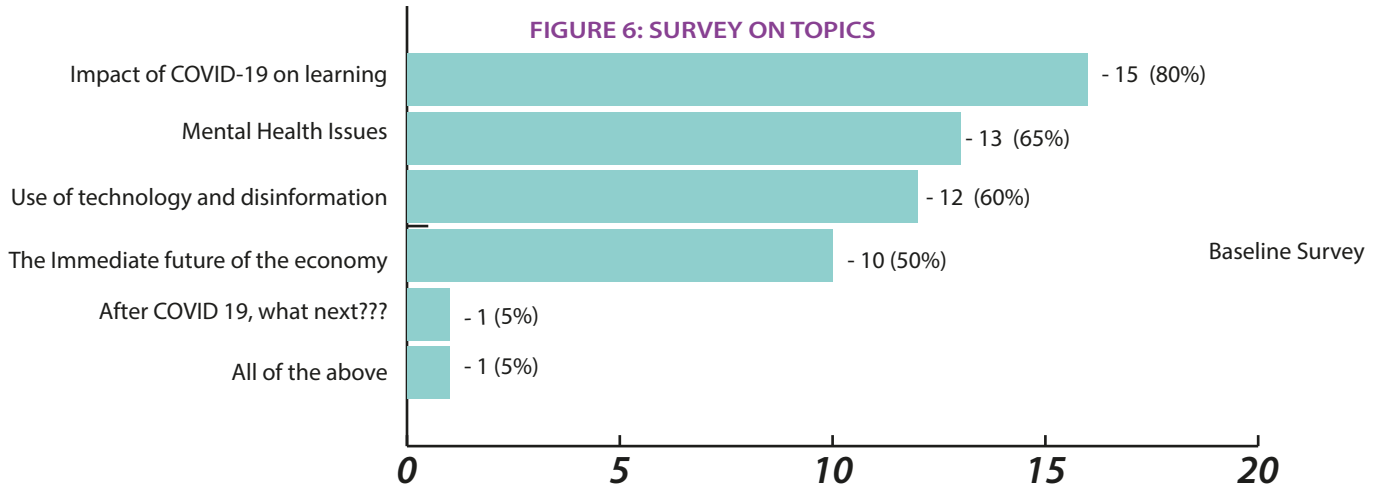
Monica Sylvia

Ask an Expert

Dr Lydia Turner,

Consultant and Psychological Therapist, Sussex Writes

Participants' feedback

Solutions that the youth discussed were in line with the adaptation of a new normal that could help people stay vigilant despite the uncertainty that looms. Despite the disruption of education programs, work, workouts, and other social events, it remains necessary to maintain some normalcy. The participants of the series were very interested in the topic of mental health.

FIGURE 6: SURVEY ON TOPICS

Topic	Value
Impact of COVID-19 on learning	- 15 (80%)
Mental Health Issues	- 13 (65%)
Use of technology and disinformation	- 12 (60%)
The Immediate future of the economy	- 10 (50%)
After COVID 19, what next???	- 1 (5%)
All of the above	- 1 (5%)

Baseline Survey

The speakers encouraged young people to find new habits to dwell on and new goals to pursue. As a techno -logy-savvy generation, the youth can take advantage of the various services on the internet to discover new talents and pick up new habits. This time can be necessary for developing new ideas and engaging with other youths. When the youth find hobbies during this quarantine period, they are likely to stay efficacious. The enga -gement of the youth in this series was much appreciated and it seemed to resonate with them greatly. In their words:

"I get excited when I see the youth embracing discussions about mental health, an issue that is surrounded by so much stigma because of misinformation and unwillingness to change our minds"

- Marie Simonna, Facebook User

"Underlying anxiety has been exacerbated by the global crisis, sense of isolation, lack of face-to-face contact with loved ones, and limited opportunities to go outside".

- Participant, survey

"In addition, I also think if our mind, body and soul are in harmony, we can achieve self awareness and thus self care is achievable. We can truly only help others if we have achieved self care.
Nice Conversation guys! Very insightful. We continually need to normalize being vulnerable"

- Momz Maureen Amuhinda, Facebook user

Our Perspective

Many youths are feeling anxious and worried about their families, their wellbeing, and their routines. Arnold Munene explains the exacerbating changes on mental health developed by COVID-19 in the following blog.

Mental Health

By Arnold Munene.

The new novel coronavirus has impacted the lives of many people negatively especially their mental and physical wellbeing. Evidently, mental health issues are on the increase as cases increase in the country further paralyzing the lives of Kenyans. The government measures to cushion the spread, which include school closure, ban-ning social gatherings and temporal unemployment, has led to great isolation.

The psychological impacts for many people include high levels of stress, fear and anger which may be a result of unplanned changes. For many people fear has been triggered by the awareness by low probability of survival. Many people are struggling with recurring questions on the situation such as:

*Am I going to die?
*How are my friends and families?
*Will I get infected?
*What if I get infected?

The constraint of movement coupled by the anxiety developed as a result of the situation, is causing mental strain. The down-side is that people may result to bad habits like alcoholism to numb their feelings. Unfortunately, without education on how to curb mental issues, people are likely to delve into a rabbit hole of misconstrued methods of dealing with issues. Addiction is a likely consequence of drug abuse which may later evolve to weakening immune system.

The possibility of mental disorders is heightened by feelings of helplessness which are triggered by more problems. Com-plications like physical weaknesses, lack of economic power and weak support system would trigger psychological cha-llenges.

Additionally, this disease is likely to considerably affect elderly people and those with underlying health conditions such as lung, heart disease or diabetes since their immune system may be compromised. People should embrace lifestyle changes that improve their metabolism and fitness towards fighting diseases. Lifestyle changes to consider are:

*Eating healthy meals and avoiding junk food as much as possible
*Having a working exercise routine
*Avoiding overworking
*Watching trusted news channels that provide updated news concerning coronavirus.
*Keeping up with friends and, family through telephone calls or online platforms
*Indulging in other hobbies
*Washing your hands and sanitizing regularly

WHO is working to provide guidance and advice during the coronavirus pandemic for health workers, people looking after children, older adults, people in the isolation and members of the public to generally help us take care of ourselves. Despite the negativity that results from the pandemic, there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

COVID-19 has inspired continuity of information sharing among people. The information that the youth shared concer-ning mental health has helped them cope with the situation while protecting their thoughts.

Recommendations

The expert discussions in the webinar provided much needed insight by the youth and wider society. Arguably, by having conversations in the webinar, even the panelists developed a sense of relief from the spiraling environment as Coronavirus cases skyrocket. The vastness of information sources in the series led to the following recommendations.

1. Mental health is a serious issue that individuals should acknowledge. This revelation calls for awareness and intentionality in managing our health.

2. Governments and associated organizations should develop elaborate mental health programs for people.

3. Developing a sense of normalcy during the pandemic helps increase positivity towards life.

4. Acknowledging mental challenges and actively seeking for help is the most important step in the process.

5. Having a strong support system lessens the likelihood of mental issues. People are thus advised to develop strong friendships and communication system.

6. Taking care of our physical health often translates to elevated mental wellbeing. As such, people should exercise and eat healthily.

CHAPTER 3: MISINFORMATION

Introduction

Is COVID-19 a myth? Is the government lying about the facts? Should I wear a mask? Can I cure COVID-19 through herbs?

The above questions are only but a few concerns that the youth had regarding this invasive disease. These are questions we could see on the internet where everybody could chip in with their own theory and concerns. Social media has become the new hub of infotainment and debates on a range of issues.

The speed of information dissemination is appealing, although it can turn into a nightmare when the information that is widely spread is not factual (Rathinaswamy et al., 2020). Ironically, people tend to over sensualize information in an attempt to make it viral, overlooking the result of these actions. There is great danger in miscommunication because it leads to arrogance and ignorance, which in this case meant more exposure to Covid 19. People are hungry for information, and with the ubiquity in social media, contesting information is making the work of health workers more difficult. Existing falsehoods involved the nature of the disease, its prevalence, and cures, which were desperate attempts to ignore the glaring pandemic. The world health Organization appealed to organizations and volunteers to ensure that people get information that is true and accurate to avoid any chaos.

Webinars

Pre-meeting

The Youth Café steered a series to empower people through accurate coronavirus information necessitated by the myths and misconceptions that were circulating on the internet. The lockdown live planners came up with the following questions to steer the discussion:
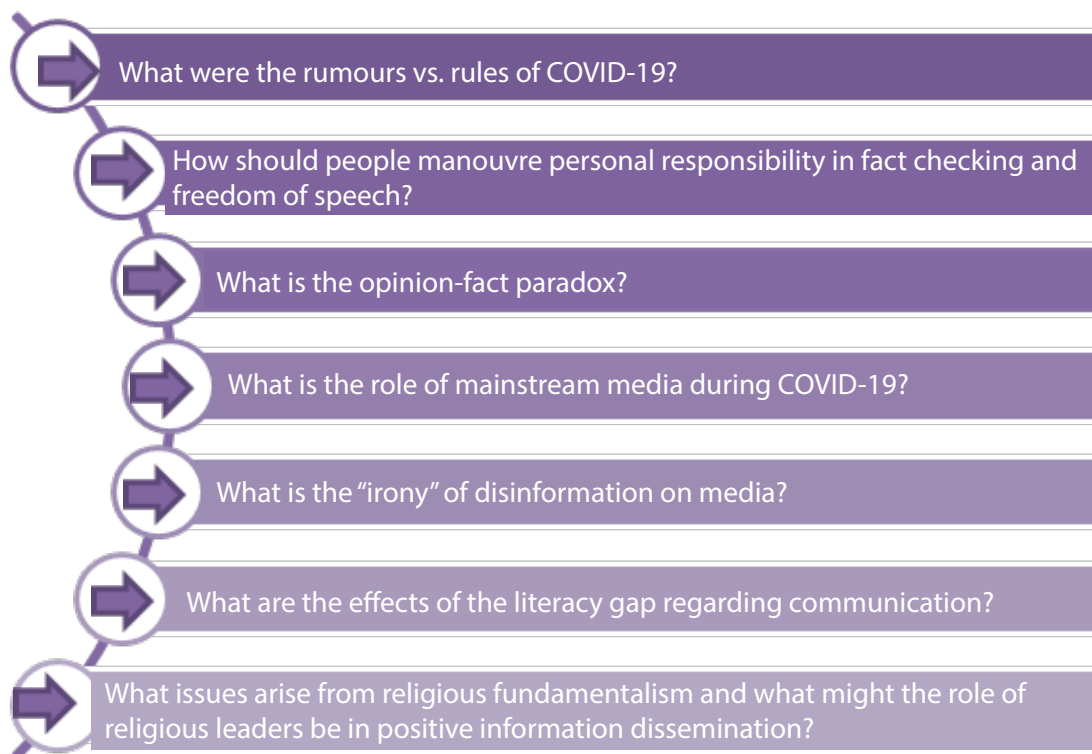
What were the rumours vs. rules of COVID-19?

How should people manouvre personal responsibility in fact checking and freedom of speech?

What is the opinion-fact paradox?

What is the role of mainstream media during COVID-19?

What is the "irony" of disinformation on media?

What are the effects of the literacy gap regarding communication?

What issues arise from religious fundamentalism and what might the role of religious leaders be in positive information dissemination?

FIGURE 7: MISINFORMATION AND COVID-19

Meeting

On 7th May 2020, a youth-led conversation titled "Separating fact from fiction" was launched on Facebook. The key speakers were Sheku Kamara and Stacey Fru. For the purpose of the discussion, the terms disinfor -mation and misinformation are defined as; the accidental speed of false information and the intentional spread of incorrect information, respectively.

Antony: I recall an incident where I was on public transport and this lady said something that hit home:

Me: *Why don't you have a mask on?*

Lady: *If it is God's will that I live throughout this I will; but if my end is to die in it, I am ready.*

There is a very thin line between religion and ignorance. It can be both a blind spot and a leaning of hope yet it is important to do what you can; not to expose yourself while testing your faith.

Emma: Religious leaders can play a positive role in spreading accurate information to people. WHO, the governments and religious leaders can have positive partnerships that help in this crisis.

Lynn: I second: blind faith is weaponized against the public; misquoting religious books to manipulate people.

Tom: Not all sources are equally reliable. Learning to recognize what reliable sources are is a skill set.

Minutes into the meeting, the panelists were already pinpointing the challenges that many people face on miscommunication. An intersection of religion and health was clear in the experiences narrated by the pane -lists. Some people believe that faith supersedes the information given by medical professionals.
When people start believing in such notions on what the disease is and what it can do, it may lead to defiance towards prevention mechanisms. Finding factual and relevant information is the only way to make informed decisions at any time just as emphasized in our conversation.

Lynn: Most people rely on Twitter...it gives timely information, international communication which enables comparison for solution sharing, international relations is better. We need to realize propaganda is spread on social media and this makes us vulnerable.

"…during COVID-19 anxiety levels are high; people cannot wait to get informed over more reliable sources like the News."

"…there are many social media accredited experts out there that give opinions as factual information. This culminates in loss of confidence in the government and law enforcement."

"Anxiety increase, if not monitored, could result in mental health issues."

Sophie: "…97% of statistics on the internet are made up! You can make those say whatever you want them to say…" *

Tom: It is important to acknowledge that we can be misled and share information with each other and our experiences so as to compare information and provide insights as to how we are dealing with this information that we get.

Katherine: Educating people starts at home, let us take initiative.

Propaganda has always been an issue with social media since information is highly politicized. The pandemic period is no difference since people are looking for ways to compensate for their anxiety and worries. However, there are some online sites that are good for factual communica-tion. Many trusted organizations like WHO are now running their social media pages to counter the misinformation that happens around the issue. Even with the development of such verified online pages, rogue information still spreads in the internet. Mental health challenges can spread as a result of wrong and misinterpreted information.

*The 97% statistic figure mentioned here was also made up by the participant jokingly to emphasize her point.
This is but only an example of how easily figures can be invented and made up.*

Maureen: We should encourage reliance on Ministries of Health and WHO for information that is factual credible and reliable.Before sharing information, verify first. Also ensure it would not have a negative impact on someone.

Neffat Mungai: Relay information in a way that is culturally inclusive and free from ambiguity so that it is not easily misinterpreted.

Antony: Fact checking boils down to us at a personal level.

"Translation allows for meaning to be lost in translation especially with a professional without local lingo."

Derrick: Authentic information is scientific (evidence), human rights(ethics) and solidarity (supportive information).

It is easy for people to feel paralyzed when they don't know which information is factual and ethical to share online. It was necessary to mention different ways that people could verify the information they get from various sources. Since COVID-19 is a medical challenge, the most secure and sure way to determine relevance information is to fact check with such organizations as WHO and national ministries of health since they are spearheading the situation as the bodies in charge. A lot of false information comes from speculation which can be avoided by reading broadly about the subjects in action especially when previous communication was not clear due to language differences. Just like any other situation, truthful information is backed up by facts, statistics and evidence of the situation. These are the factors that would ensure reliable information on COVID-19 just as discussed.

Lynn: Who regulates the government and when do we invoke the freedom of speech… how about a neutral body?

"Open diplomacy, neutrality and utilitarian value is paramount in information sharing."

Katherine: Call-out culture when you see misinformation.

Antony: I think stakeholder involvement is key to regulation policy formulation. We need functioning infrastructure: the government should lead the way, private sector, NGOs and the general public thus diversity for a fair ground thus unbiased policy formulation for censorship. Too much censorship leads to under-information.

Derrick: Transparency and collaboration is the currency of leadership. Transparency is not vulnerability. Sometimes sharing soul and conscience with the people brings trust and legitimizes information from the government.

Lynn: Inclusivity in information sharing where there is personal responsibility and social responsibility to share information with those that lack digital access.

(*In chat:* Myanmar only recently found out about COVID. For the past one year, there has been no internet access.)

Chantal: Stop the tension and spread calmness

Antony: Following the release of vaccines to the public, the international bodies and government should create safe spaces that cushion people from scamming and capitalist whims.

Considering the freedom of speech and liberty of online discussions, the obvious solution to curbing mis-communication as discussed was awareness. When youths are aware of the information shared online, they can use their voice to develop initiative and spread true information. Taking the lead in precautionary measures and information sharing is the surest way that people would ensure they are making changes despite the grave problem of false information. We see the necessity of this information powerhouse, which allows us to easily and quickly share important news about disease prevention. We particularly helped to push the factual preventative measures of washing hands and wearing protective masks.

Participants' feedback

Combating misinformation has helped families in various areas manage their activities without risking their lives. The discussion on the place of Africa in light of the global situation enlighted young people on the grappling issues facing the country and other economies. The conversation helped the youth integrate the lessons learned on the Ebola pandemic and emergency services to Covid 19 responses. The speakers noted that websites such as WHO and respective government ministries were some of the credible information sources about Covid 19. The lessons that the youth have learned in this Covid 19 period on communication are likely to help in analyzing different scenarios in the future.

In the words of the people involved:

"It is so important to explore topics such as these with students both in the UK and internationally; every young person must have their voice heard. Through listening and learning, our team at Sussex Writes and the Youth Cafe in Kenya aim to create a global classroom.

Generating group conversation is essential in the educational and emotional development of young people. I hope that universities and educational institutions recognise conversations like these in their approaches to dealing with the pandemic response."

Join us on Friday, June 26
12:00 GMT
14:00 EAT

Katherine Fretwell
#youthcafe #sussexwrites

"Hearing different people's experiences of misinformation; working through some complex issues as a group (i.e. difference between mis/dis/malinformation, debating the role of mainstream media and state resources); learning and sharing practical ways of combatting misinformation"

- Participant, Impact survey

"I have learnt, particularly from the expert guests, how to critically engage with media and evaluate the messages it is promoting, and to choose reliable news sources"

–Participant, Impact survey

"I came to age at a time when our parents thought so little of social media and the internet, and to them, spending time online was a waste of time. It can be a waste of time, alright. However, it is also this opening to a vast world in which everyone is connected in pursuit of knowledge and exchange of ideas, and I am glad that the landscape is changing as more people are seeing the benefits that the internet is bringing different people. It is on the internet that we are engaging and coming up with ideas that are unique to our generation, and that will set the ground for the youth of another era. #settingthepace"

–thefoodscientistke, Instagram user

Ask an Expert

Ayo Sokale is a young woman in politics; she started off as a civil Engineer. She wanted a new version of adding value, something more hands-on. Here is her story.

Jennifer:
What is your role in politics, how did you get there and why is it important to you?

Ayo:
I loved charity work. My desire was to add value to society. I thought civil engineering was it at the age of 9. When I grew older, I wanted to find something new and that's how I got into local leadership. On graduating from Masters, I worked in a party as part of the executive committee. When the opportunity came up, I took it and got elected May last year. Local councilors have the potential to trans -form local community very much through policy and decisions. These are things that make our lives better, progress that is felt by the lowest economic groups.

Jennifer:
Were you taken seriously given that there are very few young people?

Ayo:
The fact that people ask for more from us since we are local leaders, demands us to be more   competent and -sound.

Esperance:
What has been your biggest challenge dealing with a misinformed community and what are the some' of the sources?

Ayo:
I ensure not to add further to the chaos. Self-control is impe -rative since I wield a lot of influence. I ensure to give well researched news so that I am not part of problem. We should take time to research sources to allow ourselves to process info, avoid having an infodemic and find reputable sources. Many people love a good conspiracy theory but we all have to do better than that even if they are fast-paced and interesting.

Antony:
What are the alternative ways for access issues, and how reliable are they?

Ayo:
Physical presence is underrated. I am a very physical person. Spoken word has much more empathy; yet words are only 30% of our communication. The emotion is important. I have taken to printing out letters and dropping them in the post box. We also utilize notice boards public place where people are prone to visit even in this time.

Emily:
What is the relationship between social media and mainstream media on politics and good governance and what tips can we use to navigate the realms?

Ayo:
Take social media from a distance. This goes a long way in shield -ing yourself from negativity. We were able to change a foul narrative on media that was being spread by the press. Social media can help push forward the right narrative. There is a growing toxic culture, of attacking others, this leads to defen -siveness and there can be no progress then. Relate with whole media in general and find alternative sources. Discussions that breakdown issues like this platform are priceless. It aids under -standing, digs into problem-solving, using expert opinion. Media today lacks depth in headlines thus it is important to be open to different perspectives and these discussions raise the hard questions.

Selorm:
In your perspective, how do you think regulation can be effec -tive albeit government is tempted to control narratives?

Ayo:
I am not pro censorship; I would rather have my feelings hurt than censorship. Not knowing others thoughts limits our capacity to make real change happen. Information provides ability for scrutiny to influence change.

Jennifer:
What is your hope towards a post –COVID-19 future?

Ayo:
I hope for all-round sustainability: economic, social and environmental. The best lesson so far is that we are slowing down; there is less pressure on the environment, less bur -den due to shift in work from office to home which is better. We can do this; adjust and embrace the new normal. The reduced working week and work hours facilitates family unification, more jobs, socialization and less crime.

The once unachievable has become prioritized, such as hou -sing the homeless and moving to online learning. learning. The collective and individual reflections, lessons and shift in priorities make society better, the economy stronger, remedies homelessness, saves the environment, increases cohesion. It has enabled people spend time toge -ther, remain calm, be kind and live mindfully.

Jennifer: Thank you for those enlightening insights. The le -sson is that the responsibility to change everything is collective as much as it is personal.

Ayo:
My last point: we can do a lot to change things. I want to see more young people and more diverse minds in those rooms where decisions are made.

Our Perspective

It all boils down to you: does it deserve your attention?

By Caroline Wanjiku Kamau.

Information is undoubtedly one of the most powerful resources in the world. Even then, when information is misconstrued, it can be a hurdle to development. When we dial back to what informa -tion really means, we see that information is truly the raw data that can help people make decisions. It automatically goes that there is a direct connection between information and decision making. To state the obvious, information has become easier to get and disperse due to intelligent technology. This is an advan -tage when ethics are considered and an avid disadvantage when information is in the wrong hands. One of the troubling pieces of information that I have encountered to this day is the false death of Rowan Atkinson, AKA Mr. Bean. Who would want to kill the mi -llennial childhood hero through the keyboard? Imagine waking up one day only to find out that you are actually dead in a cony headline:

"It is with much grief that we announce Jane Doe's Death after Being Involved in a Grizzly Accident."

globalnews.ca › news › rowan-atkinson-dead-fake-mr-... ▾
Rowan Atkinson not 'dead': Viral Mr. Bean hoax is spreading a ...
Jul 19, 2018 - A video hoax claiming 'Mr. Bean' actor Rowan Atkinson has died is going viral, and it's spreading a computer virus designed to siphon personal ...

www.news18.com › buzz ▾
Mr Bean's Death Hoax Was Just An Attempt to Steal Your Data
Jul 19, 2018 - But Rowan Atkinson unfortunately seems to star in an awful lot of them. The latest death hoax of the 'Mr Bean' star came on Wednesday. But such ...

www.chroniclelive.co.uk › News › Celebs ▾
Posts claiming 'Mr Bean' Rowan Atkinson is dead are FAKE ...
Jul 19, 2018 - Do not share the hoax stories about the Consett born star on Facebook and social media sites.

Such would cause agony to friends and other mental health challenges to state the least.

Information as the bulk of communication can be very powerful in this sense. Now that we are in the middle of the worst 21st-century pandemic, wrong information can easily cause panic and rush decision making. Ethical standards in many online sites are not strictly considered, which explains why there are many false information sources still on the internet. However, before we start pointing fingers, we have to analyze ourselves and verify whether we are part of the problem. How many times have we disregarded the measures laid out by the government? What conversations are we having with friends that could be misleading?

Now that we have our answers, let's continue

Covid-19 has many answered questions which make the perfect loophole for a person seeking to spread wrong information on the internet. The irony of the internet is that information and disinformation sources act like babies seeking a parent's attention. You and I are the parents in this case and with so many sources crying for our attention, it is hard to know which one we should attend. It is exhausting to think that for every truthful piece of information disseminated, there are dozens of wrong information circulating in the same manner. That leaves us with the burden to determine which sources are worthy of our attention.

Yes...you and I have to choose which whiny baby we pick up.

Luckily, we have a strategy to determine which way to go. By finding answers to these three questions, we will definitely know which sources of information to trust:

1.   Who is the source?
2.   How credible is the source?
3.   Is the claim verifiable?

When we make it a habit to find out the answers to questions before reposting and tagging all our friends, we will eventually sieve the unwanted information that often clouds our judgment. We will truly and
-impact the communities that we form online.
but steadily, we will learn to protect ourselves and be ambassadors of a noble course. Leadership starts
you. Dig deeper; don't be fooled by chubby cheeks

Ask an Expert

Sherri Hope Culver -*(Director, Centre for Media and Information and Associate, Temple University, USA.)*

Katie:
What is your role as Director of the Center for News Literacy and what work goes on there?

Sherri:
First, I am thrilled to be here and having the chance to talk to all of you. I would consider my primary role to be a professor. The Centre does a lot of projects like workshops with parents, grant-funded projects, graduate and undergraduate research with students into how the media translates media literacy into content. Global communication is a major interest of mine.

Jennifer:
How would you define malinformation, disinformation and misinformation?

Sherri:
Media literacy is the umbrella word for all these areas. These three terms are like subsets. Media literacy and Media Infor-mation Literacy are different. Media Literacy is mostly used in the US, while the latter is used in the global space. More often than not, misinformation is said to be unintentional, disinformation as intentional and malinformation as sharing incorrect information. It really does not matter how informa-tion is shared rather how it is received because regardless of intention, it can still be equally manipulative and affect the audience. Thus media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and use this information to act.

Esperance:
What has been the greatest challenge in dealing with misin-formation in Covid-19 and what sources do you have for misinformation?

Sherri:
Covid-19 is a serious issue, a matter of life and death not celebrity buzz. It is impossible to instantly help people bridge misinformation. Media literacy is called for and Covid-19 is a clarion call. It is scary that the spread of the virus is hinged on the fact that people are not clear on how they should receive information.

Bailey:
What is the relationship between social media and mainstre-am media on politics and good governance and what tips can we use to navigate the realms?

Sherri:
Media overall is not bad. The way we use it affects communi-cation and the outcome. The person is the mediator of information. Media is constructed by someone. In main-stream media, it may feel big and may be mostly one way communication but that should not delude media literacy. It is easy to fall into the trap of seeing social media as nega-tive. It all starts with being conscious. Then taking action like leading protests for good and channeling young energy into great causes..

Bailey:
How do you think regulation can be effective albeit govern-ment is tempted to control narratives in harmful ways?

Sherri:
It is important to think about government interventions. These are unfathomably huge companies that wield a lot of influence. Government intervention aside, healthy online use, it taps into "it takes a village to raise a child", an old African saying. Stakeholders need to come together like reli-gious leaders, the media industry, educators, the people, civic leadership are just a few example of what is needed to ensure substantive change. In most homes there are few or no rules to how media should be consumed. In this context, the magnitude of influences children are open to means parental guidance is not enough. Primarily, individual ought to be media literate. Sometimes, it is the role of the govern-ment to raise the issue and putting importance on it. Recently, Facebook has gone from absolving themselves of the responsibility of what its users put out, to being part of the move towards better social media spaces. Personal responsibility and education in school assists media literacy.

Jennifer:
Why is it important to be media literate and how does one find credible sources?

Sherri:
Media literacy is an expanded definition of literacy today. The writing and reading actually translates to consumption and authoring of media in every relevant today. It is wrong to abdicate the responsibility to be media literate. About sour-ces, it is not very much the story but the source that you need to explore. Say CNN is your frequent source, go on their website and find out how they decide what goes on public, how they correct errors and their policy on reductions. Reputable news source will be transparent. Don't use, don't spread information from sources without credibility.

Jennifer:
Tell us about how to teach media literacy

Sherri:
It depends on the audience's age. Get the sense of the room. Know where to start and meet them there. Be conversational and relatable to instigate critical thinking. Approach this as mindfulness and consciousness. Teach them to see the rea-son behind the story.

Esperance:
What is your hope towards a post – Covid-19 future?

Sherri:
I am frightened because here in the US most people are not social distancing. Honestly the future is grim but the global universe will recover. The future is about education change. Instantly, teachers have taken to online education, it flipped a switch but this would have taken convincing under normal circumstances. Video conferencing has changed everything. The dilemma is in what is better and adequate online learning and face to face. All I want are hugs.

Esperance:
Thank you! That was a powerful session.

Recommendations

After the depth of information discussed on the topic of information and disinformation, the following recommendations were made to ensure information and disinformation was nipped from the base.

1. People should be clear on the information they consume and disseminate.

2. People should be vigilant in calling out false information to prevent a dis-empowering cycle.

3. Reliable sources of information should be the reference point of all information shared.

4. The only way to defeat COVID-19 is to embrace all the preventative measures by the government.

CHAPTER 4: POST-COVID FUTURES

Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic has turned many lives upside down temporarily and permanently. We cannot help but ask the question: What next after this? Wondering what happens next is not only an individual question but also an institutional and group concern. Taking employment as an example: Many people have been fired due to business closure, minimal resources, and disease risk. The turnover rates are excep -tionally high in institutions where work cannot be done remotely through computer technology (ILO, 2020). Job losses impact the family, youth progress and the health of individuals, and have caused new peaks in domestic violence and gender inequality (Bradbury-Jones, Isham, 2020; Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey, 2020). COVID-19 is a setback to economies such as Kenya, which have struggled with the high unemployment rate for long. The solutions for these gnawing challenges are in the way the government and individuals are handling the effects of Coronavirus.

Businesses are further affected heavily by changes in hours of operation and to the inputs and products they release. Small and medium enterprises make the bulk of businesses in African countries and other growing economies (Etemad, 2013). However, small businesses are more vulnerable to economic crises which expose them to many risks and inefficiencies (International Trade Centre, 2020). COVID-19 has harmed many small businesses which did not have an established foundation: those without sufficient depth of resources do not have the financial resilience to survive for long periods without making profits. The supply sector of businesses has deteriorated greatly due to suspension of flights and strict trade measures. Lockdown has further divided products into essential and non-essential, thus bringing emphasis to trade differences (International Trade Centre, 2020). As a result of lockdown, many Kenyan businesses have slowed down their economic activities (Odihambo, Ngare, Weke, 2020). Since employment has not favored many youths in Kenya, many have resorted to setting up their own small businesses (Okello, 2010). It is these businesses that have then been greatly affected by the pandemic. Business slowdown is a serious challenge that should be managed during and after COVID-19.

The cultural and creative sectors of the economy, including sports, music festivals, art, historical events, tourism, and such, have also suffered significantly (Wanjala, 2020). Many of these businesses depend on crowds and out -door activities which are prohibited during the pandemic. Although some businesses already have structured IT solutions, the majority of activities are reliant on in-person ticket and consumable sales and online solutions do not match these lost revenues and exclude those without sufficient internet access (International Trade Centre, 2020). Today, many youths who set up their own businesses entered the cultural and creative industries, which is now curtailed by the ongoing pandemic. COVID-19 has prompted many businesses to have a strong online presence although that may not be the bulk of their work. Visual artists in Nakuru Kenya have reduced the price of their work to fit the new situation (Heva, 2020). Designers are now relying on making face masks to stay afloat due to the current situation. Many people are hoping for a better post-COVID future where inte -grating online and physical business practices will yield economic success.

However, the world has faced such difficulties in the past from the USA economic recession to the Spanish flu,

which left the economy crumbling in different ways (Dugassa, 2020; Halperin, 2020). In the spirit of togetherness, sharing of knowledge and resources, society will survive the current situation. There are more advanced tech -nological tools and knowledgeable scientists today that spark optimism for COVID-19 control. Government interventions, including but not limited to wide-ranging and reactive stimulus packages and tax breaks, espe -cially for SMEs and lower and middle-income citizens, will help protect and then grow the economy. The disruption of urban commerce functions has translated to some opportunities, such as online commerce. Africa has led the world in innovating non-internet mobile payments and inclusive mobile banking and so is uniquely positioned to continue to provide elastic and creative responses to the changes COVID-19 will bring to economic behaviour (Porteous, 2006; Siegel, Fransen, 2013) The emphasis on online services today begs for operational changes for many businesses; the post-COVID phase will involve changing the structure of businesses and adapting to the adjustments (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Dose of knowledge

Youths have a lot to contribute to the economy since they are learned and exposed to modern challenges that exist. Below are the thoughts of one youth on Post COVID-19 future.

University of Sussex Lockdown Live: Jennifer Chinenye Emelife
At the time the world was stagnant, the Sussex Writes/Youth Cafe Lockdown Series jumped in and offered us an outlet, and a reminder that all isn't exactly hopeless. Every Friday in June, we highlighted issues around COVID-19, including education, employment, misinformation, and the need for young voices in politics. The experience taught me that there are several ways of getting connected; that a pandemic that tore the world apart physically is indeed capable of uniting us all. Interacting with young people like me from across the world taught me that being together transcends borders.
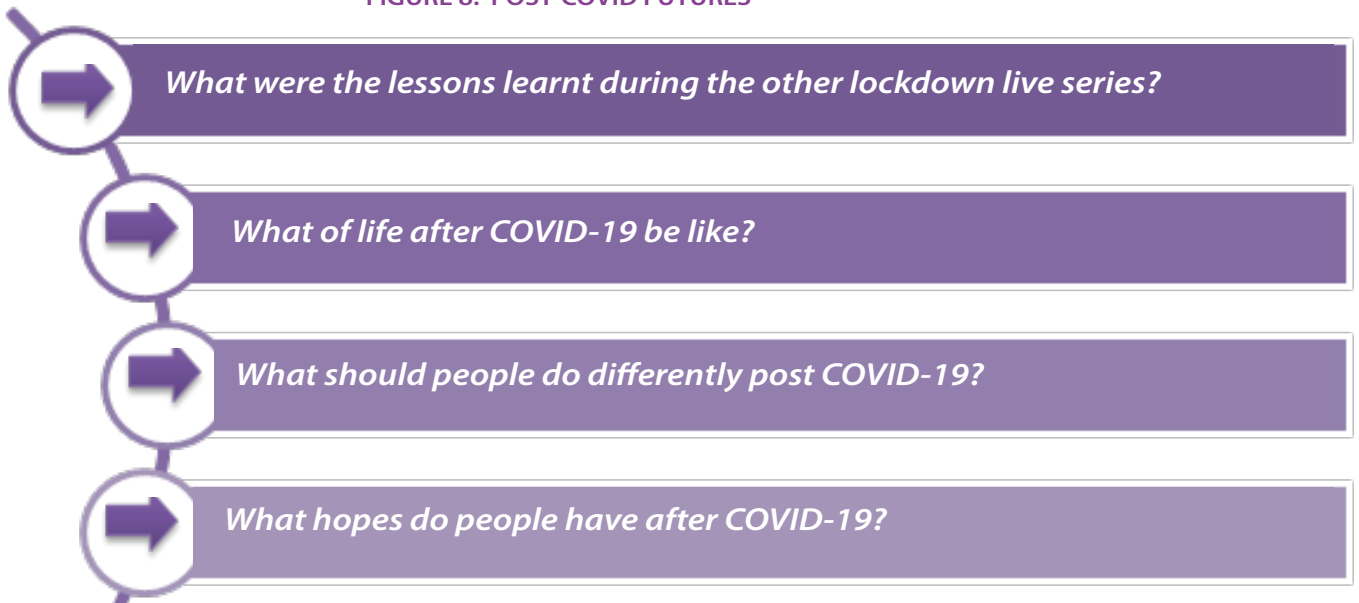
But again, it's shown me that we can't afford to be blind to the privileges of technology. As raised in our conver -sations, while others are getting connected virtually, many are cut off the world, unable to access the new virtual reality. Understanding the world for this group is dependent on others. In the interview with Sherri Hope Culver, which I highly recommend, I learned about digital literacy and why it matters. Being digital literate means that we are accountable for not only how we process information but in how we pass it on. When we accept the res -ponsibility of verifying, digesting, and spreading good information, we are slowly filling the gap between the connected and the disconnected…….***continued in "Our perspective".***

Webinars
Pre-meeting

The planning stage of the webinar involved conversation on the challenges and perks of the COVID-19 era. As much as a lot has changed due to the pandemic, people still need to consider what the future holds for indivi -duals, families, businesses, and the country at large. The following were the questions and concerns that guided the last webinar.

What were the lessons learnt during the other lockdown live series?

What of life after COVID-19 be like?

What should people do differently post COVID-19?

What hopes do people have after COVID-19?

Meeting

Tom: Today, we are going to be using the lessons learned in our discussions earlier and picking what we are taking moving forward and hopes we have for the future. What do you feel you've learned pandemic and discussions?

Derrick: Lockdown series is a game-changer. Learning from young people like me has been fun. I picked out that mental health needs more than de-stigmatization like awareness and balancing social media influence on us.

Su'Eddie: The series has been informative, enlightening. Interactive; we reached far more countries than those that the participants were from. The world really is a global village, as COVID 19 has unified states. Learning in Lockdown and mental health episodes reminded me that these issues are globalized and not unique to us.

Panelists discussed the lessons that they learned during the lockdown series on the other topics. One of the recurring points is that the issues that people face in different countries are the same with different magnitudes. The world is global in the challenges and the necessary solutions they seek towards solving those issues.

The series was informative and eye-opening to the uniqueness of challenges in issues. If anything, the conversa-tions confirmed that COVID-19 had impacted many sectors of the economy. The role of youth in pinpointing issues and starting conversations on modern challenges is necessary and impactful as a way of inspiring growth.

Mungi: : Change is inevitable. To cope or overcome, we need to adapt. Since global problems are uniform, solution sharing has been a highlight for me.

Katie: Lockdown live series has pushed me towards learning. I would love to do a Master's in gender studies. When the pandemic began, I had just finished my undergraduate degree in English and was certain that I was done learning. What we do next after Lockdown from the conversation is what matters.

Su'Eddie: We have learned a lot, we are easing restrictions, and I think we will be back to norms soon. Let us take the lessons we have learnt and not revert to the past.

Esperance: It has been awesome hearing from people all over. Our problems are relatable regardless of where we are coming from; we could compare notes. I particularly loved mental health because it highlights the deflective "I am ok" narrative

Tom: What are your hopes post COVID-19?.

Abbie: Staying at home shows the significance of downtime and self-care and is to remain important after this and part of daily life. Everyone needs compassion and resilience to shield oneself nonetheless.

Derrick: The question is finding your footing. It will determine the future. People need to have a personal acknowledgement of the status quo, readjust, and move with the new normal.

The major lesson that COVID-19 has taught us is that we need to be ready to embrace change and uncertainty that comes with it. Staying at home with friends and families has also taught many people the importance of cultivating good relationships. Having close friends that remain positive during the period helps to support good mental health and facilitate learning throughout the period. Looking to the future, hopefully, cultivates the emotional and mental strength needed to embrace the new normal.

Mungai: As said, we need to adjust. Economically we need to find footing and find a new competitive edge. It is time to get up on your feet and keep going.

Antony: The economy and the entrepreneurs have had the worst time, as very few have survived without liquidation.

Katie: The cracks in the system that have been exposed need to be amended. The social inequalities, such as the harsher impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minorities, and the need for massive investment in public health are just a few examples. Let us keep going with this motivation: to fill in the cracks of social inequality.

Antony: It has defined the idea of capitalism and its place in a pandemic prone world. It is an essential lesson for policymakers that international environmental conventions need reforms. We need to formulate sustainable policy, rebuild after the pandemic, and take responsible consumption and production seriously. Young people should rethink sustainable business, set up to buffer unemployment, and ensure they are environmentally friendly; we ought to leave a better world to a future generation. Make implementable policies. Some countries officially entered a recession, but there is always a way out.

Mungai: Choosing the right leaders in the art of social change, literate, sound mind, problem-solving in.

Damilola: Prior to COVID-19, the environment was an issue. Today there are less carbon emissions; reduced human activity has enabled flora and fauna to thrive. Let us keep this up.

Lynn: Local investment and nationalism have been significant as opposed to debt, import, and Foreign Direct Investment dependency. COVID has shown what should be the first priority. Agricultural produce reduces dependency and allows us to grow ourselves locally rather than internationally.

The post-COVID-19 era is likely to be brighter as we have been able to create change in resposnse to the pro-blems that have been exposed during the pandemic regarding the systems of government and the policy interventions in place. Issues such as environmental protection, economic success, entrepreneurial activity, investments will need adjustments that serve the country better. The pandemic has tested the different reforms in place, and the loopholes that exist are now in the open. However, even after understanding the challenges that exist, it is upon the leaders in different sectors to develop right governance tactics that will embrace sustainability.

Maame: Self- reliance has been an issue: In Ghana, young people invented ventilators, face masks, and other examples of local innovation.

Tom: What practical steps can we take to change the future?

Su'Eddie: From policy, there should be action.

Lynn: The take-away is that all of us need to be more self-aware and think about our actions.

Katie: Everyone in the UK has seen the vulnerable become a priority. It should be a norm, not a contingency plan. People are questioning the government. We are also acknowledging privilege and that access is important and, on a personal level, to show self-care while giving empathy.

Ameamu: We have started a project in Ghana for malnutrition, maternal and child mortality to be cut down. The goal is to incentivize birth in the hospital by giving mango trees to new mothers. This translates to child spacing, cash, and health. It has become as competitive as a game!

Tom: One message for our audience?

Esperance: Take care of the environment during the post-COVID industry revamp. Don't be greedy, be green.

Derrick: An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. It enables you to create awareness, get involved, and be informed, part of the solution.

Lynn: Let us not go back after all the progress made so far. We are capable, and there is no limit to what we can do.

Mungai: Be a positive vibe in the world.

Su'Eddie: Let love live. Love self, others, and the earth. Show empathy and compassion. Life can change, value it now

Katie: Let us talk to each other, even when our busy lives return, make time for family and educate ourselves and others.

Maame: For young people seeking jobs after COVID-19, get tech skills, they are more relevant at this time. Most Africans in rural areas are not tech-savvy, yet the future is in tech. They are missing out on education now.

Mungai: Stay positive because the future is ambiguous and keep an open mind.

Ameamu: Let us set up research, hasten the effort for access to public health, train health practitioners, and be ready for another pandemic

Tom: Thanks to our viewers, those involved behind the scenes, those that participated in the previous promotion, and those that have stuck till the end. Stay in touch after, I hope you've also learned a lot and good luck.

In conclusion, the series we had on learning, mental health, and misinformation was significant in creating pur-pose and connection for the participants as well as helping to identify the global and local challenges of and solutions to COVID-19. It highlighted the importance of developing strong IT skills and to foster a positive, creative and elastic attitude to adapt to the changing economic and social environment. People were motivated by the information shared to stay positive and start conversations that inspire and give more insight into situations. The initiatives developed after Coronavirus will depend on the depth of research and the adoption of reasonable measures that will improve the lives of people. The webinar series was a successful endeavor considering the lessons that people learned and the information shared in the various social media sites.

Participants' feedback

Post-COVID Futures being the last part of the webinar series, we wanted to share the hopes and dreams that people had around the world as we battle and heal from COVID 19. The feedback was positive and filled with hope as people connected the future with the past webinar topics we discussed in the forum. Below are some of the thoughts that participants had:

A better future where we embrace the lessons that the pandemic has taught us, improve our systems to ensure they serve EVERYONE and not revert to system -ic injustices against society's vulnerabilities.

- Participant, Impact survey

"Lynn Modester, a student at Africa Nazarene University taking a Bachelor's in Environment and Natural Resource Management, is a passionate environmentalist with a heart for conservation of everything nature.

Resource acquisition and use for community development, she believes, is the best way to ensure nations growth is to equip it's most vulnerable members with tools or opportunities to develop themselves

She loves marketing, volunteering, travelling and reading and writing poetry and listening to music. Being part of the change in the world is her key driving force.

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I hope this experience will have made people more aware of the struggles of disabled people, for whom the realities of Lockdown (not being able to go where you want, when you want, just because you wish it) have existed for many years prior to this pandemic, and which are an ongoing scenario. I hope that that will make people more understanding of the adaptations in teaching that disabled people may need to access their education.

- Participant, Impact survey

Streamlining of government functions and facilities. COVID has shown what is wrong with our institutions. My hope is that this is a lesson to get things where they need to be and better Greater understanding of the need for community, solidarity and mutual aid; greater international connectedness; opportunity to reflect on the status quo and how things need to change, particularly regarding policing, migration and systemic racism; greater effort to combat climate change.

- Participant, Impact survey

"Prior to the current crisis, young people aged 15-24 were three times more likely than adults to be unemployed and often faced a prolonged school-to-work transition period. In post-COVID-19 societies, as young people are called upon to contribute to the reco -very effort, they will need to be equipped with the skills to successfully manage evolving challenges and the resilience to adapt to future disruptions." - United Nations

Our Perspective

(Continued from "Dose of knowledge")
...Talking to Ayo Sokale reminded me of the role we can play in our local communities in these times of instability. Among other things, her interview inspired me into starting a GoFundMe campaign for teachers in low-income private schools in Nigeria who have, since March, been forced out of employment due to the closure of schools. Sokale asks us to look around and ask ourselves what we can do to make a difference. By starting the GoFundMe Support for Teachers Affected by the Pandemic, I recognize my ability as an individual capable of creating change.

I'm most delighted to have been a part of the Sussex Writes/Youth Cafe Lockdown Series. From all the sess -ions, I feel re-energized in my passion towards contributing my quota in improving the state of teaching and learning in Nigeria. The Lockdown Series taught me many lessons, and I'm applying them for good. You too can be part of something worthy by supporting my GoFundMe campaign.

Ask an Expert

JJ Taboola is an investment industry professional from Nigeria with a post-graduate degree in Mathematical statistics and economics. He spent 12 years in South Africa in asset management now; he is the founder and Chief Executive Officer at Prime Circle Africa, which is a social investment company.

Antony:
What is your role in the business world?

JJ Taboola:
My role is that of a starter, a founder. Prime Circle is a social business networking platform, which gives our members investment opportunities by partnering with com -panies in East Africa. It improves the lives of people and helps them grow. Most members that join have strengths that we use to help others.

Selorm:
What has been the most significant challenge in COVID-19 and what skills help strengthen a business?

JJ Taboolaa:
I moved to Kenya from South Africa in December last year. I spent January and February this year strong up. Prime officially launched March, and by then, 80% of the capital was spent. The idea was widely accepted, and things looked promising. I the second week of March, the President announced a com -pulsory lockdown. This was the beginning of issues about ambiguity, the lack of a contingency plan, and an alternative revenue source.
I tried negotiating rent reprieve, asking new members to make subscription payments, finding external funding, all of which

failed. The subsequent week, companies were filing for bankruptcy and closing down. Family and friends started calling to ask how they could help, oil prices were decrea-sing, and I got calls from people asking for financial guidance. I realized that I had a skill to help people. I shot a video on saving, investment, and it trended. I got clientele seeking financial guidance from the world round. Moral of the story: I evolved and tapped into my skill set, res-cuing my business from potential insolvency.

Jennifer:
Education has moved online, what matters, what essential skills are needed rethink, and what system of education would you envisage?

JJ Taboola:
Today, in Africa, education boils down to access and affor-dability. Primarily, access is an issue. COVID-19 has put those with access at home. We need to open education centers in rural Kenya which provide digital learning spaces, with teachers from around the world delivering lessons. With infrastructure like the internet, and a lockable facility, education can work at this time. Education is human capital development. There are kids out there who could be the key to a COVID-19 cure.

Esperance:
Environmentally, these three months show a drop in the carbon footprint, according to CNN and the BBC. Post COVID-19, economic revamp will negatively impact the environment. How can businesses models be environmen-tally sound?

JJ Taboola:
There have been a lot of academic debates on the environ-ment, but one thing we are sure of is that humans are ruining the planet, and we have to find solutions to arrest this environmental issue. We lack long-term vision in this so much that in our old age, we won't have a world to hand over. There is a politician dilemma, the movement versus progress grade system where building roads gains them more respect compared to education and the internet when it is not relevant.

Katie:
In your opinion, what is the future in employment, what practices die, and which ones live on after COVID-19?

JJ Taboola:
Potential behavioral changes are many. There is evidence that China lifted Lockdown in February. Economic activities recovered to 90% with little or no investment or no spending. Given that the supply side recovered and not demand, pro-jections are; unemployment will spike. We should expect high unemployment and job loss in the near future.

Ameamu:
Due to life changes, what advice would you give people seeking jobs?.

JJ Taboola:
In light of COVID-19, if you must have a face-to-face meeting one must have proven to be valuable. You need to add value to a business: craft a skill for yourself that people are willing to pay for and you can dictate the pay yourself. While proving we can work from home, the networking culture will die, and camaraderie may be lost. This will make it harder for young people to advance in their careers.

Antony:
What are your hopes for a post-COVID future?

JJ Taboola:
In 2017, I had a near-death experience. I was mountain bi-king in Cape-town and rode off a cliff. Unfortunately, there were no witnesses and had to wait 4 hours to be rescued… My biggest fears were death and paralysis... The time spent in surgery, rehabilitation, and in bed had me think critically and return in good health, with a sense of the presence of mind and have had renewed long-term mindset. People need near death experience to appreciate and take control of their lives right now. People have had to stop and realize that death is real. For the past 15 years, the world has embraced a short term mindset: instant gratification, infodemic, decreased concentration spans. A long term mindset sets up businesses with a positive impact on the masses such as tech compa-nies. COVID-19 has shown us that a business may be recession-proof but not pandemic proof. Sustainable busi-nesses are organic and grow slowly.

Antony:
Thank you for coming and for the wisdom that you have shared. We look forward to seeing players for the whole team.

Recommendations

The last part of Lockdown live series was successful based on the achievement of all the planned tasks. Youths had a lot to say about their participation in the Lockdown Live series as well as their hopes and concerns for the future. The following were the recommendations on the topic..

1. People should retain their hope of a better situation after COVID-19 is over

2. Even if employment has more hurdles, people could use the time to develop their skills.

3. Automation and dematerialization of businesses

4. Creativity is an important factor going forward for many businesses.

5. We can learn to live with the currently reduced carbon footprint

CONCLUSION

Jennifer has a great interest in creating curriculum content that stretches beyond academics. In June 2018, she founded Teach for Change Nigeria, an educational initiative meant to address the problems of teaching Literature in Nigerian secondary schools. A secondary teacher of Literature, she has also written detailed and practical teaching guides for literary texts read in the Nigerian classroom.

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Jennifer Chinenye Emelife

Join us on Facebook Live!

12pm UK
2pm Kenya

To write this report, The Youth Café and Sussex Writes joined forces to address the challenges that people are facing due to COVID-19. The Lockdown Live series was an initiative planned to create awareness about the global situation of the world in the wake of COVID -19. The goals of the initiative were to understand the struggle regarding learning, mental health and misinformation. The process of collecting this information and using it on decision making included webinars for peer discussions, expert opinions, survey tools and the perspectives of our team members presented as blogs. In doing so, the two organizations understood that the issues brought by the pandemic are frequently universal despite the difference in locations.

The information compiled on learning in lockdown through the different methods revealed that the pande -mic had affected both teachers and students. Teachers are struggling to manage their classes which are now primarily online: The sudden shift did not find many schools prepared, and this has caused changes in the syllabus and delivery, but often no changes were made to the system of examination. Although in the UK, school exams were cancelled, university assessments were not; in other countries, including Kenya, the school examinations continued, meaning that those unable to access education at home were unfairly impacted. For students, the biggest challenge has been accessing the technology needed for online classes. Many students do not have access to a computer or other relevant internet technologies for learning and research. Even for those with hardware, connectivity issues are still a major hurdle. The government, parents and other educa -tional institutions have a lot to do in facilitating online classes.

The series also examined the underlying mental challenges that have been an adverse effect of Coronavirus. Although COVID-19 has rendered tough situations, it has also helped to expose the mental challenges that existed even before the pandemic. Depression, stress and anxiety are the most common psychological distur -bances during this period. The pandemic has resulted in the loss of many lives and created uncertainties about the future and negativity towards life. During the final Lockdown Live event, participants reported that taking part in the series had given them a greater sense of positivity and togetherness as well as new insight and pur -pose in their lives, producing a net social and emotional benefit for the participants. The expert opinions on the issue were necessary and relevant in uplifting people. Experts offered insights on remaining positive and occu -pied during the period. Over-exposure to contradictory information about the virus during this period was highly discouraged since it is one of the sources of anxiety.

Misinformation is one of the persistent challenges that people were exposed to during the coronavirus pan -demic (Brennen, Simon, Howard, 2020). Wrong information spread mainly through the internet and has been a barrier towards growth and accurate reporting (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, 2020). Misinformed sources on the internet claiming to understand the situation have misled many people. Differentiating facts and opinions is a necessary skill at all times, and lack of factual information confuses people. Discussions with fellow youths and experts helped in understanding the solutions to the situation. The primary solution discussed for immunity from false data is to get information directly from reliable sources, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Reuters and government health ministries, such as the National Health Service of Great Britain. Even with social media, understanding the credibility of the sources is critical to avoid a chain of misinformation.

Lastly, the youth stakeholders discussed their hopes for the future after Coronavirus is no longer an issue. People are hopeful that the economy will improve after COVID-19. The pandemic has caused unwanted changes in many societal structures, and adapting to the new situation will require a new mindset. Even though there are many negatives that COVID-19 has exposed, it has also shown the importance of family, global connectivity and good international relations. To build on the success of the Lockdown Live series, we will now seek funding to expand our global campaign for international cooperationin building a successful post-COVID future, with a par -ticular emphasis on improving access to education and mental health support and on expanding media information literacy. Finally, we anticipate more productive conversations that will empower, inform and influence. Thank you.

Appendix - Participant List

The Youth Café

Marvin Atsiano - *Kenya*

Derrick Chemao - *Kenya*

Lynn Modester - *Kenya*

Cynthia Makena - *Kenya*

Candy Obunga - *Kenya*

Antony Karanja - *Kenya*
(Lead Chair)

Caroline Kamau - *Kenya*

Damilola Adeduro - *Nigeria*
(Graphic designer, Report)

Edward Etyang - *Kenya*

Samuel Bosire - *Kenya*

Margret Penylon - *Kenya*

Esperance Chantal - *Kenya*
(Project Administrator)

Mariam Hassan - *Kenya*

Charlynne Ado - *Kenya*

Kosisochukwu Mokwe
- *Nigeria*

Amina Mdoe - *Kenya*

Dan Kindiki - *Kenya*

Isewon Isreal Bidemi - *Nigeria*

Njoh Trevor - *Cameroon*

Obagbemisoye Ifedayi
Rachael - *Nigeria*

Anthony Ndirangu - *Kenya*

Sussex Writes

Emily Su'eddie Agema - *Nigeria*

Abbie O'Connell - *UK*

Tom Bamford-Blake - *UK*
(Assistant Director, Sussex Writes)

Jennifer Chinenye Emelife
- *Nigeria*

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema
- *Nigeria*

Emily Bailey - *UK*

Sophie McClellan - *UK*

Emily Askew - *UK*

Katie Fretwell - *UK*
(Social Media Manager)

Monica Agnes Sylvia
- *Indonesia*

George Clutterbuck - *UK*
(Social Media Manager)

SOS Kenya

Maureen Mwangi Mwihaki
- *Kenya*

Fauzia Naomi - *Kenya*

Peter Cata - *Kenya*

Simon Mudi - *Kenya*

Faridah Abdallah - *Kenya*

Neffat Mungai - *Kenya*

KSAC (Turkey)

Cansu İlke KURU - *Turkey*

Muratcan ŞEN - *Turkey*

Zeynep KARASALİH - *Turkey*

Kayra Aryuk - *Turkey*

Hakan AKTAS - *Turkey*

Bartu Aydin - *Turkey*

Guest Voices

Edmond Amos Ameamu - *(CEO, Seph - Ghana & Nurse at Ghana Health Service)*

Stacey Fru - *(TYC's youngest ambassador and International Multiple Award-Winning Bestselling author of Chapter Books)*

Bismark Selorm Adzimah - *(Social Activist & Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator with Activista Ghana)*

Maame Araba Annan - *(Mandela Washing -ton Foundation Alumni)*

Experts

Dr Lydia Turner - *(Psychological Therapist from Univeristy of Sussex)*

Dr Emma Newport - *(Lecturer, University of Sussex, and Director of Sussex Writes).*

J.J Taboola- *(Economist, Investment ex -pert and asset manager)*

Sherri Hope Culver - *(Director, Centre for Media and Information Literacy and Associate Professor, Temple University, USA.)*

Ayo Sokale - *(Civil Engineer and Local Councillor in reading, Brighton, England.)*

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