GLOBAL WEBINAR: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD POVERTY IN AFRICA AND BEYOND

Thursday, May 14, 2020

WELCOME TO THE WEBINAR!

- Please note that the webinar will be recorded
- For questions, please use the Q&A Function
- We're streaming live on Twitter
  - Check out the **@globalcoalition** channel
  - Share your thoughts using the hashtag **#endchildpoverty**

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MEET THE PRESENTERS

Panelists

Moderator

Terry Kiarie
Cultural mediator
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ATD Fourth World
African Region

Martin Kalisa
Regional Director for
Africa,
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Joan Nyanyuki,
Executive Director,
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Olivier De Schutter
UN Special
Rapporteur on
Extreme Poverty
and Human Rights

David Stewart
Co-Chair of the Global
Coalition to End Child
Poverty,
Chief of Child poverty
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UNICEF HQ

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ABOUT THE COALITION

- **A global initiative** to raise awareness about children living in poverty across the world and support global and national action to alleviate it.
- **Members** consist of multilateral, civil society and academic institutions
- Support and monitor progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 1.
  - Ending extreme child poverty
  - Halving child poverty in all its dimensions by 2030

ATD FOURTH WORLD

ALL TOGETHER IN DIGNITY TO OVERCOME POVERTY

Experiences of the most vulnerable children and families in Africa in times of pandemic

By **Martin Kalisa**, Regional Director for Africa,
ATD Fourth World

and **Terry Kiarie,** Cultural mediator for children,
ATD Fourth World African Region

For more information, please visit: www.atd-fourthworld.org

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ALL TOGETHER IN DIGNITY TO OVERCOME POVERTY

- Our presentation on the lived experiences of vulnerable children and families in Africa in times of pandemic is based on a dialogue we had with ten ATD Fourth World local teams active in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, and Togo.

- Our local teams are involved in a day to day life with the most disadvantaged families, creating a sense of trust, solidarity and friendship among families and children to support their dreams and projects.

- Our objective is to allow people in poverty to contribute to the recognition and development of their communities.

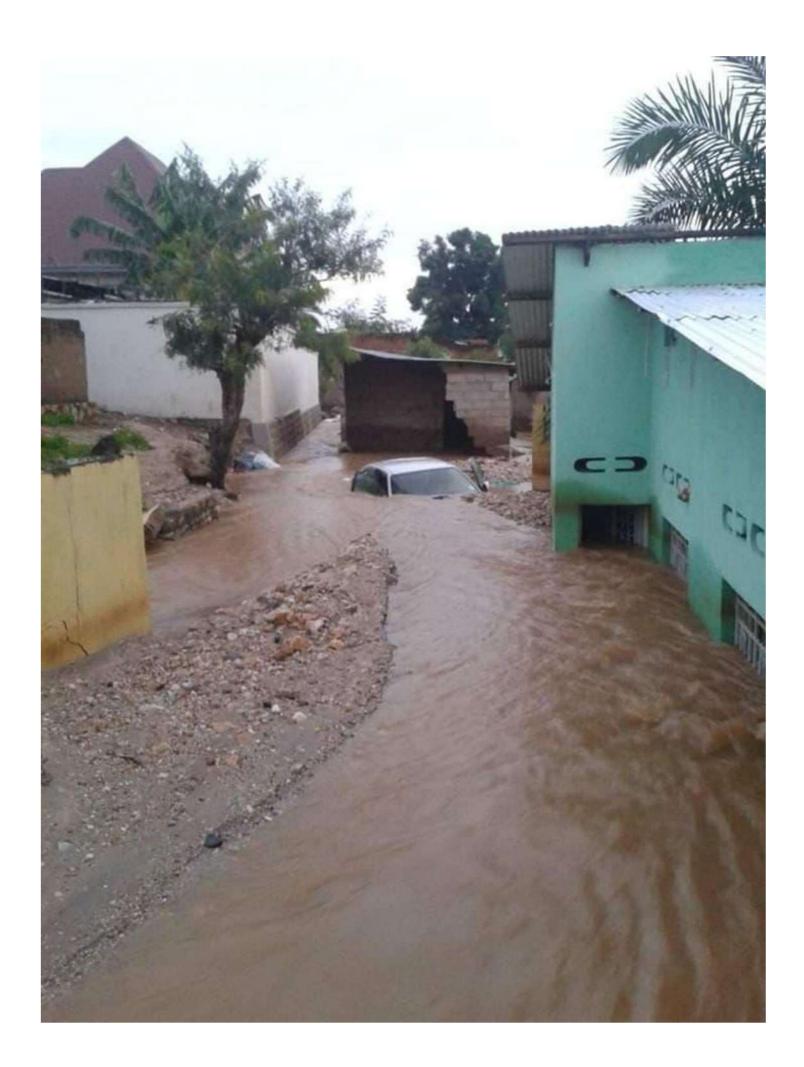# What is the general picture in the countries?

Countries face a Permanent State of crisis:
- High level of poverty and inequality
- Low level acess to healthcare and information
- Natural disasters: deadly flooding in DRC, Burundi, etc…
- Drought, diseases (malaria, cholera; ebola), food shortages…

The Covid19 crisis has reinforced existing inequalities. For example, information about the pandemic has not reached outlying rural areas without infrastructures and resources.

Consequences of the pandemic preventive measures:

- Closure of social institutions (schools, churches, mosques are now closed and curfew imposed)
- Economy slow down (restriction in movement, market closure impact the informal economy…)
- All negatively impact already stuggling families

Effects on the poorest families:

- A child belongs to a family and a family lives in a community.
- Families already in poverty are now facing a sudden lack of opportunities to earn a living.
- The closure of borders and restriction of movements between provinces, and closure of markets have damaged informal activities, in particular that of small businesses.
- In rural areas, the lean season between the end of the harvest and before sowing, means families have fewer reserves.
- As the same time, food, medecine, and transport cost are on the rise.
- As a consequence, families fear hunger, famine, illness and death.

A mother in DRC country said:

"Right now my activities are slowing down. Everyone thinks of food first because we are not sure what will happen tomorrow during this period. I don't know if you too are feeling hungry like me. I'm starting to be ashamed of welcoming people to my house because I have nothing to give them."

Effects on the poorest children:

- This pandemic has worsened community life and children have been badly affected either directly or indirectly.
- Governments have launched school lessons on radio or television, but not all children have access to these devices nor have a quiet space to focus on their studies.
- This interruption in education risks becoming "a blank year", especially for adolescents who will most likely not resume their schooling after the confinement.
- For many children, poverty forces work to support their families and loose their innocence of childhood.

"Coronavirus is a dangerous disease, closing schools could reduce our intelligence because we don't go to school anymore and we could forget our lessons." Narcise, CAR

"My mom is sick and if we are infected with this disease, she will not have the money to pay for the hospital." Elisabeth, Burundi

Effects on the poorest children (2):

- For children living in shelters or on the streets - life has become even more difficult.
- In this period of restriction of movements and social distancing, these children loose all the security they had secured: a place to sleep, personal hygiene, access to their daily meal.
- The preventive measures of social distancing are inapplicable as the children feel more secure together especially after the 8pm curfew when they have to find a place to sleep or take shelter which in most cases is either inside schools or on rooftops.
- There are many children living in orphanages but despite the harsh life inside and outside, it is worth noting there is a lot of love and solidarity:

"We don't go out anymore, but our friends outside don't stop helping us, they give money, clothes and other things and I like that." Jacques, CAR

2020, DRC, Bukavu –

a group of families with children here live in a collection of small homes surrounding a common yard.

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ATD Fourth World response:

- ATD teams looked for innovative ways to stay in touch with families and children.
- In Burundi, ATD team made each child, an ambassador, an actor in the fight against this disease of Covid-19.
- In CAR, the team provided mobile water sources with soap by entrusting responsibility to a group of young people in each neighborhood
- Other ATD teams worked on sensitizing about the virus and protective measures and providing support to education and learning for the most vulnerable children.

ATD Fourth World response (2):

- Tapori is the children branch of ATD Fourth World, a global network creating friendship between children of different socio-economic backgrounds. In Kenya, ATD Fourth World has recently started a Tapori group in a school in Kibera, the largest slum in Africa.

- Now that the school has closed, the Tapori facilitators, accompanied by teachers, visit the children twice a week at their homes to identify the most isolated and vulnerable children and their families. The activities consist of reading mini-books, drawing pictures with messages of hope and love, and learning about the preventive measures against Covid19.

- In Senegal, the team also supports the education of the most fragile students, with a focus on teenagers, by motivating them to study and stay on track. A special effort was made to ask the teenagers about their reflections in time of Covid, and the solidarity they were witnessing in the neighbourhood. For adolescents in particular, the teams are seeking to define a project that will avoid dropping out of school or vocational training, based on a pedagogy of mutual sharing.

"We don't have smartphones, or internet access, we don't even know how to use them. What you are doing is very useful to our children." Bibi Teddy , Tanzania

Policy recommendations based on these experiences:

Short term:

- Ensure the most marginalized people are not left out in the campaign against covid-19 and are provided with the required equipment.
- Continuous support to the most vulnerable children and adolescents with their education by all means.
- Encouraging and training young people from diverse backgrounds to be agents of change in their communities.
- Access to food and support to the informal sector for the most vulnerable families via cash transfer that respects their dignity.

Policy recommendations based on these experiences:

Long term measures:

- Communities should be involved in the establishment and implementation of protective measures instead of a copy and paste of Western measures. We cannot succeed in reducing inequalities and building a just and fair society without taking into account the knowledge and experience of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion on a daily basis.
- Investment in medical infrastructures, access to medicine for all.
- Establishment of universal social protection floors to ensure access to health care and minimum income security for all children and families, especially the most marginalized.
- Access to quality education systems for all children, especially those most vulnerable.
- Creating green jobs for the poorest communities for a sustainable economic transition.
- Access to grant and scholarships for Careers in social Care and environmental protection.
- Call to people from all walks of life to promote social cohesion and be in solidarity with the most vulnerable, who are at the forefront of the fight against poverty.

Putting children at the center of Africa's response to Covid-19

What needs to be done?

Dr. Joan Nyanyuki

Executive Director

Africa Child Policy Forum (ACPF)

May 14 2020

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Where we are now?

1. **Commendable political will and mobilization to combat COVID-19**

    - Recognition of the devastating impact of the pandemic

    - Significant focus given to combat, often at complete neglect of other issues

2. Gaps in policy and strategy development

    - Human rights values and principles not adequately reflected in the containment policies; Responses that are health focused.

    - Policy lags (gaps in policies/strategies to keep up with the pace of the pandemic)

    - Tendency to copy-and-paste from other regions/Cotextualisation lacking

3. Gaps in implementation:

    - Gaps in coordination of responses, hence inefficiency.

    - Limited rapid socio-economic measures to provide safety nets

    - Gaps in reaching out to children living in sub-optimal conditions: extreme poverty, on the streets, in armed conflict, humanitarian setting, on the move, without parental care

    - Securitization and criminalization of response.

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What do the COVID-19 response policies/strategies mean for African children living in poverty?

Millions of Africa's children are already living in poverty within complex humanitarian crises, conflict or post-conflict situations, countries with weak health and social protection infrastructure

- Unequal access and ability to comply with the coronavirus containment policies - **greater risk of infection**.

- Risk of being left out of socio-economic mitigations programmes - **greater exclusion**

- Not able to access social protection and services such as school feeding schemes - **increased levels of deprivation**.

- Exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities for children already living in sub-optimal conditions, in poverty or at the brink of poverty - **pushed into extreme poverty.**

- Insensitive to children **psychological state and support needed** to help them overcome.

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Left in their current form, policies/Strategies are likely to :

- Insensitive to children and disadvantaged families;

- Not reach the most poor African children

- Worsen deprivation, pushing more children into extreme poverty

- Aggravate poverty related abuse, violence and neglect such as extreme forms of child labour, sexual exploitation, child marriage, trafficking…

- Claw back on progress made in addressing child poverty and more broadly child rights

- See reversal and loss of progress in addressing child rights protection and progress, within the SDGs and Africa Union Agenda 2040

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How can key actors develop and implement policies that put children at the center?

- Use a rights-based approach that also considers **children's rights**

- **Inclusive** : Make responses available to all children, including those already living in sub-optimal conditions, at increased risk of abuse, violence and exploitation

- **Multi-dimensional** : Complex crises needs multi-dimensional policies that reinforce integrated multi-sectoral child protection and service provision systems.

- **Co-ordination** : of efforts between stakeholders to ensure that children and families are protected from the immediate and long-term impacts of the pandemic.

- **Enhance accountability**: of actors involved in the multi-sectoral responses through clearly defining roles and responsibilities

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What then, for African governments ?

- Adopt the principle of 'the best interests of the child'

- Prioritize children's rights to food, health, education, water, shelter, adequate protection

- Rapidly scale up social and economic safety net programs to vulnerable households such as food assistance, cash transfers, school feeding programmes , free or subsidised health services

- Ensure that containment measures are child-friendly, cognisant of the needs and capacity of children living in poverty .

- Urgently ensure that children who are deprived of parental care receive appropriate care and protection.

- Continue to meet co-existing health needs - immunisation, treatment for malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other childhood illnesses

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What more can the African Union and regional bodies do?

African union and its organs:

- Coordinate and intensify efforts to mobilize resources from within and outside Africa.

- Create virtual platforms to exchange experience and lessons among governments

- Provide greater support to governments in conflict, post-conflict and fragile situations.

- Provide technical support to Member States as they implement the ACERWC Guiding Note on COVID-19.

Regional economic Communities:

- Facilitate experience sharing among member states

- Ensure that there is cross-border collaboration and co-ordination within their respective regions

- Include the protection of refugee and stateless children who are at great risk of deprivation.

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African Child Policy Forum
ACPF

Civil Society, African Philanthropists, the Private sector, and the Media as critical partners

- Produce and share data on child poverty and emerging trends, to enable governments identify the gaps and measure impact of existing policies.

- Actively engage with governments to develop practical solutions that reach the children who need it most

- Strengthen partnerships with governments towards financial, technical and operational support to provide basic social services to vulnerable children and households.

- The mainstream media needs to dedicate programme for children and support them as they struggle to overcome the stress caused by the pandemic.

Time is of the essence, let us ACT NOW!

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QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- For questions, please use the **Q&A Function**
- You can also upvote your favourite questions!
- On Twitter, ask questions and share your thoughts using the hashtag **#endchildpoverty**

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THANKS FOR JOINING!

We'll share the recording and summary very soon,
via email and on the coalition website.

🐦 @globalcoalition   🔗 www.endchildhoodpoverty.org

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