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Why the DISABLED Kenyans are pregnant in the Corona era: Author Mugambi Paul

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Generally speaking, The COVID-19 pandemic occurring in Kenya should be of utmost concern to every citizen. This is because we need to work together around the country in solidarity.

Ofcourse, the risen times are extra-ordinary. This is the times that will redefine Kenyan human spirit.

Are we going to ensure disability-inclusive, accessible disaster-response?

On my own behalf and the disabled Kenyans

We acknowledge the great leadership displayed by cabinet secretary Mutahi Kagwe of ministry of health under this difficult circumstance. Moreover, the CS is communicating in to minds and hearts of all citizens. Could this be adapted as the new norm to Kenyan organization culture of governance?

On the other hand, the Corona virus seems to have equalized all of us and the realization of the economic inequalities that exist among low income Kenyans

Amongst these is the largest minority “Kenyans with disabilities” of who make up more than 15 % of the population [WHO 2011]. we need to examine corona virus by waring the disability lenses.

On March 20th, 2020 during the daily updates a more disability inclusive approach was adapted.

This affirms that the CS is a great communicator.

though much needs to be done to realize disability Inclusive approaches.

As a public policy scholar and a person with lived experience of being blind I opine that if what the CS health interventions were to be made long term policy execution the Kenyan government will overcome many challenges of including persons with disabilities and resolve the unemployed citizens mystery.

In other words, our policies must not discriminate. Disabled and low-income people must be included in every policy, every fund, every new law.

This is the real meaning of disability mainstreaming.

Background:

Kenyans with disabilities' needs and concerns should be adequately addressed in existing COVID-19 Kenyan relief packages.

I affirm that Disability impacts every community and occurs at every stage of life. In addition to impacting Kenyans with disabilities more disparately, the virus is also likely to create disability while people recover [WHO 2020].

Fact to consider:

I believe The Corona virus has awaken the public consciousness of what works for the disabled Kenyans can also work for all

Challenges faced by disabled Kenyans:

Unfortunately. Clean water and sanitation facilities aren't always available or accessible, particularly for Kenyans with

Disabilities and the low-income earners [UNICEF 2017].

Are the newly 500 water points in Nairobi accessible to all disabled Kenyans?

Life-saving information often doesn't reach those who are deaf, blind, using wheelchairs, illiterate, Deafblind or living in remote areas.

I uphold this global health emergency, the ability to read timely information in an accessible format is even more critical than usual. I believe the more people access and act upon the information that Ministry of health leaders and public officials are

providing, the better we Kenyans can all cope with the rapidly evolving situation.

Furthermore, the corona virus puts people with chronic diseases, Kenyans with disabilities, and the elderly most at risk. could the ministry of health issue a statement regarding rationing of care to ensure that when rationing treatment begins, decisions about how medical treatment should be allocated are made without discriminating based on disability?

Worse still, the Kenyan health system is

not prepared. In China it is reported already some disabled persons have died due to starvation and nonattendance.

Information campaigns and medical care must include the needs of Kenyans with disabilities. It is pivotal that Kenyan state as a duty bearer identify and monitor people with

disabilities in their communities. Frontline staff need training on caring for people with disabilities in the crisis. The ministry of health should also ensure protection of the front-line health workers by provision of **the equipment which they need to execute their work safely**

masks, gowns, shields, gloves, suits, and other equipment. Therefore, preventing further spreading of COVID-19.

I urge the Kenyan public policy makers and stakeholders to think boldly and broadly in their response to this pandemic and waste no time saving lives and have actionable long-term policies and regulations.

Different ILO studies have affirmed with proper reasonable accommodation execution productivity is high and brings diversity. For instance, If the ministry of public service, ministry of labour, federation of Kenya employers, employment authority, ministry of transport, disability experts can work together via video link can craft a reasonable accommodation regulation.

This is to say with flexibility and

creative solutions are more important than ever in this Corona era.

With this regulation, the president with his executive power ascent can save Kenya a great deal.

several studies and additional public health experts have stated that disabled Kenyans are more vulnerable to COVID-19. Beyond the specific conditions or diagnoses that may raise susceptibility to the virus itself, Kenyans with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the broader social, civil, and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Thus life in Kenya will never be the same again.

will this be a turning point for Kenyan Parliament and senate to ensure a inclusive social protection cover for the marginalized?

Outlined below are a series of expectations that could benefit Kenya in the long run:

1. Prioritize and Expand Home delivery services. This can be done through acceleration of M-post services since most Kenyans have Mobile phones additionally more private delivery companies can also be incorporated with a particular county. This would reduce the social contacts since most Kenyans go seeking for goods outside there vicinities.
2. 24 shift working economy: this can be accelerated by both public and private employers thus even reduction of man hour spent on traffic. Moreover, through shift working economy it would increase work productivity. Some best practises can be borrowed from the private sector. Could this be an opportunity for implementing 2030 vision? Additionally, if adopted in Nairobi, Kisumu, Meru and Mombasa can say by bye to the traffic menace. Could the new Nairobi Metropolitan team adapt this?
- 3.

Prioritize access of digitalized documentation: if this was to be adopted most government documents would be gotten easily. For instance, one of the best recently successful is acquiring renewal of tax exemption among the Kenyans with disabilities although now with the advent of Corona Kenya revenue authority and NCPWD needs now more than ever to decentralize the service. This would actually reduce the transport expenses incurred by Kenyans and also save working hours.

4. Cash transfer uptake: As the coronavirus crisis has caused a significant economic downturn, I believe that it is essential for ministry o of treasury to authorize an increase in cash transfer programme to the ministry of social protection in order to reduce the economic shocks among persons with disabilities, the seniors of Kenyans and their care givers. Who are already vulnerable and not covered with the current cash transfer programme.

This move will enable government of Kenya to reduce vulnerability levels.

5 food access:

Regular access to healthy food is key to maintaining strong immune systems. I encourage the Kenyan government to expand access to food distribution during this period especially to chronic ill persons, the low-income earners, disabled Kenyans, the slum areas and vulnerable populations.

Regrettably, many Kenyan families even before corona era were living under distress for lack of one meal a day.

Sadly, many Kenyans ability to keep and maintain employment will be impacted by both the business and transit closures.

If short term measures are not taken this might lead to civil strife and increase of psychosocial disabilities among Kenyans.

6. Access to transport: the Kenyan government can support the public transport sector by having reduction of oil prices thus preventing Kenyans from paying extra charges.

Additionally, the government owned busses offer the services to support the private owned public transport services with the new half full caring capacity policy implementation. Where are the NYS busses?

I observe there has been increased discipline in the Matatu industry by the reduction of congestion by the ministry of Health directive.

Environmentally speaking, drastic air pollution has reduced.

How I wish it was a daily Norm in the public transport.

Could the government offer tax wavers for public transport to acquire disability inclusive buses?

7. Implementation of accessibility standards.

The national construction authority and disability stakeholders should rally behind and ensure when makeshift hospitals,

isolation facilities and construction of new hospitals are fully accessible and equipped with accessible beds.

Therefore, Duty bearers should ensure disability civil rights protections are fully protected since rights are not negotiable. I believe time is ripe to

enforce and implement article 27, 54 of the constitution and persons with disability act 2003 for protecting rights of disabled Kenyans.

8. inclusive economic stimulus: Kenyans with disabilities must be included in the economic relief proposals now under consideration by the private sector and Kenyan government. Given that COVID-19 poses unique risks for Kenyans with disabilities and other low-income earners that may make it more difficult for those who are not in any form of employment. This will enable people with disabilities and low-income earners to be able to survive during the current crisis. The economic stimulus should be easily and equitably available for all. Of particular concern are men, women, girls and boys with disabilities.
9. All of these recommendations are critical to addressing the spread of COVID-19 and addressing our nation's public health more broadly and ensuring we meet the SDGS by not living any one behind.

As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” The fragile state of this “network of mutuality” has become all too apparent during the coronavirus outbreak. Though we may be vulnerable, we are not dispensable. In fact, disabled Kenyans have critical experience to share in adapting to challenging and constantly changing situations affecting our health, employment, education, housing, and families—experience that all fellow Kenyans will need in the days and weeks ahead. We are grateful for the urgency with which the Ministry of Health is moving to make sure that the Kenyan people never feel the worst of this pandemic, and am seeking only to protect Kenyan disability community from the unintended but all too foreseeable impacts of discrimination.

especially during all phases of disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.

The views expressed here are for the author and do not represent any agency or organization.

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