

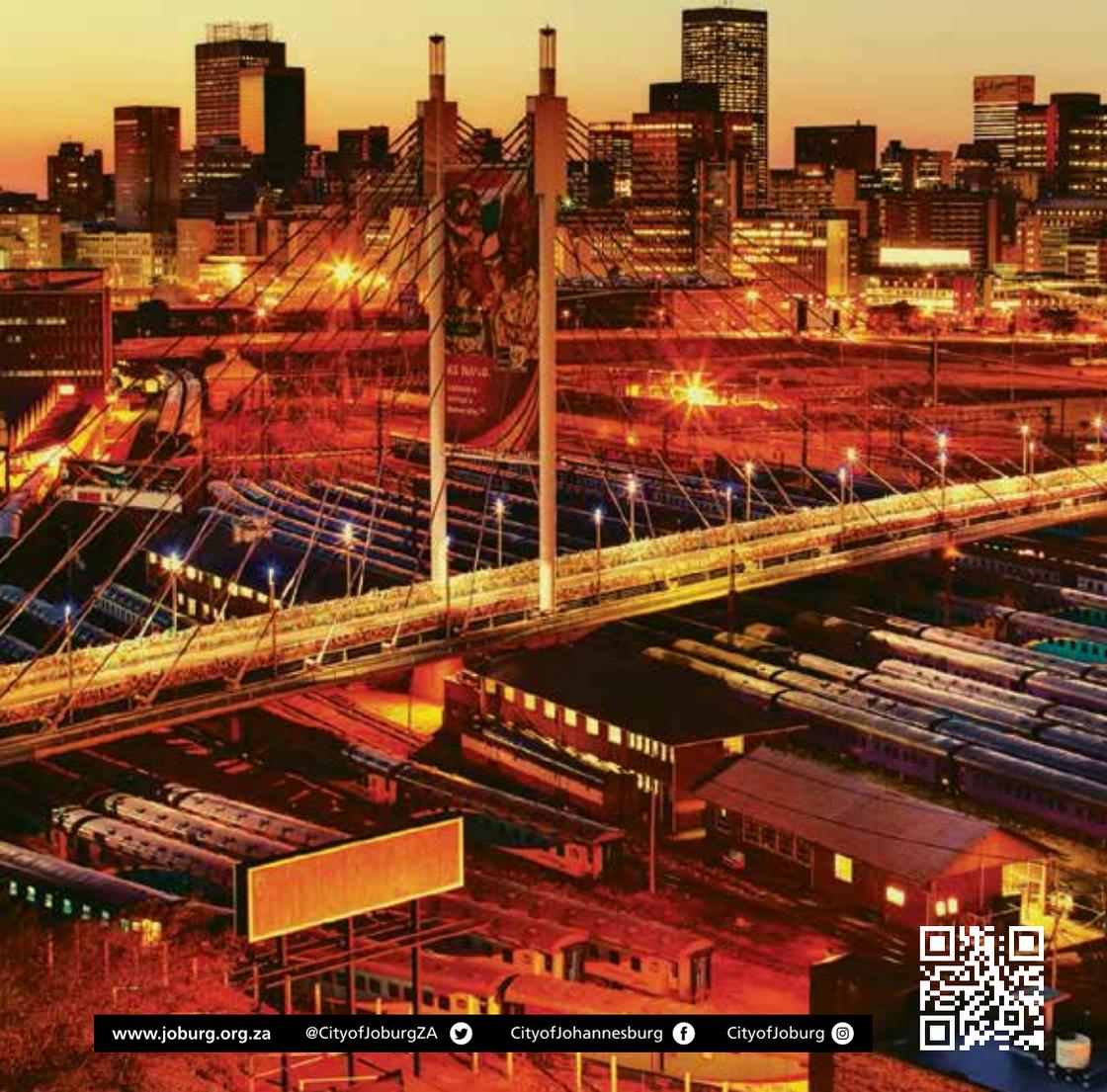


a world class African city

# Marang

International Relations Newsletter

12<sup>Issue</sup>



- 1 Editorial
- 2 'Hlapa Matsoho' to curb spread of Covid-19 pandemic
- 3 Joburg to benefit from R44-million prosperity fund
- 4 Cities will survive the Coronavirus
- 5 Countries should plan and manage the new normal
- 6 Easing restrictions and living with Covid-19
- 7 An opportunity to "Build Back Better"
- 8 Leading the Covid-19 response in urban centres
- 9 Global Mayors Covid-19 Recovery Task Force
- 10 Innovation, proximity and solidarity: Local economic development as an immediate response
- 11 Lockdown levels and what they mean for a return to normal life
- 12 Covid-19 Tracker
- 13 Buenos Aires uses WhatsApp to boost response to Covid-19
- 14 UCLG Executive Bureau on the post Covid-19 era
- 15 C40 webinar on measures taken to deal with Covid-19
- 16 We can create a better urban future where no one is left behind
- 17 #BeyondTheOutbreak – Covid-19 and digital technology
- 18 Impact of Covid-19 on local finances
- 19 Joburg joins C40 Covid -19 mayoral webinar for knowledge exchange
- 20 World Bank's Covid-19 response in Africa
- 21 Message of solidarity from ICLEI
- 22 Message of solidarity from UCLG
- 23 Inspirational quote



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## Dear Readers,

The worldwide media catchphrase – ‘Cities responding to Covid-19’ – was an obvious theme for this edition, which contextualises the important role of local authorities and global networks in addressing the pandemic.

Our lead story focuses on Joburg’s Hlapa Matsoho campaign, a massive early intervention hand-washing initiative aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in the City of Joburg.

The edition emphasises the implications of the virus on cities and its inhabitants and how resilience can be improved to promote effective control and management of future global crises.

Looking beyond the immediate response phase, this global health and economic crisis threatens to delay interventions on climate change and to worsen inequality. People that live in informal settlements and work in the informal economy are among the most affected by the pandemic. However, the novel coronavirus offers local authorities the opportunity to reduce inequality, supported by national government policies that increase the resilience of cities and their residents.

History shows that people often move to cities after pandemics in search of better prospects and higher wages offered after the sudden drop in the population. The pandemic accelerates trends affecting cities, such as the digitalisation of the retail sector, the move to a cashless economy, the shift to remote work and virtual delivery of services and the pedestrianization of streets.

Public transit will struggle to retain ridership without social distancing adjustments. Driverless cars and micro-mobility schemes may become increasingly vital. The pandemic is also exposing the quality of governance and the scale of inequalities in our global cities.

As we focus on the gradual reopening of cities and the easing of lockdown measures, urban planners and entrepreneurs should re-build, re-think and re-innovate. Some are already exploring ways to upgrade zoning and procurement policies to promote smart density and greener investments.

Cities are the perfect testbeds for innovations and redistribution of resources in the aftermath of this pandemic. Their transformational ability would have to be heightened in rebuilding and transforming societies.

Read more on the Covid-19 theme in the 12th edition of Marang, which is anchored by reflections on the need to focus on a post Covid-19 world.

*We hope you enjoy the read!*

# 'Hlapa Matsoho' to curb spread of Covid-19 pandemic

The City of Joburg has launched a massive hand-washing campaign aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Johannesburg.

Hlapa Matsoho, which loosely translated means wash your hands, is designed to educate residents of Johannesburg, particularly those in informal settlements about the importance of washing hands with soap to avoid contracting the novel coronavirus.

The City is currently the epicentre of Covid-19 in Gauteng. Over the last few weeks, the municipality has implemented measures aimed at providing water to informal settlements and is now educating residents on hygiene routines as part of public awareness.

Hlapa Matsoho re-emphasises the message by the Department of Health and the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), which encourage people to sanitise, practice social distancing and wash their hands regularly with soap for at least 20 seconds.

Members of the Mayoral Committee are deployed in eight areas around Region F (which covers the inner-city) to further amplify the City's Hlapa' Matsoho education programme. Hlapa Matsoho will be rolled out in all seven regions of the City to ensure residents participate in this initiative and play a part in curbing the spread of coronavirus.

The initiative marks the beginning of a journey to empower communities with information during the lockdown and change habits beyond the Covid-19 crises. The City has partnered with various organisations to spread awareness about Covid-19



and to assist residents to maintain high levels of personal hygiene. The City's health department has also rolled out the Covid-19 mass screening and testing programme as part of work done to combat the virus.

The City's Emergency Management Services (EMS) has been traveling throughout various informal settlements distributing soaps and teaching residents how to wash hands properly and maintain personal hygiene.

Hlapa Matsoho is launched in collaboration with Lifebuoy, Liberty and Longrich. The Executive Mayor, Geoff Makhubo has urged other private companies to join hands with the City in its efforts to prevent and contain Covid-19 by donating bars of soap and sanitisers to informal settlements and to homeless as well as poor people within the City.



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# Joburg to benefit from **R44-million prosperity fund**

The British High Commission through the Future Cities programme will deliver additional support to the City of Joburg to help mitigate the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

The Global Future Cities Programme launched in South Africa earlier this year as part of the UK cross-government Prosperity Fund (PF). It aims to address the essential conditions for inclusive economic growth through the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Covid-19 programme will provide an estimated R44-million rands of technical assistance in support of partner cities in South Africa.

The City will receive support in its financial recovery and analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on urban planning and transport. The support will inform financial modelling and recovery approaches, and adaptation of urban planning and transport strategies in response to the pandemic. This multi-sectoral approach aims to build long-term financial, economic, social and environmental resilience in Johannesburg.

Nigel Casey, British High Commissioner to South Africa says the support aptly addresses the resilience pillar of the Prosperity Fund's Global Future Cities Programme. "We enjoy a very collaborative relationship with the City of Joburg and are well placed to leverage this relationship to respond to the City's needs. Globally, cities are at the forefront of Covid-19 response and we are pleased to be able to provide



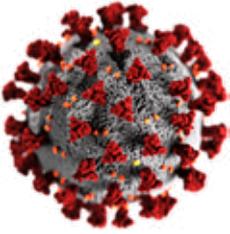
British  
High Commission

the essential support to South African cities at a time where everyone is working hard to mitigate the negative effects of the virus."

Geoff Makhubo, the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg says the relationship between the City and the British Embassy stems from years of collaborative and mutually beneficial interests.

"As the City of Joburg continues to battle the Covid-19 pandemic with limited resources, we are grateful for the support we receive from British taxpayers. We hope that this generous support solidifies the relationship between Johannesburg and Britain, and further advances the Prosperity Fund's Global Future Cities Programme," says Makhubo.

# Cities will survive the **Coronavirus**



Great cities will survive the coronavirus. Cities have been the epicentre of the infectious disease since the time of Gilgamesh, and they have always bounced back — often stronger than before. The Black Death

decimated cities in Europe during the middle ages, and in Asia up to the start of the 20th century. The Spanish Flu of 1918 killed as many as 50 million people worldwide, and yet New York, London, and Paris all boomed in its wake. History shows that people often moved to cities after pandemics because of better job opportunities and higher wages offered after the sudden drop in population.

Some aspects of our cities and metropolitan areas will be reshaped, depending on how long the current pandemic

lasts. Fear of density, and subways and trains in particular, plus a desire for safer, more private surroundings may pull some toward the suburbs and rural areas. Families with children and the vulnerable, in particular, may trade their city apartments for a house with a backyard.

But other forces will push people back toward the great urban centres. Ambitious young people will continue to flock to cities in search of personal and professional opportunities. Artists and musicians may be drawn back by lower rents, thanks to the economic fallout from the virus. The crisis may provide a short window for our unaffordable, hyper gentrified cities to reset and to reenergize their creative scenes.

Predictions of the death of cities follow shocks like this one. But urbanization has always been a greater force than any infectious disease.

*(Source: Richard Florida, Foreign Policy: May 2020).*

## Countries should plan and **manage the new normal**



Vulnerable and invisible populations, particularly those living in informal settlements, and work in the informal economy are among the most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Live Learning Session on Informalities and Covid-19 sheds light on how to best respond to this immense challenge, from the local sphere, counting on communities.

Mayors, vice-mayors and councillors from a wide range of cities across the world, as well as representatives from national governments share experiences and learning around the very real impact that Covid-19 has in the informal sector in their cities, and how they are working to address it. The session also features the participation of partners from civil society and representatives from the

informal sector.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN-Habitat, opens the session by stating that “2020 has started the decade of action for the 2030 Agenda, and we will not be able to move beyond this outbreak and towards a new normal if poor people remain at risk.”

Sharif spelt out specific guidelines for local governments in developing countries to plan and manage the new normal, concerning housing, basic services, organising markets and mobility and other matters that are most important for people living in informal settlements.

Octavi de la Varga, Secretary-General of Metropolis, provides the metropolitan approach to the relationship between informalities and Covid-19 and calls for a rethink of the model of development and the need to bring about new approaches to governance. Grassroots organisations that work to provide services and enhance dialogue between poorer communities and national governments need to be consulted.

Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General of UCLG, showcases the

Decalogue for the Post- Covid-19 era, which provides measures for new governance in the aftermath of the pandemic for the 2030 Agenda.

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General of UCLG Africa, argues for the need to provide a direct conduit to the more vulnerable populations to ensure they access resources and change how partnerships are carried out so they benefit those that need them the most.

Adriana Allen, President of the Habitat International Coalition presents lessons learnt and calls for the informal sector to be acknowledged as an integral part of cities. She argues that redistribution of resources would be integral to transform societies in the aftermath and states that data produced in informal environments is key to enable this redistribution.

The Live Learning Session is organised by UCLG in collaboration with Cities Alliance, and partners from the World Bank, Habitat for Humanity, the private sector, Academia, and Habitat International Coalition.

*(Source: UCLG, Barcelona: April 2020).*

## Easing restrictions and living with Covid-19



The Executive Mayor, Geoff Makhubo participates in the third mayoral webinar hosted by C40's Chair and Mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, which focuses on the gradual reopening of cities and the easing of lockdown measures.

### **Ideas about a safe, phased approach to reopening cities include:**

- Building testing, contact-tracing and healthcare capacity – Testing and contact-tracing will be vital to keeping Covid-19 pandemic in check once cities begin to reopen.
- Relaxing rules targeted toward lower-risk areas – The lockdown should be relaxed earlier in lower intensity areas and later in outbreak hotspots.
- Relaxing rules targeted at those who are least vulnerable – This would mean asking older people and those with relevant underlying health

conditions to continue staying at home longer, while those who are less vulnerable are allowed out.

- Reopening schools and childcare – Closing schools for all children except those of essential workers helps to slow transmission between households in the community and has been widely adopted during the initial emergency response phase of the pandemic.
- Prioritising reopening for smaller businesses, and those who are unable to work from home – Recognising that total or partial lockdown restrictions used to control the transmission of Covid-19 are having an especially devastating impact on smaller businesses, the hospitality industry, public-facing businesses which rely on foot traffic, and industries whose staff are unable to operate from home. Some cities are prioritising their return to work alongside a raft of other measures to mitigate the economic impact of Covid-19.
- Expanding the use of physical distancing models and working practices, including for government services – Increased deliveries, hatch-trading for smaller shops, limits on the number of people allowed in a shop or venue at a time, and other measures which have been rapidly adopted by essential shops in cities around the world should be replicated for other businesses as they reopen.
- Increasing walking and cycling provisions – Given enough space, walking and cycling helps facilitate physical distancing in cities, as well as provide opportunities for outdoor activity, with significant physical and mental health benefits.
- Reopening large-scale events – Large gatherings, which have been linked to a string of outbreaks in cities around the world may need to be the last to resume.
- Promoting the use of facemasks in public places – Some countries and cities which are reopening encourage or require the wearing of facemasks in public. While these masks do not completely prevent transmission, they are proven to reduce it and their widespread use can help life to look more normal more quickly.
- Managing Covid-19 at borders – To enable safe travels to resume quickly when borders reopen. Temperature checks and health screenings should be added to security measures already in place at borders, hand sanitisers and masks should be made available, and measures will be needed to reduce crowding, such as reduced passenger counts (keeping a middle seat free on an aeroplane, for instance). Quarantine periods for arrivals, particularly those coming from countries or regions with high rates of infection, could also remain in place/ be introduced.
- Possibilities offered by antibody testing – Antibody tests identify people who have previously had a Covid-19 infection and who could, for example, safely return to work.

# An opportunity to “Build Back Better”



The Covid-19 pandemic is transforming city life. It is overwhelming hospitals, demolishing commerce, restricting access to public spaces, straining digital infrastructure, intensifying mental health challenges, and forcing people indoors.

In the absence of a vaccine, many of these disruptions could become permanent. Cities were already facing chronic revenue shortfalls and budget deficits before the pandemic. The priority now is to save lives, deliver essential services, and maintain law and order. This is especially important in developing-world cities and informal settlements where rising food prices increase the risk of hunger and social unrest.

City mayors are already revisiting urban plans to prevent the next pandemic. In the short term, many will introduce mass testing and digital contact tracing, retrofit buildings and public spaces for social distancing, and bolster health systems to deal with future threats.

The pandemic is also accelerating deeper, longer-term trends affecting cities, such as the digitalisation of retail, the move to a cashless economy, the shift to remote work and virtual delivery of services, and the pedestrianization of streets. Public transit will struggle to retain ridership without social distancing adjustments and driverless cars and micro-mobility schemes may become increasingly vital.

The pandemic is exposing the quality of governance and scale of inequalities in our global cities. It is also providing an opportunity for urban planners and entrepreneurs to build better. Some of them are exploring ways to upgrade their zoning and procurement policies to promote smart density and greener investment. Cities are the perfect testbeds for innovations. First movers such as Amsterdam, Bristol, England, and Melbourne in Australia are already developing plans that prioritize circular economics, climate resilience, and a radical intolerance of inequality.

*(Source: Robert Muggah, Foreign Policy: May 2020).*

# Leading the **Covid-19** response in urban centres

Dense populations, frenetically paced commerce and global connections have made cities economic, political and cultural powerhouses. They've also increased their vulnerabilities to pandemics.

In 1920 – the final year of the “Spanish Flu” – 14% of people lived in urban areas. In 2018, that number soared to over 55%. As the coronavirus spreads throughout the world's urban areas, governments, businesses and civil society are springing to action to help cities manage this crisis and mitigate the fallout.

## **Share knowledge, save lives**

As Covid-19 travels around the world, city after city has seen eerily similar patterns of viral spreads and the necessary drastic policy responses. The ability to share knowledge and best practices are crucial for cities to avoid mistakes and optimise the response, particularly in the early stages of the spread.

It's invaluable for metropolitan areas to explore the implementation of successful strategies deployed by other cities – like social distancing is vital to slow the spread of the virus and flatten the curve.

The City Possible network managed by MasterCard has organised regular meetings of municipal decision-makers around the globe to exchange strategies on how to address the crisis in their communities. C40 launched a dedicated Covid-19 portal for cities to share knowledge and best practices for managing the crisis.

These city-to-city connections made in the short term will be vital to the necessary transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon economic system in the long term. Cities for Global Health, led by Metropolis and supported by UCLG, allows cities to share successful local initiatives to respond to health emergencies – Covid-19 or otherwise.

## **Connecting with experts**

As some national governments struggle to respond, cities can't be left to face the Covid-19 threat alone. This is why it's critical to connect local decision makers to health experts.



Bloomberg Philanthropies is closing this information gap with the Coronavirus Local Response Initiative, which connects US cities with public health experts, researchers and clinicians from across the Johns Hopkins University network to relay the most important and up-to-date information from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The organisation is also working with the US Conference of Mayors and the National Association of City Transport Officials on the Transportation Response Programme to provide rapid-response tools, real-time updates and technical assistance with providing essential urban services.

As another example, Cities for All, a global network focused on creating inclusive and accessible cities is hosting an expert webinar series to help cities devise and coordinate strategies to protect the elderly and persons with disabilities. Global Resilient Cities Network, a Rockefeller Foundation-backed initiative dedicated to supporting urban resilience, has likewise organised a weekly speaker series with the World Bank on global responses, as well as a programme to facilitate long-term resilient recovery plans among member cities.

Armed with the latest information from experts, cities can effectively plan and implement the strategies needed to slow the virus's spread – and come back even stronger.

## **Disease vs. Data**

The technological transformation of cities hasn't slowed during the pandemic. Organisations focused on the “smart cities” boom have simply expanded areas of exploration to include ways to mitigate the Covid-19 crisis. Quintela, an

artificial intelligence start-up focuses on urban services, and has created CoVER, an AI-powered emergency response platform to assist government officials with diagnosing, monitoring and tracking people with the disease as well as with communicating and collaborating with communities.

However, the benefits of technologies like AI and Big Data also come with major risks. From February to March, Covid-19-related cyber-attacks increased 475%, with hospitals and health ministries among the primary targets. SecDev, a Canadian risk consultancy, responded by launching a Cyber Defence Force. The all-volunteer group of IT professionals will be matched with Canadian healthcare providers, critical infrastructure and municipalities to help defend them against these attacks. The goal is to ensure hospitals remain open, patients can continue to be treated and essential services remain functional for the duration of the crisis.

### **What's the World Economic Forum doing about the future of cities?**

Cities represent humanity's greatest achievements – and greatest challenges. From inequality to air pollution, poorly designed cities are feeling the strain as 68% of humanity is predicted to live in urban areas by 2050.

The World Economic Forum supports several projects designed to make cities cleaner, greener and more inclusive.

These include hosting the Global Future Council on Cities and Urbanisation, which gathers bright ideas from around the world to inspire city leaders and to run the Future of Urban Development and Services initiative. The latter focuses on how themes such as the circular economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) can be harnessed to create better cities. To shed light on the housing crisis, the Forum has produced a report titled 'Making Affordable Housing a Reality in Cities'.

### **Innovative design for exceptional times**

Regardless of the amount of planning, information sharing and available financial resources, Covid-19 has tested – and in some cases overwhelmed – urban health infrastructure.

A lack of equipment and shortages of hospital beds are among the greatest threats to city governments and creating spaces that protect health and wellness will be essential to recovery.

CURA (Connected Units for Respiratory Ailments), led by architectural design firm Carlo Ratti Associati and the MIT Senseable City Lab, is one initiative seeking to bolster public health capacity in cities. Combining the efficiency of temporary tent structures with their knowledge of permanent buildings, organisers will repurpose shipping containers as mobile intensive care units connected by tented walkways, which can be deployed as field hospitals or hospital annexes to provide needed hospital bed space in poverty-stricken cities.

The International WELL Building Institute, which implements the WELL Building Standard, is also using this time to better understand the role of the built environment in public health. Its Places Matter task force is exploring the role of buildings and other spaces in supporting health and wellbeing, and our collective ability to prepare for and respond to global health challenges like the pandemic.

The aim is to identify and develop signature deliverables and resources, including guidelines for individuals, businesses and communities to help them better manage their buildings and organisations, as well as assess how the WELL Building Standard can be strengthened.

### **A new urban future?**

As Covid-19 continues to ravage the globe, cities will continue to be the most visible focal points of the crisis. Even as the pandemic ebbs, the economic fallout will be significant. At the same time, we'll be second-guessing the close-quarters dynamism of city living around the world.

This crisis will end. As we're already seeing with the winding down of the lockdown in Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, cities will survive – and with the right multi-stakeholder leadership and strategic planning, they will thrive. This will require collaboration between businesses, governments and civil society to meet the ongoing challenge posed by the Covid-19 crisis, the economic repercussions that will follow it and the long-term implications for planning in a post-pandemic world.

*(Source: WEF, Geneva: May 2020).*

# Global Mayors **Covid-19 Recovery** Task Force



## **GLOBAL MAYORS COVID-19 RECOVERY TASK FORCE**

The Task Force aims to help all C40 mayors think about the actions that must be taken on behalf of city residents and communities, as the impact of Covid-19 begins to ease. C40 is hoping that by placing sustainability and equity at the forefront of policies and stimulus interventions, cities will be able to rebuild in a way that ensures the protection of residents, the planet and shared prosperity.

The Task Force is composed of the following mayoral representatives:

- Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown (Sierra Leone)

- Wong Kam sing, Secretary of the Environment, Hong Kong (China)
- Fernando Medina, Mayor of Lisbon (Portugal)
- Daniel Quintero Calle, Mayor of Medellin (Colombia)
- Sally Capp, Lord Mayor of Melbourne (Australia)
- Valerie Plante, Mayor of Montreal (Canada)
- LaToya Cantrell, Mayor of New Orleans (USA)
- Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam (Netherlands)
- Jenny Durkan, Mayor of Seattle (USA)
- Park Won-soon, Mayor of Seoul (South Korea)

*(Source: C40, Johannesburg: April 2020).*

## Innovation, proximity and solidarity: **Local economic development as an immediate response**

Local and regional governments are playing a key innovative role in giving impetus to the maintenance and reactivation of local economic development systems. They are taking the lead in providing financial support to economic actors as well as to the most vulnerable citizens by fostering social dialogue in economic recovery.

The live learning session demonstrates how local and regional governments are acting to provide financial support to the economic community and businesses through loans, assistance to access the financial market and providing grants to employees. It further shows the important range of innovative actions taken by local and regional governments as part of their immediate response to the pandemic in fostering social dialogue, safeguarding public services and protecting workers. The session also highlights policies based on solidarity and proximity, at the level closest to citizens, putting action for the most vulnerable first.

Maimunah Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, recalls that local economic development is not just a matter of economy, but needs to focus on citizens. Sharif indicates that local economic development should be the commitment of all city leaders and everyone.

“We owe vulnerable communities the promise that we will create the space and opportunities for new and more jobs,” she says.

Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General of UCLG, states that many citizens work under insecure conditions. It will be critical to rethink an economic model based on local, small businesses with cities supporting each other and harnessing the potential of territories.

Sang Heon Lee, ILO Director of Employment Policy Department, shares the four pillars of ILO to fight the pandemic: lending and activating financial support to specific sectors including the health sector; extending social

protection for all; implementing employment retention measures and providing financial support for enterprises. Lee emphasises the need to protect workers in the workplace, expand access to paid leave, and utilise social dialogue through collective bargaining and labour relations' institutions and processes.

Njabulo Sithabe, Gauteng Premier's Special Economic Advisor, presents the City's regional economic and social stimulus response which includes support for people during the post-lockdown period and helping them access new markets. Sithabe says Johannesburg is among the most unequal societies and that Covid-19 exposed the areas of weakness such as urban residents having nowhere to live.

Andrea Agostinucci, from UNDP-ART, commends initiatives showcased in the session and calls for the placing of resilient

local and urban economies at the centre of efforts to rebuild and apply knowledge from the territorial perspective.

Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, Advisor, ILO, addresses some critical elements of response, including placing value on local public service provision and highlighting the importance of local economic development and local actors, preserving business environments through social dialogue and trust among stakeholders with disparate interests.

Speakers address some of the key priorities for local economic development in the future: supporting and avoiding the disappearance of small businesses and job creation; promoting innovative businesses; improving working conditions and supporting and acknowledging care-related work; and rethinking models of consumption and production, supported by new technologies.

(Source: UCLG, Barcelona: April 2020).

## Lockdown levels and what they mean for a return to normal life

President Cyril Ramaphosa has announced plans to gradually return the country to economic activity through a series of lockdown levels.

In his address to the nation, Ramaphosa says the end of the 'hard' lockdown does not mean a complete return to normal life. Scientists have warned that if we simply go back to the way things were before, we could see a massive resurgence of Covid-19 infections. This would undoubtedly overwhelm our vulnerable healthcare system and become a cause for a return to another hard lockdown.

The national coronavirus command council has implemented a series of lockdown levels to ease the country back into economic activity. As such, under the advisement of scientists, researchers and the council, President Ramaphosa has implemented a risk-adjusted strategy for economic activity – also known as the five levels of lockdown.

ALERT LEVEL 5	ALERT LEVEL 4	ALERT LEVEL 3	ALERT LEVEL 2	ALERT LEVEL 1
 <b>OBJECTIVE</b>				
Greater resistance to contain the spread of the virus and save lives.	Extreme precautions to limit community transmission and outbreaks, while allowing some activity to resume.	Restrictions on many activities, including at workplaces and socially, to address a high risk of transmission.	Physical distancing and restrictions on leisure and social activities to prevent a resurgence of the virus.	Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times. Population prepared for an increase in alert levels if necessary.

Each level permits a certain amount of economic activity, movement and trade, depending on a variety of factors, including the relevant health system's capacity to treat new patients.

Source: Joburg.org.za, Johannesburg: April 2020).

# Covid-19 Tracker

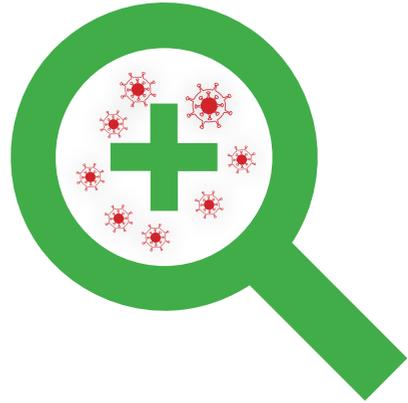
Ask Africa Market Research Intelligence published a survey unpacking the significant social change brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. The research aims to understand the socio-economic impact coronavirus and the subsequent lockdown period has on South Africa. Over 1 627 interviews were conducted. These included 647 computer-aided telephonic interviews and 980 online interviews, of which 54% were female and 46%, male. All nine South African provinces were included in the survey, with respondents aged between 16 to over 65 years.

## The survey results are summarised as follows:

One in three South Africans share positive emotionality as more people experience feelings of fear, depression and discouragement. The Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces remain the most positive. Many people have reflected on their sense of purpose in life and continue to show empathy for others due to the impact of the lockdown.

Food shortages, unemployment and a loss of income remain the most prevalent concerns for South Africans. The majority of citizens are concerned about the amount of food available in their households before they will have funds to replenish their cupboards and fridges. Nearly 2 in 3 adults have reduced their portion sizes due to a lack of food and money to buy more food, and one in three children go to bed hungry because there is not enough money to buy food.

Most people also feel that the Government should provide food parcels and safety equipment to the township and rural communities and nearly 50% feel that the Government has not been distributing food parcels in the most vulnerable communities. The majority of people also



note that they have changed what they eat during the lockdown.

Many people are experiencing financial insecurity and have started using their savings to maintain their livelihoods, borrowed money and made financial arrangements for later payment.

People mostly trust President Cyril Ramaphosa to lead the country during the outbreak and believe that the Government is doing a good job to prevent the spread of the virus. They trust the mainstream media to report news accurately and fairly. More than half of people experience low internet speeds and an inconsistent connection during the day and the majority of people are using more data during the lockdown. Social media and video calling platforms have also become more important to consumers.

Behaviourally, handwashing practices have increased since the lockdown, and most people wear a mask when they leave their homes. Educational drives may be necessary to keep people informed and up to date on the latest Covid-19 initiatives and terms, such as flattening the curve, which many don't understand. Only one in three people are aware of testing initiatives in their communities.

*(Source: Ask Africa Market Research Intelligence, Johannesburg: April 2020).*

# Buenos Aires uses WhatsApp to boost response to Covid-19



A city-run WhatsApp chatbot has handled 170 000 public queries related to the Covid-19 pandemic, achieving a response rate five times quicker than traditional telephone emergency responses. The City of Buenos Aires revamped its WhatsApp chatbot, Boti, at the end of February in preparation for an influx of coronavirus cases and to diversify the city's emergency assisted channels.

WhatsApp is the most widely used communication channel for both personal and professional purposes in Argentina. "This version enables queries or responses on Covid-19 and provides an immediate referral to medical professionals working in one of the emergency review units," Fernando Straface, Secretary-General and Secretary for International Relations, City of Buenos Aires, tells *Cities Today*.

"More than 6 000 of these queries have been referred directly to medical professionals."

Boti lets a concerned resident know if their symptoms coincide with those of Covid-19 and after a series of questions, suspected cases are immediately referred to a medical professional on the same chat. The city says three to five queries are resolved using Boti in the time it takes one emergency telephone call. Buenos Aires is into its fifth week of a strict mandatory lockdown, and has recorded over 800 coronavirus cases with more than 40 deaths.

Although recently the national government has approved some measures to ease the lockdown in cities, this did not include Buenos Aires, but the exclusion has been supported by the city government. "We are extremely preoccupied with the situation here and we don't think we are in a phase to be more flexible with the quarantine," adds Straface.

The city is working to further develop its technological response in preparation for when lockdown measures are

eased. Improvements are being made to remote care and incorporate medical records and prescriptions into digital formats using text messages, WhatsApp and email.

"We are now developing software for monitoring future patients, suspected cases and especially those in close contact with patients," says Straface. "This will be controlled by the emergency operation centre so medical staff have access to these areas to make decisions."

Straface confirms that this would not extend to a tracing tool that some countries and cities have controversially introduced, that has raised privacy concerns. "We think that's part of future policy and solutions," he adds.

"To convey this idea in a democracy is not always easy and recommendable so that is why we are working with the public to create a debate on the use and benefits of this knowledge." To make the quarantine restrictions easier at home, the city tapped into its wealth of cultural offerings in developing its Life at the Home platform.

Performances from the city's renowned Opera and Colon theatres, independent theatres and other performances were made available online. More than 2.5 million people have accessed the productions.

"That platform makes us proud because it means that even in the context of quarantine, the people of Buenos Aires are responding successfully to the cultural opportunities we have in the city," says Straface.

"We can look back and say that we were able to maintain our cultural identity during this pandemic in Buenos Aires."

*(Source: Cities Today, London: April 2020).*

# UCLG Executive Bureau on the **post Covid-19 era**



Given the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and following the cancellation of the face-to-face meeting of the UCLG Executive Bureau in Rome, UCLG convenes a virtual Executive Bureau focusing on the strategies in the post Covid-19 era. Moreover, it facilitates a dialogue between Mayors and Ministers in strengthening coordination on the Paris Agreement.

UCLG has also agreed on a Decalogue that includes 10 recommendations to change the world beyond the outbreak of Covid-19, building on the Durban Declaration and focusing on the commitment of local and regional governments to build a world of solidarity.

The City of Rome expresses its commitment to keep working with UCLG and reiterates its interest to hold a UCLG meeting in the future.

*(Source: UCLG, Barcelona: April 2020).*

## **C40 webinar on measures** taken to deal with Covid-19

The webinar is attended by officials from the C40 cities, including the Executive Director of C40, Mark Watts, who sets the tone for the meeting.

The webinar aims to assist cities such as Johannesburg to manage the Covid-19 pandemic through knowledge exchanges and support. C40 organises presentations from Chinese cities of Guangzhou, Nanjing and Beijing to showcase practical measures already undertaken to deal with Covid-19.

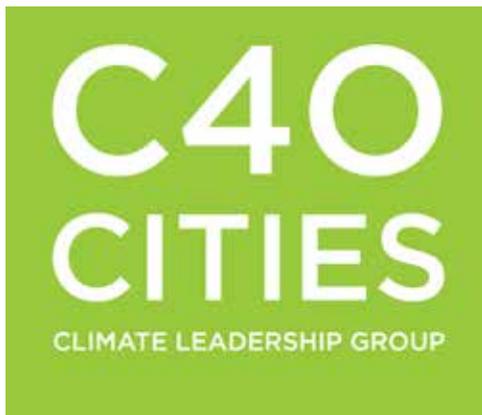
For instance, the City of Guangzhou implemented a government-led operation supported by community participation. This included deploying a three-defence approach focusing on the following:

- Joint transport checkpoints;
- Tightened community prevention and control; and
- Reinforcement of efforts in medical facilities.

On the other hand, the City of Nanjing ensured that community screening was increased, as well as the isolation

and treatment of patients. Nanjing also focused on early treatment with individualised treatment plans.

To minimise the spread of the virus, the City of Beijing mobilised community awareness, focused on early detection and home quarantine, imposed restrictions on travellers from high-risk countries, closed schools and universities, and cancelled major events.



# We can create a **better urban future** where no one is left behind

Around 95 percent of people with Covid-19 live in urban areas. This has brought some of the fundamental inequalities at the heart of our towns and cities into sharp focus.

Covid-19 will hit the most vulnerable the hardest, including the one billion residents of the world's densely populated informal settlements and slums, as well as other people lacking access to adequate, affordable, and secure housing. Without a house, it is impossible to heed the call to stay at home. Without safe shelter and access to basic services, the order to shelter in place has no meaning.

This pandemic is already exacerbating the urban divide that has resulted from a long-term failure to address fundamental inequalities and guarantee basic human rights. The post- Covid-19 response will require these failures to be addressed and all urban residents provided with basic services — especially health care and housing — to ensure everyone can live with dignity and be prepared for the next global crisis.

Local authorities will have to be the driving force in reducing inequality, supported by national government policies that increase the resilience of cities and their residents. The eternal optimist in me aspires to, and firmly believes in a better urban future in which no one and no place is left behind.

*(Source: Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Foreign Policy: May 2020).*

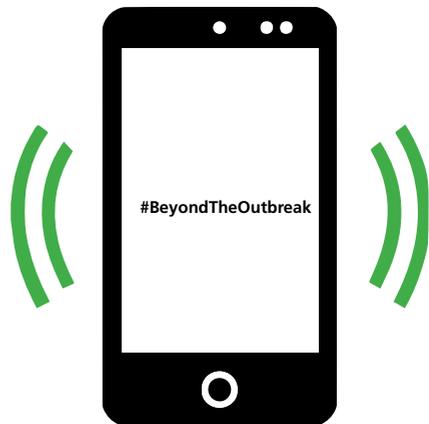
## #BeyondTheOutbreak – Covid-19 and digital technology

The aim of the live learning session on Digital Technologies is to highlight the role of new technologies during the pandemic and beyond.

Maimunah Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, expresses her concern regarding the digital divide and mentions how cities and regions can contribute to ensure digitalisation leaves no-one and no place behind. On the principle of Human Rights First, also online, she commends the Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights on their work in advancing universal access to technology, data security, transparency, and non-discrimination.

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat also highlights that it is time to look at the outcome of Covid-19 as “the new normal,” and how lockdown unlocks opportunities for introducing new technologies and for alternative ways of working.

Privacy is one of the key concerns, with Barcelona focusing on the management of data in the aftermath of the pandemic, and Roberta Cocco, Deputy Mayor of Milan, looking at how the city should support citizens through technology, but not if this posed a risk to rights. The concept of smart living beyond implementing teleworking



is also introduced by Cocco, pointing to a full digital transformation having been started.

Mousa Hadid, Mayor of Ramallah, argues that local and regional governments have a responsibility towards their citizens to guarantee safety, and states that Ramallah had worked to ensure a response from day one and is already thinking about how technology could be used in rebuilding.

Dubai shares its experience of implementing working from home principles, and how over 70 000 public employees were able to do so after a simulation implemented before the crisis hit. The city of Bogotá highlights digital education as a cornerstone of its work and argues that this had exposed some of the underlying digital, and economical inequalities that students face, and calls for a wider alliance to ensure technology reaches all who need it.

John Farmer, Chief Technology Officer of New York City highlights how the digital divide is both a human rights issue and about public health. The city is working to accelerate the delivery of the #InternetMasterPlan to bridge the digital gap in urban areas by bringing universal broadband and access to the Internet in the city.

Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General of UCLG, closes the session by recalling the relevance of key principles that guide the work of cities for digital rights. Technical and human infrastructure for smart citizens is enabled by technology, she argues, but it is necessary to enhance the role of local and regional governments in gathering and protecting their citizens' data.

She also touches on the consideration of access to the Internet as a basic service, stating that "it is critical to ensure service provision to ensure accessibility, and this entails bringing all actors, even the private sector on board. We need to define access to information as critical, and cities will need to lead the way in the defence of digital rights. Our role, as local government networks, will be to foster and put together strategies to ensure this happens."

*(Source: UCLG, Barcelona: April 2020).*

## Impact of Covid-19 on local finances

In a webinar focusing on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on local government expenditure and revenue, the Executive Mayor, Geoff Makhubo reflects on solutions local and regional governments provide to address the unprecedented financial pressure caused by the crisis, and measures needed in the aftermath.

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting local service providers throughout the world. The Live Learning Session on local finance highlights how essential it is for local and regional governments to have access to finance and to bring all stakeholders together to protect global resources and promote the universal development agenda amid the crisis, and in the aftermath.

Mayors, Vice Mayors, representatives of regional governments, councillors, and representatives of national governments from all over the world share their experiences and challenges in accessing finance. They analyse the current situation regarding local and regional governments' access to finance, initiatives to provide services to their citizens, and how the system needs to change to become

more sustainable in the aftermath.

The session provides an opportunity to foster exchanges among local and regional governments and key partners such as the French Development Agency (AFD), the Rockefeller Foundation and the European Commission on the steps necessary to guarantee access to finance for local and regional governments in the face of the crisis and to address the recovery.

Parks Tau, the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs highlights the country's response to the pandemic, including stimulus packages offered to local and regional governments. Tau calls for everyone to think collectively on how to support local governments to create sustainable revenue streams. He says a recovery fund must enable all levels of government to respond adequately to challenges being faced now and after the outbreak.

On the other hand, Mayor Makhubo highlights that the Covid-19 response in the City has been directed towards ensuring public health is stable and to purchasing sanitary equipment. Social relief packages have also been issued to poorer families. For the aftermath, he calls for the continuation of public services, and to support those most in need in times of economic contraction.

Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General of UCLG, closes the session by warning against the lack of funding for local and regional governments. She highlights the financial measures identified in the Decalogue of Local and Regional Governments for the post-Covid-19 era and advocates that financial packages during the crisis provide direct and immediate support to local and regional governments.

Saiz calls for the consolidation of the global coalition on municipal finance, the Malaga Coalition and redirecting the funding of the International Municipal Investment Fund to

Covid related reconstruction while promoting a renewed public debate on fiscal transfers.

She further argues for the need to take a decisive leap forward in international financial instruments available for the urban era. "A global fund or bank should be developed if we want to ensure the service provision we need."

The Live Learning Session is organised by UCLG in collaboration with FMDV and UNCDF.

*(Source: UCLG, Barcelona: April 2020).*

## Joburg joins C40 Covid-19 mayoral webinar for knowledge exchange

The webinar addresses two of the most urgent and significant issues resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic - procurement of medical supplies during the immediate crisis and preparing for a sustainable and inclusive economic recovery.

Many of the questions and discussions on the Covid-19 webinars hosted by C40 to date focus on the immense challenge of deploying mass testing mechanisms and procuring the equipment and supplies necessary to protect medical and non-medical workers in cities. Professor Vernon Lee, Director of Communicable Diseases at the Singapore

Ministry of Health shares his country's experience of successfully managing mass testing.

Looking beyond the immediate response phase, the escalating long-term global health and economic crisis threatens to delay action on climate breakdown and to worsen inequality. A major economic stimulus is required to recover from the economic impacts of the Covid-19 health emergency. The webinar aims to encourage cities to start thinking about how to shape that response.

The webinar is attended by the C40 Chair and Mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, who sets the tone for the meeting.

## World Bank's Covid-19 response in Africa

Dr Muhammad Ali Pate, the World Bank's Global Director for Health, Nutrition and Population outlines the institution's \$160 billion package to support private sector companies and national public health systems to combat Covid-19 over the next 15 months, focusing efforts on Africa.

The initiative includes a \$14 billion fast-track package: \$8 billion is dedicated to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and private sector response and \$6 billion to support countries in their response to immediate health consequences caused by the pandemic.

The Bank has launched the Fast Track Covid-19 Facility, designed to streamline the procurement process for client countries seeking essential medical products and equipment. Dr Pate acknowledges the major role non-profit organisations play alongside the private sector in service delivery and notes that collaboration among all stakeholders is key to shortening the time to economic and social recovery.

# Message of solidarity from ICLEI

Working with cities on an integrated, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly urban transport system using Eco-Mobility and Eco-Logistics is always ICLEI's commitment to local and regional governments. ICLEI's commitment has never rang truer than ever in disrupted times.

ICLEI sees people around the world once again embrace walking and cycling whilst public transport and shared mobility are suspended and put under scrutiny; urban freight is in extraordinarily high demand whilst supply chain has been struck severely.

There has never been a better opportunity than now for cities to reflect on critical issues concerning sustainable mobility for people and goods. How to prioritize walking and cycling in urban planning once and for all? How to rebuild trust in public transport and make it safer and more reliable than ever before? How to, after all, shift people's mobility habits and put sustainable mobility at the centre of urban prosperity?

The new social norms have taught us that sustainable mobility is the lifeblood of keeping cities moving regardless. Logistics in cities now deserves urgent attention. It is time for the logistics sector to improve the work environment, for people to consume consciously and for technologies made available to inform decision making in a responsive urban freight system.

When cities move past the immediate crisis posed by the global pandemic and life returns to normal, it is imperative to envision a more resilient and people-centred mobility ecosystem, one where there is no space for congestion, air pollution, traffic injuries, and inequality.

The society has spoken. Sustainable mobility is the definitive answer to the future of urban mobility. ICLEI will continue working with local and regional governments and their partners to shape eco-mobile and ecological cities for all.

# Message of solidarity from UCLG

The UCLG wishes to send a message of solidarity to all members. For many weeks now, cities have lived in an exceptional situation, facing a threat that knows no borders and changing the way they work to protect and provide basic services to their communities, especially the most vulnerable, who are suffering the most from the effects of this crisis.

Local and regional governments are proving that they are great allies of the Ministries of Health who, together with scientists, are the reference for action and solutions. Cities are demonstrating, not only as mayors but as a networks

of local governments, why they are essential actors in emerging from this crisis.

UCLG conveys its solidarity to those affected, its condolences to those who have lost loved ones, and its support to the authorities and scientists around the world, who are working tirelessly to contain and combat the virus effectively. UCLG is doing everything possible to remain relevant in these difficult times and is available for any additional information cities might require in combating the pandemic.

## Inspirational Quote:

"Gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times," **Thabo Mbeki.**

## **City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality**

**Group Strategy, Policy Coordination and Relations  
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