



New Report Provides African Governments Real-Time Information and Guidance to Find the Balance in COVID-19 Response

Real-time data from 20 African countries drives prevention guidelines to save lives

5 May 2020 (New York) – Member states across Africa responded quickly to COVID-19 with public health and social measures (PHSM), including curfews and lockdowns, as well as training in laboratory diagnostics, surveillance, risk communication, infection prevention and control, and case management conducted by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners. Implementing these early policies helped curb the rapid spread of infection across the continent, but response to the virus is a marathon, not a sprint. Countries now must find a balance between reducing transmission while preventing social and economic disruption.

“We knew that COVID-19 was a significant threat to Africa, so we started addressing it very early. We convened an emergency meeting of Africa health ministers, which endorsed the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19. Because of the early political engagement there was a continent-wide awareness and alertness to prepare the countries,” said Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC,”

As member states consider these complex trade-offs, a new report released today is putting real-time data about health and public sentiment into the hands of decision-makers. The *Responding to COVID-19 in Africa: Using Data to Find a Balance* report includes first-of-its-kind data to adapt COVID-19 pandemic response to local needs and capacities in Africa.

Using Data to Find a Balance, developed by Africa CDC, the WHO, Ipsos, Vital Strategies’ Resolve to Save Lives initiative, the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team, Novetta Mission Analytics and the World Economic Forum provides data and guidance to governments as they move toward a long-term response: use data to make informed decisions, adapt local measures as the pandemic and public perceptions evolve, and mitigate adverse effects by focusing on protecting the most vulnerable populations.

“This report highlights the large information gaps on COVID-19 which exist in Africa and threaten response efforts,” said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. “The findings of this report, along with COVID-19 trend data, will help countries make strategic decisions on relaxing their lockdowns. What we’ve learnt from Ebola and other outbreaks is that countries need to decentralize the response to the community level and increase their capacity to identify and diagnose cases.”

Key findings in the report include:

- One third (32%) of respondents said they do not have enough information about the coronavirus, including how it spreads and how to protect themselves;
- Across countries, large majorities believe COVID-19 will have major impact on their country (62%), but only 44% believe it is a threat to them personally;
- More than two thirds (69%) of respondents said food and water would be a problem if they were required to remain at home for 14 days – and 51% would run out of money.



Recommendations include that governments:

- Strengthen public health systems for immediate response and for a lasting recovery;
- Monitor data on how public health and social measures meet local COVID-19 conditions and needs; and
- Engage communities to adapt PHSM to the local context and effectively communicate about risks to sustain public support.

The report notes the disruptions caused by public health social measures, which are designed to stop the spread of COVID-19, and the importance of preserving wellbeing, economic livelihoods and social stability. *Using Data to Find a Balance* also includes recommendations for governments to prioritize rapidly enhancing public health capacity to test, trace, isolate and treat people infected with the virus, making the most of the time that early intervention with PHSM has provided.

“Governments have had to make difficult decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shelter-in-place measures can prevent infection but may limit access to food and essential services,” said Dr. Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies. Dr. Frieden, the former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added, “By using data, governments can find the right balance and adapt lifesaving policies to the local context.”

“Governments cannot rely on guesswork or instinct to combat COVID-19 – they need data,” said Dr. Darrell Bricker, CEO, Ipsos Public Affairs. “Many preventive measures taken elsewhere in the world must be adapted to the local context; we are proud to be a part of this extraordinary effort to provide real-time, Africa-specific data so that decision-makers can adapt their COVID-19 response based on data that is specific to their country.”

“The most successful response to COVID-19 in Africa must consider context and adaptability, and must be data-driven. With the release of *Using Data to Find a Balance* report, governments throughout Africa now have access to country-specific policy recommendations, and the data to guide their response to COVID-19 in the most effective and responsible manner,” said Dr Nkengasong.

PERC conducted surveys across 28 cities in 20 African member states to assess the impact the crisis was already having on populations, and people’s attitudes toward PHSMs being implemented. The report includes a regional analysis accompanied by individual country briefs to provide the most relevant data and recommendations to local decision-makers. As the pandemic evolves, further waves of research are planned to provide real-time updates that reflect current response efforts, changes to people’s perceptions, and timely recommendations and guidance.

“Understanding the need for data to guide the pandemic response across Africa, the World Economic Forum is proud to have facilitated this private-public partnership,” said Arnaud Bernaert, Head of Health and Healthcare, World Economic Forum. “It is important for governments, businesses and civil society to have the latest data and case studies available to make the best decisions possible in this global crisis.”



This report was produced by the **Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC)**, a public-private partnership that supports evidence-based measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on African countries. PERC member organizations are [Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(Africa CDC\)](#), the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies](#), the [UK Public Health Rapid Support Team](#) and the [World Economic Forum](#). WHO and Africa CDC are providing technical leadership and ensuring that new evidence is quickly adopted by Member States to adjust their COVID-19 response interventions. [Ipsos](#) and [Novetta Mission Analytics](#) bring market research expertise and years of data analytic support to the partnership.

To read the full report, please visit: <https://preventepidemics.org/coronavirus/perc/>

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About Africa CDC

Africa CDC is a specialized technical institution of the African Union that strengthens the capacity and capability of Africa's public health institutions as well as partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks, based on data-driven interventions and programmes. Learn more at: <http://www.africacdc.org>

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization contributes to a better future for people everywhere. Good health lays the foundation for vibrant and productive communities, stronger economies, safer nations and a better world. As the lead health authority within the United Nations system, our work touches people's lives around the world every day. In Africa, WHO serves Member States and works with development partners to improve the health and well-being of all people living here. The WHO Regional Office for Africa is located in Brazzaville, Congo. Learn more at www.afro.who.int and follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

About Resolve to Save Lives

[Resolve to Save Lives](#) is a five-year, \$225 million initiative funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Gates Philanthropy Partners, which is funded with support from the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation. Resolve received additional funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies for the COVID-19 response. It is led by Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is part of the global organization [Vital Strategies](#). To find out more visit: <https://www.resolvetosavelives.org> or Twitter @ResolveTSL

Resolve to Save Lives created a website called PreventEpidemics.org that shows how prepared each country is for an epidemic, including COVID-19, and how many flights are coming and going from infected countries. This site is also a [resource](#) for current coronavirus statistics and resources.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in 73 countries to



design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter @VitalStrat.

About IPSOS

Ipsos is the third largest market research company in the world, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people. Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data coming from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques. “Game Changers” – our tagline – summarises our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our world of rapid change.

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<https://www.ipsos.com/en/news-and-polls/overview>.

About the World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the World Economic Forum, acting as partner to the World Health Organization (WHO), launched the COVID Action Platform. The platform is intended to catalyse private-sector support for the global public health response to COVID-19, and to do so at the scale and speed required to protect lives and livelihoods, aiming to find ways to help end the global emergency as soon as possible. For more information, visit: <https://www.weforum.org/>

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