

OPINION PIECE

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COVID - 19: Let's take action now to flatten the curve

By Phyllis Wakiaga,

The number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in Kenya has jumped to 50, as of 30th March 2020. Whilst announcing the above, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Mutahi Kagwe noted that the virus is no longer being imported, rather, it is being passed on among ourselves. If there was ever a time for all of us to roll up our sleeves and face this pandemic, it is now. We need to move fast to flatten the curve. This is down to individual responsiveness and responsibility.

To contain the spread of the virus, China, one of the hardest-hit countries, introduced extraordinary measures, mid-January. These included restriction of movement through the suspension of trains and flights. People were required to stay at home. Patients diagnosed with coronavirus were immediately isolated into designated existing hospitals.

Wuhan actually stunned the world by building a makeshift emergency hospital in just 10 days! Home quarantine for contacts of the affected was initiated and large gatherings were cancelled. Because there was concerted efforts from all quarters to implement these measures, China's new cases slowed down drastically, with the country recording at most, [55 cases a day](#), from 10th March.

Whereas the confirmed number of cases in Kenya is low as compared to hard-hit nations, adhering to precautionary measures will see us reduce the risk of exposure and slow the spread of the virus.

The government projects that the Kenyan cases will rise to about 5, 000 by mid-April and 10, 000 by the end of April. This is a prediction that does not have to come true. In the true spirit of our National anthem Citizens, Government Businesses, Civil Societies all have to come together to protect our great land.

The government's response has been encouraging in managing the pandemic. Since the confirmation of Kenya's first case, all Ministries and agencies have expeditiously engaged their response teams in delivering quick progressive measures to protect all citizens.

The fiscal policy measures intended to unlock cash flow as pronounced by H.E The President, mean that businesses have the necessary buffer to continue operating in a crisis, which then translates to retained employment and ultimately the ability for citizens to access basic needs during this time. Another noteworthy step is the setting up of a Business Emergency Response Team to spearhead the formulation of measures and emergency policies to steer businesses in this time, cushioning the vulnerable, especially the small and micro-businesses.

Industry is also making efforts to ensure that production continues, especially food and other essential commodities. To this end, Kenya Association of Manufacturers developed and shared Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the workplace with its members. The SOPs provide precautionary measures to ensure the safety of employees within manufacturers' premises, during this period. We have also launched an online directory (www.directory.kam.co.ke) to help the public and other businesses access local products and services to support their operations during this time.

The Association is also mobilising its members to amplify the nation-wide hygiene campaign for citizens to practice sanitary procedures in public and private spaces.

The manufacturing sector is committed to ensure that there are at best, no, and at worst, minimal job losses as well as remain ethical and fair in our pricing to enable, especially those whose daily wage will be greatly impacted by the pandemic, to cater to their basic needs. Furthermore, the sector is prioritizing the health and safety of those in our companies and in our communities, by strictly adhering to guidelines and protocols provided by the Government under the Operational Safety and Health Act.

I urge all of us to do our part by adhering to the precautionary measures provided. We are a strong nation and it is through our combined efforts that we shall have a swift recovery and a promising future.

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