Pandemics and Cross-Border Trade

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Abstract

This paper examines the impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on cross-border trade and its implications on trade within and amongst African countries. Intermittent outbreaks of infectious diseases have had profound and lasting effects on societies throughout history. Using desk research, the paper argues that the COVID-19 pandemic presents unprecedented public health, social and economic challenges, including affecting international trade. Measures to curb the spread of the disease shut down large swathes of the global economy leading to dramatic negative supply and demand shocks. This study argues that pandemics are inherently uncertain, necessitating flexible policies in responding to outbreaks as they develop.

Keywords

Contextualize, COVID-19, cross-border trade, globalization, pandemic, public health, socio-political dynamics

Introduction

Pandemic outbreaks have been closely examined through the lens of humanities in the realm of history, including the history of medicine (De Witte, 2014). There have been pandemic outbreaks that the world has faced, including the Black Death (a plague outbreak from the fourteenth century), the Spanish Flu of 1918 and the more recent outbreaks of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Ebola, and Zika. In the era of modern humanities, however, little attention has been given to review how the different pandemics have affected the individual and group psychology of affected societies (CDC, 1918).

There have also been many pandemics of lesser magnitude throughout history. Potter (2001) identifies about ten pandemics in the past 300 years, arguing that pandemics follow a recurrent, although not a regular periodic, pattern, so we should not rule out the possibility of new medical disasters of this type in the future. According to Kilbourne (2005), the world was hit by three pandemics in the 20th century: Spanish influenza in 1918 (CDC, 1918), Asian influenza in 1957 and Hong Kong influenza in 1968. This study argues that COVID-19 is likely to affect

cross-border trade more than any past pandemic because it occurred when the world was more integrated than ever. COVID-19 has happened at a time when the world has been globalized.

Studies like that of Brainerd and Siegler (2003) and Young (2004) that investigated the macro-economic impact of pandemics and other major diseases such as SARS and HIV/AIDS have attempted to quantify the consequences in terms of lost output, growth and consumption. These studies concluded that pandemics reduce national outputs but increase consumption levels. However, there is little consensus. The results depend crucially on the models used and on the availability of data. Althoughliterature on the Black Death is substantial, researchers have not reached firm conclusions concerning its long-run effects (Bell & Lewis, 2004).

Nevertheless, a 2019 joint report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank estimated the impact of such a pandemic upwards, bringing the total cost to between 2.2%-4.8% of global GDP (US$3 trillion). The report further noted that in such an event, South Asia's GDP could potentially fall by 2% (US$53 billion) and Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP by 1.7% (US$28 billion) (WHO, 2019). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that vulnerable populations, particularly the poor, suffered disproportionately from an outbreak. They may have less access to healthcare and lower savings to protect them against financial catastrophe (IMF, 2020). This was aggravated by the lack of investments in infrastructure development in most developing countries (OECD, 2020; Congressional Research Service, 2020).

While at the regional level, a World Bank report estimated that the Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, derailed many of the previous years' economic gains in these countries, which, until then, were among the fastest-growing economies in the world (World Bank, 2016). A WHO report further explained that the outbreak caused a substantial loss of growth in the private sector, posed threats to food security due to a decline in agricultural production and burdened cross-border trade with restrictions on movement, goods, and services (World Bank , 2019).

As the Coronavirus emerged in China and spread globally, authorities acted to limit its spread. Experience with similar diseases revealed that while the human costs were significant, the bulk of the economic costs were due to the preventive behaviour of individuals and the transmission control policies of governments (Brahmbhatt and Dutta, 2008).

In Africa, COVID-19 has disproportionately disrupted the livelihoods of poor households and small and informal businesses. According to the initial analysis on the economic impact of COVID-19 in Africa, the average GDP growth of the continent in 2020 could be cut by 3–8 percentage points (Jayaram and Leke**,** 2020), the highest being the worst case and resulting in a negative growth rate of -3.9% (Jayaram *et al.*, 2020). Any disruptions on the livelihoods of the people in Africa directly disrupt the opportunities of exports and imports, which now reduces trade within and amongst African countries.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) predicted that the continent would experience a 1.4% GDP decline with a monetary value estimated to be US$29 billion (i.e.,

from US$66 billion in 2019 to US$37 billion in 2020) (UNECA, 2020). At a national level, it was estimated that COVID-19 would shave 2.9% off this fiscal year's economic growth in Ethiopia (UNICEF Ethiopia, 2020). Building on previous studies, this paper focuses on evaluating the impact of the pandemic on cross-border trade and its implications within and across borders.

Methodology

This study used data from secondary sources to analyze the Impact of COVID-19 on cross-border trade in Africa. The analysis was conducted using the information found in reports, documents, published and unpublished materials obtained from reputable sources such as the World Health Organization, World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD documents. These sources were substantive as they provided current data to analyze how COVID-19 had impacted trade within and amongst African countries.

Past pandemics and trade

Historically, pandemics caused significant economic and trade challenges globally, due to the interconnected nature of our world. The first pandemic of the eighteenth century began in the spring of 1729 in Russia, spreading across Europe during the ensuing six months and around the globe over the next three years (Pyle, 1986; Hirsh, 1983; Patterson, 1987; and Finkler, 1899). The outbreak occurred in multiple waves with more recent pandemics with higher associated morbidity and mortality at later stages (Beveridge, 1991; Patterson, 1987). The second pandemic of that century originated in China in 1781 (Pyle, 1986; Finkler, 1899). It spread through Russia and Europe for eight months, with an exceptionally high attack rate among young adults (Pyle & Patterson, 1984).

The major pandemic of the nineteenth century began in the winter of 1830 in China (Potter, 2001). This pandemic was reported to be of similar severity to the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. It spread across Southeast Asia, Russia, Europe, and North America by 1831 (Pyle, 1986; Beveridge, 1991; Patterson, 1987). Despite a high illness attack rate, associated mortality was low (Potter, 2012). In the winter of 1889, another pandemic emerged in Russia, spreading by rail and sea across Europe and North America (Pyle, 1984; Patterson, 1987). With an estimated case fatality rate in the range of 0.1%–0.28%, the outbreak killed about one million people globally (Valeron, 1889). This pandemic spread faster than previous ones and may have provided the first indication of the accelerated spread of emergent diseases due to progress in transportation technology.

In response to the above pandemic, efforts to control outbreaks relied on non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), such as quarantines, school closures, banning public gatherings, and infection prevention practices like cough and sneeze etiquette and use of face masks (Markel *et al.*, 2006). Interventions were of variable effectiveness. For example, the gauze face masks would have effectively prevented bacterial infection but were too porous to stop viral penetration, and many people resisted their use regardless. Governments issued directives on the dangers of influenza, but these were often poorly understood or ignored (USDHHS, The Great Pandemic, 1919). The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was the first outbreak in the twenty-first

century that managed to get public attention. Caused by the SARS Coronavirus (SARS-CoV), it started in China. It affected fewer than 10,000 individuals, mainly in China, Hong Kong, and other countries, including 251 cases in Canada (Toronto) (Damir, 2019).

Africa recently experienced its pandemic in 2014, where the West Africa region was confronted with the worst Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak ever observed in Africa, causing tragic loss of lives, impacting national economies and adversely impacting agriculture, food and nutrition security in the region (WHO, 2015). Governments, institutions and infrastructures struggled to cope with the enormous challenges posed by the epidemic while the way of life of affected populations hung in the balance (FAO-UN, 2016).

The EVD outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was unprecedented and caused major public health and socio-economic crises as of 2014. It had multiple and long-lasting repercussions on rural societies throughout the West African region (FAO-UN, 2016). The Ebola virus prevented West Africa from trading within and amongst each other for fear of spreading the virus. This, however, had great impacts on supply and demand due to the freeze on movement of goods and products across the borders. In addition to the tragic human death toll, the epidemic severely affected agricultural market chains in the three countries. This was aggravated, indeed, by the disease itself and its dramatic public health impact. The measures implemented to limit its propagation (such as movement restrictions on collective transport, closure of weekly markets and borders) had a tremendous social and economic impact on the local communities that depended on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood (FAO-UN, 2016).

The Ebola pandemic affected the proper functioning of market chains and the flow of agricultural products, and key factors influencing food and nutrition security. In the globalization era, countries were increasingly dependent on markets and their proper functioning for their food and nutrition security, as revealed by food security studies conducted in the three countries (WFP-CILSS-FEWS NET, 2010; WFP-Guinea, 2010; WFP-Liberia, 2010).

The Ebola-related control measures of border closure between affected countries also disrupted regional trade dynamics in West Africa and even affected the global trade ties as most countries could not accept or allow any movements into and out of these affected countries. According to the FAO rapid assessment in Sierra Leone, rice producers and traders in Kambia and Port Loko districts faced physical constraints to reaching markets in Guinea and Freetown due to movement restrictions and market closures. This resulted in the loss of contracts for producers and loss of income, and reduced activity for most agribusinesses (FAO-Sierra Leone, 2014a).

The year 2014 marked the first time that flights per day exceeded an annual average of 100,000, while 2013 was the first time when annual passengers exceeded 3 billion (Garfors, 2014). Meanwhile, global population growth continues. When the 1918 pandemic occurred, the global population was around 1.8 billion (Madhav *et al.*, 2013); as of July 2016, the World Population Clock estimates a global population of about 7.4 billion (World Population Clock Current World Population, 2016). If today's pandemic were to kill the same proportion as in 1918, this would equal between 74 and 370 million people. Nevertheless, population growth, human mobility,

and greater proximity to animal reservoirs increase both the risk of pandemic emergence and the speed with which pandemics can spread across the globe. Between 1700 and 1889, the average inter-pandemic period ranged from 50 to 60 years; since 1889, this period has shortened to 10 to 40 years (Potter, 2001). While a pandemic one hundred years ago would take weeks or months to spread globally, an infection today is spreading to every continent, country, community and household in days, if not hours. This increased risk can only be addressed by combining local, national, and international efforts to improve mitigation and containment of future pandemics.

The Coronavirus and trade

Trade is typically more volatile than output and tends to fall particularly sharply in times of crisis (Freund, 2009; Bussière *et al.*, 2013; Bems *et al.*, 2010; Kose and Terrones, 2015). Generally, investment, which is more cyclical and more trade-intensive than other categories of expenditure, has declined worldwide as firms face financing challenges and delay in expansion. Travel restrictions and concerns about COVID-19 led to a precipitous fall in tourism—a sector that in recent years accounted for about 6.5% of global exports of goods and services—with sharp declines in economies with the most severe outbreaks (Ahn *et al.*, 2011; Chor and Manova, 2012). Tourism is an important income-generator in Africa. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has demonstrated that over a third of all direct tourism GDP in 2018 was attributed to wildlife. This is important for many African countries such as Botswana, Kenya and South Africa and many of the continent's least developed countries (LDCs) such as Madagascar, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, where the wildlife tourism sector is lucrative for economies and livelihoods.

Many studies have found that population health, as measured by life expectancy, infant and child mortality and maternal mortality is positively related to economic welfare and growth (Pritchett and Summers, 1996; Bloom and Sachs, 1998; Bhargava *et al.*, 2001; Cuddington *et al.*, 1994; Cuddington and Hancock, 1994; Robalino*et al.*, 2002a; Robalino *et al.*, 2002b; WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, 2001; Haacker, 2004).

There are many channels through which an infectious disease outbreak influences the economy. Direct and indirect economic costs of illness were often the subject of health economics studies on the burden of disease (WHO, 2009). The conventional approach uses information on deaths (mortality) and illness that prevents work (morbidity) to estimate the loss of future income due to death and disability. Losses of time and income by careers and direct expenditure on medical care and support services are added to estimate the economic costs associated with the disease (WHO, 2004). This conventional approach negatively affects trade by underestimating the true economic costs of infectious diseases of epidemic proportions that are highly transmissible and for which there is no vaccine (McKibbin and Fernado, 2020).

The experience from the previous disease outbreaks provides valuable information on how to think and imagine the implications of COVID-19 on trade. COVID-19 affected households, businesses and governments in labour supply decisions, labour efficiency, household incomes, business costs and foreign investments (Mirzoev and Sedaghat, 2020). Haacker (2004) states that pandemics lead to increased public expenditure on health care and support for disabled and

orphaned children. Conventionally, this has implications on the productive sectors of countries, especially the developing countries. Largely, this affects but also shifts the investments from the productive sectors to health and public health regulations in the quest to reduce the spread of the diseases. Labour implications affect the economic productivity capacities of developing countries, directly reducing the levels of exports and imports.

Unlike other pandemics, the influenza virus was by far more contagious than HIV, for example, and the onset of the epidemic was sudden and unexpected. The COVID-19 virus was also very contagious, sudden and unexpected.

Nevertheless, the fear factor was influential in the world's response to SARS–a coronavirus not previously detected in humans (Shannon and Willoughby, 2004; Peiris *et al.*, 2004). It was also reflected in the responses to COVID-19. For example, when COVID-19 was discovered, all cities in China were closed, and travel restrictions were enforced by countries on people entering from infected countries. In most cases, the most infected countries were the industrial countries with whom developing countries trade. That means trade, to a larger extent, was negatively affected as goods and services could no longer be freely moved between and amongst countries. This affected the living standards of the population at large, especially those markets that depended most on importations (OECD, 2020). The fear of an unknown deadly virus was similar in its psychological effects to the reaction to biological and other terrorist threats causing high levels of stress and anxiety, often with long-term consequences (Hyams *et al.*, 2002). Many people would feel at risk at the onset of a pandemic, even if their actual risk of dying of the disease was low.

Furthermore, studies conducted in 2003 on the effects of the SARS epidemic on the macroeconomy found significant negative effects on trade through large reductions in consumption of various goods and services, increase in business operating costs, and re-evaluation of country risks reflected in increased risk premiums. Such effects had negatively impacted the production levels and purchasing power of the people. COVID-19 had its own peculiarities with the imposition of tougher restrictions in movements beyond social distancing to closures of cross-borders (Chou *et al.*, 2004; Sui and Wong, 2004).

Also, shocks to other economies during the SARS pandemic were transmitted according to the degree of the countries' exposure or susceptibility to the disease. Nevertheless, the impacts were marginal for the developing countries; despite a relatively small number of cases and deaths, the global costs were significant and not limited to the directly affected countries (Lee and McKibbin, 2003). This is the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, where developing countries experienced a relatively smaller number of infected people, yet the impacts on trade were enormous and getting worse day by day due to travel and transportation restrictions. Other studies of SARS include (Chou *et al.*, 2004) for Taiwan, (Hai *et al.*, 2004) for China and (Sui and Wong, 2004) for Hong Kong.

Bloom *et al.* (2005) used the Oxford Economic Forecasting Model to estimate the potential economic impact of a pandemic resulting from the mutation of the avian influenza strain. They indicated how the pandemic had the possibility of contracting cross-border trade and further assumed that it was a mild pandemic with a 20% attack rate, a 0.5% case-fatality rate, and a

consumption shock of 3%. Scenarios include two-quarters of demand contraction only in Asia (combined effect of 2.6% Asian GDP or US$113.2 billion); a longer-term shock with a longer outbreak; and larger shock to consumption and export yields (a loss of 6.5% of GDP or US$282.7 billion). With COVID-19, it is rather feared that the trade implications could be beyond what Bloom and others indicated because this pandemic has a long-term shock as it had put the world on a standstill in all aspects of the world economy. Global GDP, according to Bloom and colleagues, during the SARS was reduced by 0.6% and global trade of goods and services contracted by $2.5 trillion (14%). Nevertheless, open and less stable economies were more vulnerable to international shocks, as is the case in the COVID-19 pandemic period.

McKibbin and Fernado (2020), learning from the approach used by Lee & McKibbin (2003) and McKibbin & Sidorenko (2006), converted the different assumptions about mortality rates and morbidity rates in the country where the disease outbreak occurs (the epicentre country). Given the epidemiological assumptions based on previous experience of pandemics, they created filters that converted the economic shocks to reduced labour supply in each country (mortality and morbidity); the rising cost of doing business in each sector, including disruption of production networks in each country; consumption reduction due to shifts in consumer preferences over each good from each country (in addition to changes generated by the model based on the change in income and prices); rise in equity risk premia on companies in each sector in each country (based on exposure to the disease); and increases in country risk premium based on exposure to the disease and vulnerabilities to changing macroeconomic conditions (OECD, 2020). COVID-19 is, however, feared to have worse implications on trade than the past pandemics as many countries have experienced two or more lockdowns. Despite measures put in place to curb the economic impacts, there still is a fear that the impacts are enormous, especially for agriculture-dependent countries, as is the case with most African countries (WHO, 2020).

McKibbin and Wilcoxen applied a global intertemporal general equilibrium model with heterogeneous agents called the G-Cubed Multi-Country Model. This model is a hybrid of the Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) Model and Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Model developed by McKibbin and Wilcoxen (1999, 2013). The hybrid model helps in seeing the implications of the pandemic on trade within and amongst countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been highly disruptive to development financing in Africa, regardless of the source of revenue. Oil prices had a historic collapse from US$61.5 in December 2019 to US$23.2 in March 2020. This is a major blow to a continent whose oil rents represent 4.5% of GDP (OECD/ATAF/AUC, 2019). The contraction of world trade has affected the productive apparatus of several sectors across the continent. For example, African industries import over 50% of their industrial machinery and manufacturing and transport equipment from outside the continent. The most important suppliers are Europe (35%), China (16%) and the rest of Asia, including India (14%). As such, COVID-19-related disruptions in global supply chains, especially from China and Europe, have led to a decrease in the availability of final and intermediate goods imported to Africa. In the long run, lower value-added sectors such as agribusiness, flowers, or

garments would suffer the most from shortages in supply, and possible relocating of production activities closer to final markets would be necessary (ECA, 2020).

Overall, the impacts of COVID-19 vary across African countries, both within and across sectors. The fall in global demand for exports and a slump in prices of major commodities, including fuels, are the main concerns for Africa. There has also been a fall in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which is closely linked to the extractive sector and hence the commodity price cycle (UNCTA-World Investment Report, 2020). The decline in crude oil prices by up to 60% has put significant strains on the revenue of the net oil exporters, particularly those whose revenues are highly determined by crude oil sales. Reports by UNCTAD (2020) suggest a -11.4% decline in Nigeria's revenue in 2020 with relatively lower revenue falls for the other key exporters of fuels in the region such as Algeria (-2.5%), Angola (-3.8%), Gabon (-2.4%) and Congo (-2.3%). However, the final impact will depend on how the respective countries will take advantage of their respective key markets as frontier closures are lifted with productivity resumed in the world. Overall, fuel exports are estimated to fall by -7.7%, with a significant drop in GDP of about -3.3% in Congo and Mozambique (UNCTAD, 2020).

Generally, a protracted global recession causing low demand for their exports with resultant revenue losses had significant consequences not just for agriculture but also other sectors of their economies, with poverty and food insecurity rising not only currently but also expected to worsen in 2021 (Akiwumi and Valensisi, 2020). Recent food security estimates suggest that 73 million people in Africa are acutely food insecure. This alarming situation is being exacerbated by the current COVID-19 crisis through its direct impacts on trade and logistics as well as on production and value chains. Administrative restrictions imposed by governments such as lockdowns, travel restrictions and physical distancing measures have also contributed to worsening the situation. The burden of movement restrictions and lockdowns is being felt particularly strongly by low-income households and those working in the informal economy due to their loss of livelihoods and inability to access markets (UNCTAD, 2020). Additionally, despite fuel prices being favourable to net importers of fuels, the recession in LDCs and SIDS economies may also lead to reduced fuel imports as production in other sectors remains depressed. For example, countries like Burundi (-26.6%), Cabo Verde (-8.5%), Comoros (-30%) and Malawi (-15%) are all expected to import less fuel by the indicated amounts over the year. A potentially deep recession in the global economy will result in significant losses in Africa, with a fall in GDP of -1.4%. Most countries are expected to suffer a recession as a result of the decline in world GDP and fuel prices, but the impact is expected to be disproportionately higher amongst net food exporters (UNCTAD, 2020).

This paper, however, argues that implementing measures in response to COVID-19 must take into consideration the local economic and social realities of different communities. In other words, public health measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus must go beyond the one-size-fits-all approach that sees the world through a Western lens to context-specific understandings of diseases. Africa, for example, is not Europe, even in the context of so-called globalization. The perspectives and responses of the local population are important. The world is now moving into

online shopping, but it is unfitting to say that Africans should engage in internet shopping because that would be denying the reality of poverty and lack of access to information technology in this part of the world.

Institutional analysis on trade

Africa has key institutions whose aim has been to expand and facilitate trade within Africa, but COVID-19 has contracted everything in this regard, hence, exposing countries to a lot of trade challenges simply beyond financial assistance. The continent as a whole has seen the birth of the African Continental Free Trade Area with the aim of facilitating the expansion of Intra-African Trade. One of the objectives of the AFCTA is to create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by the movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan-African vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" enshrined in Agenda 2063 (Agreement Establishing the AFCTA, 2018). In the face of COVID-19, this objective is being challenged as people are not free to move or transport their goods and services due to massive restrictions meant to reduce the spread of the virus.

Furthermore, institutions such as the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) regard intra-African trade as trade in goods and services between or among African countries and the flow of goods and services between Africa and Africans in the Diaspora. The Intra-African Trade Strategy, as conceived and conceptualized by the Afreximbank, is viewed through three main pillars, namely, Create, Connect and Deliver, with an ancillary pillar known as measure (Africa Export-Import Bank, 2017).

Afreximbank, on the first pillar of creating, aims at building the capacity for the expansion of production and processing capabilities, with a focus on agricultural production, agro-processing, manufacturing and services (Afreximbank, 2017). This pillar has been heavily affected by COVID-19 in that the agricultural sector and other productive sectors are either non-operational or operational to a little extent. This paper also argues that the majority of agricultural products come from small-scale farmers continentally who are also affected by COVID-19. The bank, through this pillar, is supposed to facilitate capacity for expansion of tradable goods and services that can enter the trade. Nevertheless, less or no production in the productive sectors entails that trade within and even with the outside world is affected.

Despite the bank facilitatingthe environment for the flow of goods through the creation of robust in-country and intra-regional supply chains in Africa with the pillar of Connect, the productive sectors are not meeting the goals and aims of trade. This means there are no institutions that the bank can support, so they would be able to connect producers and buyers along the intra-African value chain (UNCTADStats, 2017).

With regard to the last pillar of delivering, the bank aims to provide efficient and cost-effective distribution channels for the delivery of goods and services to buyers within the continent and support the emergence of facilitative infrastructure including transportation and logistics, as

well as introduce an intra-African trade payment platform. In view of this aim, this paper argues that the bank must expand investments in the digital trade that could assist the producers and buyers in their small productive capacities. This will help the continent to be viable in intra-trade and be able to enhance people's livelihoods. The Bank could still expand the digital trade with the already existing infrastructure, including transportation and logistics and also introduce an intra-African trade payment platform (UNCTADStats, 2017).

However, the continent accounts for less than 3% of world trade (UNCTADStats, 2018). This is because the continent is mostly endowed with commodities and natural resources continue to dominate Africa's export basket, and the continent's participation in the global value chain has been minimal. Nevertheless, the continent has improved in the value chain with increased productions from Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Egypt, and these countries have a lot of potential to support the intra-African Trade (UNCTAD, 2019). On the contrary, with intra-African trade, Africa continues to trail other regions which have drawn on vibrant cross-border trade to sustain growth, economic development and integration into the global economy. At about 15%, Africa compared unfavourably to Europe (68%), North America (37%), and Latin America (20%) (Afreximbank, 2018).

The implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement will make the African continental market the world's largest free trade area. As its implementation is ongoing, global markets and countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas are being affected by the new Coronavirus (COVID-19). This is having a negative multiplier effect on almost all aspects of human engagements, including trade, finance, travel, employment and contracts. COVID-19 restrictions are constraining the benefits of the AfCFTA, whose mandate is to incorporate all 55 African countries with a population of 1.2 billion and a combined GDP of $2.5 billion (Adetuyi, 2020). The AfCFTA is mandated to facilitate the removal of tariffs and trade barriers to free up trade and deepen intra-African trade and regional integration, which is an important tenet of the AfCFTA. Also, the AfCFTA, once in effect, is likely to lead the shift in technology frontier and improvement in productivity spillovers within African countries that will result from trade creation. Technology enhancement is important in the era of the pandemic as it will eliminate the physical trade in cross-borders.

According to UNCTAD (2019), Africa's development in terms of merchandise exports is still confronted with multiple challenges. Amongst these challenges, the continent has continuously been faced with high costs related to poor quality of infrastructure and logistics, low processing capacity and the overwhelming dominance of primary commodities and natural resources in Africa's exports, exposing the region to recurrent adverse commodity terms-of-trade shocks. Compounded with these challenges, Africa is now faced with a global pandemic of COVID-19 with a few coping strategies at its disposal. COVID-19 has affected the world at large, but in Africa, where there are a lot of trade bottlenecks already, intra-trade is left challenged due to restrictions in people's movements, amongst other reasons, and this is reducing the cross-border trade.

The global economy has almost been brought to its knees from the severe, wide and deep impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, placing all past development gains at risk. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted businesses, jobs and household livelihoods, resulting in increased poverty—with the poorest and vulnerable suffering the most. In addition, the resultant illness has overwhelmed health systems and social safety net responses, with the burden being proportionately higher for Africa's weaker economies. The total impact is yet to be accurately determined through more in-depth analyses (United Nations, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Africa's total merchandise imports posted a strong recovery growing by an estimated 5.4% in 2017 to reach US$502.28 billion after a contraction of 10.9% in 2016. However, it remained below US$534.97 billion in 2015 (Afreximbank, 2018). The resurgence of growth in Africa's imports was driven largely by a recovery in foreign reserves, which now has been highly affected by COVID-19 and compounded with high international debts. Most Africa countries have borrowed beyond their recovery capacities during COVID-19. This largely has implications as the purposes of the borrowing have not been clearly stipulated. Even if they had been, the money has not been fully invested in what is claimed. This is because Africans largely have not understood their socio-political and economic dynamics. After all, if they had, they would not be taking the homogeneous perspectives of combating the virus without reflecting on context specificities (OECD, 2020).

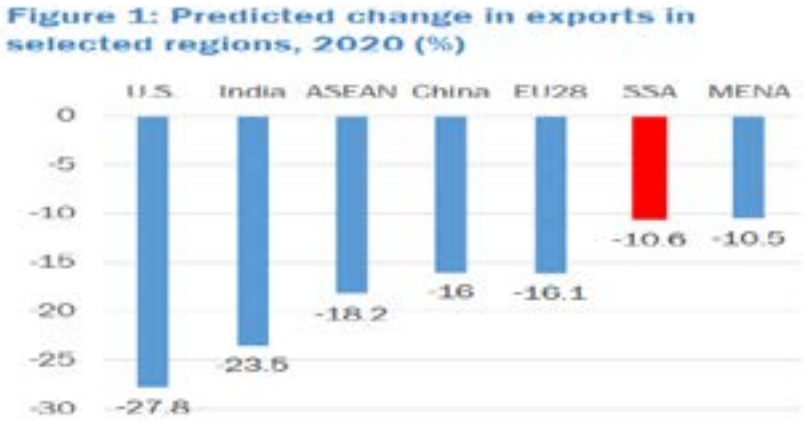
Contextualizing the policies meant that reducing the spread of the virus requires development institutions to understand what regulations to put in the context of Africa without copying and pasting the western practice. The western ways of reducing the spread of COVID-19 include social distancing, lockdowns and wearing face masks. Not all these are problematic, but some become an economic challenge to the majority of Africans as they live on hand-to-mouth income earned on a daily basis, which is not the case for the westerners. Another challenge is whether many Africans understand the meaning of social distancing. Do Africans really believe in it, given that face-to-face interaction dominates all aspects of life in Africa? How best can we understand social distancing? This paper argues that the failure to properly understand the implication of these measures is degenerating itself into another virus called the 'hunger virus'. The hunger virus is spreading way faster than the COVID-19 pandemic. To some extent, if all Africans were to fully practice social distancing, it would mean that most Africans will be stripped of the daily realities of business which is still largely informal. Furthermore, the paper asks whether the African people wear face masks, for example, and whether they even understand what COVID-19 is. These are general and foreign discourses predominantly from Western epistemic frames. This paper, therefore, argues for the critical deconstruction of what is really meant by COVID-19, social distancing and mandatory face masks as conventional public health requirements are significantly affecting the cross-border trade in developing countries.

Largely, the trade-related impacts of COVID-19 highlight the longstanding underutilization of the regional market by African countries. COVID-19 is negatively impacting intra-trade in Africa, and the sooner African people devise their context-specific solutions to this pandemic, the better would be the realization of the benefits of AFCTA. Many countries have imposed transportation and movements across the border, which implies challenges on the movements of

goods and services by many Africans. Despite the fact that commodity price volatilities continue to dictate the direction of economic progress, the diversification of exports and increased value addition could help build resilience to shocks in African countries, especially in times of pandemics. Potentially, the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will provide countries with opportunities for growth and economic diversification, particularly through industrialization and manufacturing, could be a game-changer for Africa. By addressing the fragmentation of African economies, in the longer run, the AfCFTA is also likely to boost agricultural outputs. According to the World Bank (2020b), the AfCFTA has the potential to increase intra-African exports of agricultural products by 49% by 2035 (compared to 10% growth without the AfCFTA), whilst also lifting between 30 and 68 million people out of poverty (UNCTAD, 2020).

Trade Implications

COVID-19 will continue impacting trade globally in so many ways as the world is considered a global village. Since the 1990s, most countries around the world have opened up their markets to the rest of the world, and this has seen enhanced cross-border trade across the globe. With the liberalized system of opening up the borders to facilitate trade, goods, services, and products move from one country to another depending on the comparative advantage of each country. The ever-growing spread of COVID-19 across the globe is impacting cross-border trade with enormous travel restrictions put in place by each country. As if that is not enough, stringent border controls and production delays have weighed on trade. In other words, measures taken to slow down the COVID-19 outbreak have limited or delayed the supply of critical inputs, particularly in the automotive and electronics industries (Haren and Simchi-Levi, 2020; Baldwin and Tomiura, 2020). COVID-19 has also led to the collapse of airlines in most countries resulting in a steep rise in air freight costs, putting further strain on industries that rely on just-in-time delivery of foreign-sourced intermediate goods. Supplier delivery times have lengthened considerably, and inventories have been depleted (World Bank, 2020). The figure below shows the predicted change in exportations in selected regions and Africa together with MENA.



Source: WTO, (2020).

In showing how COVID-19 is impacting cross-border trade globally, the World Trade Organization (WTO), in its global forecast update of June 23 2020, estimated that global trade volumes could fall by 18.5% in 2020 and then recover in 2021 if COVID-19 reduces by then. This forecast partially reflects a downward revision from the WTO's more optimistic prediction of April 8 2020, in which it was forecasted that global trade volumes could decline by 13% to 32% in 2020 as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19 (WTO, 2020).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the labour force globally, which directly impacts the productive capacities of every country. McKibbin and Fernado (2020) argued that when calculating how the pandemic affects the labour shock, there is a need to adjust the problem in the model as an annual model. That is to mean, days lost at work, therefore, must be annualized. If we consider the current pandemic of COVID-19, it has a recommended incubation period of 14 days (ECDC; 2020), so we assume an average employee in a country would have to be absent from work for 14 days if infected (ECDC; 2020). This indicates a loss of productive capacity for 14 days out of the working days in a year. Hence, this can be used to calculate an effective attack rate of the pandemic for the globe and how this affects the productive capacities of economies that largely reduce or further contract the rates of exportation and importation across borders. In addition to labour shocks across the globe, there is also the shock of labour inputs. This study identifies other labour inputs such as trade, land transport, air transport and sea transport, which have been significantly affected by the outbreak (UNCTAD, 2019; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020).

COVID-19 has also affected commodity imports across the globe; nevertheless, the most affected in this commodity implication is the developing world with little or no strong financial fallback strategies. Growth in most commodity importers has been curtailed by severe domestic virus outbreaks and restrictions to stem the pandemic, all of which have heavily weighed on consumption and investment (World Bank 2020). Although commodity importers on average

have more developed health care systems than commodity exporters, there is a considerable variation across regions.

COVID-19 is expected to impact China's global trade for several months. As China is Africa's largest trading partner, the effects of COVID-19 are already being felt in Africa (McKenzie, 2020). McKenzie continued arguing that, with countries like China that have a lot of trading ties with Africa having shut down their manufacturing centres and closed their ports, there has been a resultant decrease in demand for African commodities. Importers in China are cancelling orders due to port closures and as a result of a reduction in consumption in China. Sellers of commodities in Africa are being forced to offload products elsewhere at a discounted rate (McKenzie, 2020). He argued that over three-quarters of African exports to the rest of the world are heavily focused on natural resources, and any reduction in demand impacts the economies of most of the continent. McKenzie stated that countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Nigeria and Ghana are significantly exposed to risk in terms of industrial commodity exports, such as oil, iron ore and copper to China. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has dramatically reduced its outlook for oil demand this year as a result of the virus.

Arguably, McKibbin and Fernado (2020) indicated the most easily available indicators of the expected global economic impacts of COVID-19 reflected in the movements in financial market indices. Implications of the financial markets have a negative connotation on the availability of finances for investments in the productive sectors that have the capacity of expanding the exports of a country. For example, since the commencement of the outbreak, financial markets have continued to respond to daily developments related to the outbreak across the world. Particularly, stock markets have been demonstrating investor awareness of industry-specific (unsystematic) impacts (Prita *et al.*, 2020).

According to McKenzie (2020), the impact of COVID-19 will also be felt in the manufacturing sectors. Because China is part of the global supply chain, factory closures raise the risk of supply chain disruptions for multinational companies with delays, raw material shortages, increased costs and reduced orders, which are already affecting manufacturing plants around the world, including in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic is substantially impacting people's lives and livelihoods and putting extreme stress on socio-economic systems. International collaboration, coordination and solidarity among all are going to be the key to overcoming this unprecedented global challenge. The challenges argued by Wishnick (2010) are the same shortcomings being experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic.

One case study through which cross-border trade is affected in the COVID-19 period is that of South Africa. At this time, South Africa's deep integration into Southern Africa makes the region very vulnerable to any trade measures adopted by the country (SA Government Gazette, 2020). Delays at borders and export restrictions have impacted vital supply chains across this region and exacerbated the COVID-19 impact on fragile neighbouring economies. A second-round effect could well be a new wave of migration to South Africa, as those hit hard seek income opportunities

elsewhere (SA Government Gazette, 2020). Largely, lockdowns and other restrictions, while necessary to slow the spread of the virus, have been accompanied by a sharp reduction in economic activity (Baldwin *et al.*, 2020; Boissay *et al.*, 2020; Eichenbaum *et al.*, 2020; Gourinchas 2020).

The World Trade Organization (2020) argued that there is a large degree of variation in terms of the products of which exportation has been prohibited or restricted. Many export restrictions and prohibitions affect the exportation of products that the joint WHO/WCO indicative list of products designates as essential in combating COVID-19 (WHO, 2020a). Largely, the COVID-19 virus and the efforts governments around the world are making to contain it are creating challenges for all companies that rely on global supply chains (Deloitte, 2020). While most countries have determined that cross-border trade of goods (as opposed to travellers) does not present a meaningful risk of spreading the virus and are doing what they can to reassure the trade community by keeping their borders open (again, for goods but generally not for people), trade is slowing down due to domestic efforts to contain the virus; the new normal is seeing limited instances of certain jurisdictions placing new restrictions on the export of personal protective equipment and other supplies needed to help combat COVID-19 (Sidley, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a range of border controls in countries around the world to curb the spread of the disease. In Africa, these moves have interrupted progress toward economic integration (OECD, 2020b). The AfCFTA, for example, was supposed to establish a continent-wide free movement of goods starting on July 1, 2020. Later, the African Union Commission proposed postponing the launch until January 1, 2021. In addition, trade restrictions implemented in Africa and elsewhere in response to the pandemic are fuelling fears of a new food crisis on the continent (IFPRI, 2020).

However, it is worth indicating that most border closures have been imposed with little or no clear knowledge of what is happening on the ground. For example, in West Africa, because of daytime heat, fresh produce, meat, and other perishable products are usually transported at night. Yet, curfews make this practice impossible. Mandating more thorough health checks without adding necessary personnel also increases transport times. Health check delays and curfews are likely to cause significant waste and loss of products in West Africa (IFPRI, 2020).

Countries across the world are also facing serious consequences and damages to their economies. Many economies have faced negative per capita income growth in 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, according to the International Monetary Fund [IMF] (2020). Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund's projections depicted that the global economy would contract sharply by –3% in 2020, much worse than during the 2008–09 financial crisis (IMF, 2020). In its later forecast, the World Trade Organization [WTO] (2020) indicated a clear fall in world trade between 13% and 32%, perhaps the highest fall since the Great Depression of the 1930s. There is also a disclaimer: no forecast is perfect when the pandemic is at its peak and changing the contours frequently.

Furthermore, the world merchandise exports grew by just over 50% during the ten years between 2009 and 2019, reaching US$18.9 trillion in 2019. Nevertheless, this growth experienced a 3% decline in 2018 (UNCTAD, 2020a). In 2017-2018, exports showed signs of recovery after more sluggish performances in 2015 and 2016, whereas in 2019, global services trade was valued at US$6.1 trillion, recording a slight increase of 2% in 2018, and almost 70% in ten years earlier (UNCTAD, 2020a). These projections for 2020 were no longer possible because of the significant impacts on the world economy by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is, therefore, worth noting that the year 2020 got off to a rocky start due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary UNCTAD-WTO estimates for the first quarter of 2020 showed a decline of 2.8% in world merchandise exports on the corresponding quarter in 2019 (UNCTAD, 2020a). The seasonally adjusted figures enabled comparison with the previous quarter and showed a drop of 2.0% for world export volume indices. Most of the impact of COVID-related confinement measures affected global trade during the second quarter of the year, for which UNCTAD estimated a decline of 26.9% from the previous quarter (UNCTAD, 2020b). From a development standpoint, such economic implications directly contract the livelihoods of the people particularly those of the vulnerable members of societies.

According to the UNCTAD (2020), developing economies have seen a strong recovery since 2017 after the 2008 global financial crisis and the more recent trade downturn in 2014-2016. Trade in goods increased at annual growth rates of 11.7% and 10.0% in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Trade in services grew by 9.0% in 2017 and 11.6% in 2018. While trade in services in developing countries continued to grow by 2.7% in 2019, trade in goods decreased by 3.5%. In 2018, total exports of goods and services reached US$10.4 trillion but declined to US$10.2 trillion in 2019. Thus, developing economies' trade finally exceeded US$10 trillion, a level last achieved in 2014. Their trade has increased by almost 15% since 2015, the year the 2030 Agenda began. In 2020, global trade was expected to fall as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economic activities around the world. These disruptions will have profound implications for the most vulnerable economies, including developing economies and LDCs (UNCTAD, 2020c).

As if that is not enough, the pandemic has instigated a global economic downturn, the likes of which the world has not experienced since the Great Depression. GDP in the world's second-largest economy – China, fell by 6.8% between January and March 2020 (WEF, 2020). In the first quarter of 2020, China's exports and imports dropped sharply in volume compared to the previous quarter, by 21% and 11.5%, respectively (UNCTAD, 2020a). The consequences of the economic downturn in China were quickly felt in other economies as imports to and exports from China were reduced due to COVID-19.

As merchandise exports of LDCs are concentrated in a few markets, including those worst affected by the COVID-19 health crisis (China, France, Germany, the United States of America), it makes them even more vulnerable to a decline in demand in these countries. At an individual country level, LDCs are even more exposed to COVID-19 related economic disruptions. For example, in 2018, Angola exported around 57% of its merchandise to China, Benin around 41% to India, Burkina Faso around 54% to Switzerland, Haiti around 82% to the United States of America

and Rwanda around 65% to the United Arab Emirates (WTO, 2020a). WTO reported that these statistics of trade have drastically reduced in 2020.

China is a major player in international trade as a manufacturer and exporter of consumer products and as a key supplier of intermediate inputs for manufacturing companies globally. Today about 20% of global trade in manufactured intermediate products originate from China (up from 4% in 2002). UNCTAD (2020d) has analyzed the UN Comtrade dataset for about 200 countries and 13 manufacturing sectors to measure each country's and industry's integration with the Chinese economy using the intra-industry trade.

The pandemic could also increase the trade finance gap by limiting access to forex liquidity required to finance African trade. In 2019, the trade finance gap in Africa was estimated at USD 82 billion (AfDB-Afrieximbank, 2020). If the pandemic persists, it could worsen the shortfall in liquidity experienced by banks engaged in trade finance in Africa. Foreign exchange liquidity shortages in the region could encourage global banks to reduce correspondent banking lines for domestic banks in Africa. This could limit the supply of dollar liquidity demanded by firms for trade, increase trade finance rejection rates, and increase the size of the trade finance gap in Africa above the USD 82 billion recorded in 2019 (AfDB-Afrieximbank, 2020).

According to this analysis, the economic downturn in China has led to disruptions in Global Value Chains (GVCs) and diverse spillover effects across economic sectors and countries (ECB Economic Bulletin, 2017). The crisis may impact the supply of critical parts from Chinese producers, affecting economic output and trade in any country dependent on the Chinese economy. These impacts may spread faster than expected due to the common strategy of limited inventories and just-in-time production compounded by COVID-19 trade restrictions (WTO, 2020).

On the other hand, the WTO has been monitoring the trade-related measures governments have introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant number of these measures are temporary export restrictions imposed on medical goods. There have also been several trade-facilitating measures, such as the temporary and unilateral withdrawal of tariffs to facilitate imports of these products (WTO, 2020a). Some non-tariff measures associated with trade in these goods (for example, the elimination of non-automatic licensing procedures or the introduction of special export licensing requirements) are also being taken by members to combat the impact of the crisis (WTO, 2020).

Baldwin (2020) argued that 2020 would experience a more severe trade turndown than the demand shock of the 2008-2009 crisis as the COVID-19 crisis creates both a demand and supply shock. From the supply perspective, production is affected for two reasons: because of reductions in labour supply and because of disruption to value chains. Countries that rely on equipment and components from regions affected by the virus may experience disruptions in the production process (EIF, 2020). From the demand angle, demand for manufactured goods could fall considerably. During lockdown, many shops are closed, and people are reducing shopping in-person to avoid social contact. Workers who are required to stay at home in line with "social

distancing" measures tend to prioritize saving over spending; thus, the propensity to consume decreases. Secondly, firms that are experiencing disruptions in the production process may decrease their consumption of intermediate goods.

Small and vulnerable economies are likely to be hit hard because of their dependence on trade as a driver of economic growth, their small domestic markets and low levels of diversification, all of which increase their vulnerability to external shocks, as the global financial crisis demonstrated (Keane, 2020). That said, the impact of supply and demand shocks on trade can be manifested in different ways depending on the country or region. It is plausible to assume that resource-rich developing countries will also be affected by the strong reduction in commodity prices, for example, the fall in the prices of petroleum and precious metals caused by reduced international demand for such goods, and that developed countries have been experiencing a drop in the production of transformed manufactured goods (see Towards sustainable industrialization and higher technologies) (UNIDO, 2020).

However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be similarly devastating for LDCs and other developing countries that do not rely on commodities as a primary source of their foreign revenues (World Bank, 2020). Non-commodity dependent LDCs, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Haiti, rely mostly on low-skilled and labour-intensive manufacturing exports, which are at risk of contracting sharply if global demand for manufacturing exports remains depressed in 2020 and beyond. Also, the lack of sufficiently large domestic demand to absorb excess supply as external demand drops is likely to lead to mass layoffs of the labour force in the manufacturing sector (UNCTAD, 2020a). Much of the exports of these countries rely on intermediate imports from abroad, meaning that if the disruption in global production and supply chains continues, these economies may not be able to procure intermediate production inputs, even if there is demand for their products (WTO, 2020).

Largely, border restrictions by governments led to an abrupt slowdown and delays in cross-border trade, often characterized by disputes between neighbouring countries, long lines of trucks awaiting clearance and the divergence of trade to less safe unofficial routes. Informal cross-border trade, which requires traders to cross the border to sell their goods and services on the other side, has been particularly hard hit (Luke *et al*., 2020). Disruptions to cross-border trade present significant challenges for Africa's fight against COVID-19 and broader socio-economic development.

The World Bank (2020) further argued that the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to hit African economies extremely hard. According to the World Bank biannual Africa's Pulse report, as a result of the pandemic, economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa will decline from 2.4% in 2019 to between -2.1% and -5.1% in 2020, depending on the success of measures taken to mitigate the pandemic's effects. This means that the region will experience its first recession in 25 years. The decline will be primarily due to large contractions in South Africa, Nigeria, and Angola based on their reliance on exports of commodities whose prices have crashed as well as other structural issues (OECD, 2020). This will inevitably affect Africa's participation in trade and value chains as well as reduce foreign financing flows.

Trade Opportunities during COVID-19

The spread of the pandemic has essentially halted international travel and disrupted global value chains, resulting in a sharp contraction in global trade. Nevertheless, opportunities arise amidst the COVID-19 pandemic where countries and communities across the world have taken different approaches in the quest for not only reducing the spread but also eliminating the virus. It is, therefore, safe to argue that the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity for policymakers to learn from each other and co-operate to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and maybe even "build back better". The paper further recommends that all development stakeholders must join hands and support each other in the fight against COVID-19.

Even though trade allowed COVID-19 to grow from epidemic to pandemic and attack more peoples of the world, trade itself has not escaped from the economic damage of COVID-19 (WTO, 2020). Trade, which involves movements of the people, goods, products and services across the borders, led to the fast spread of the virus globally, and in reverse, this has affected trade itself via various restrictions imposed by individual countries. There is, however, a question that is asked about where Africa's future markets and trading opportunities are. As the old saying goes, "crisis is also an opportunity." This time is no exception. African countries can build more resilient and sustainable economies if they can do things right following the pandemic. As Zeng (2020) cited in the World Bank (2020) argued, at least four optional policies exist during this pandemic.

Firstly, there is a need for further diversification of the African economies and strengthening the few strategic sectors. The pandemic crisis has not only highlighted the importance of food and health sectors, but it has also exposed the dysfunctional aspect of these sectors in most countries. Africa is uniquely positioned to further leverage its rich agricultural resources by improving basic infrastructure and efficiency and agro-processing capacity (FAO, 2017). More resources will be needed to strengthen the public health sectors with the support of development partners. In this regard, the two sectors must go hand in hand for a successful enhancement of the people's livelihoods (World Bank, 2020).

Secondly, Africa must embrace the digital age and adopt more and more digital technologies for both productions and services, such as banking, retailing, learning, and public services. The sectors with a high level of digitization seem to weather the storm much better. In doing so, it needs to strengthen its education system, especially the training and learning related to digital skills (World Bank, 2020).

Thirdly, through the AfCTA, Africa as a continent has an opportunity of strengthening intra-regional trade in the quest to balance supply and demand. For Africa to boost the intra-regional trade, countries need to make not only concerted efforts but must also have the political will of ensuring harmonization in their trade-related regulations, customs controls and reduce both tariff and non-tariff barriers (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017). Meanwhile, countries must also be ready to willingly invest and improve their infrastructures and connectivity to lower the logistics cost. This crisis provides an opportunity to take more concrete steps towards realizing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (World Bank, 2020).

Finally, as African countries have a large market within and amongst themselves, there exists an opportunity for expanding intra-African trade during and after the pandemic. The pandemic came with a lot of restrictions as far as cross-border trade is concerned. This is at the detriment of African countries whose majority of trade is with the Western world. Trade restrictions with China due to COVID-19 revealed that most countries have challenges on the availability of goods and services in their markets. If African countries could exploit the opportunity of trading within and amongst themselves throughout this pandemic, they would stand a chance of stabilizing their economies.

Also, trade volumes for Africa are projected to decrease by 8% for exports and about 16% for imports for 2020, compared with previous historic trend estimates (WTO, 2020b). As a result, Africa is expected to be hit particularly hard as 17% of the world's 'COVID-induced' poverty will be located on the continent following East Asia, the continent with the highest concentration of 'new poor' (20%) (Sumner et al., 2020). Last but not least, Africa, during the pandemic, can expand more on international trade agreements that can support its growing but still fragile export sectors (World Bank, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper argues that international trade plays an important role in the economy of each country. Trade allows the satisfaction of the needs of the population and stimulates internal development making the economies of developing and developed countries highly interdependent. COVID-19, a global pandemic, has affected and impacted trade across borders. Trade across borders in Africa has contracted more because Africa has taken the conventional approach to mitigate COVID-19 without critically analyzing their specific socio-political and economic dynamics. Africans are affected not only by lack of proper understanding but also by the fact that the majority cannot afford face masks, and even when they have masks, most of them might not put them on. Subsequently, the poor are likely to suffer disproportionately from the outbreak as they may have less access to healthcare and also lower savings to hedge themselves against financial catastrophe. Lack of an African ideological perspective to reduce the spread of the virus without affecting the socio-economic dynamics (and considering that most people depend on daily income) has also affected both intra- and cross-border trade in Africa. Therefore, the unavoidable decline in trade and output will have painful consequences for households and businesses, on top of the human suffering caused by the disease itself. The COVID-19 pandemic is causing the worst contraction in global trade in the post-war era. One of the affected sectors is the industrial sector through the global value chains (GVCs). Industries that participate in GVCs are often dependent on "just-in-time" delivery of intermediate inputs, and trade of such inputs has been restricted and, in some situations, closed due to lockdowns.

This paper concludes that COVID-19 has affected economies differently. Some of the manifestations include the slowing down of the manufacturing of essential goods, disruption of the supply chain of products, losses in national and international business, poor cash flow in the market and a significant slowdown in revenue growth. The social consequences include the cancellation or postponement of large-scale sports and tournaments, disruption of celebration of

cultural, religious and festive events, undue stress among the population, social distancing with peers and family members, closure of hotels, restaurants and religious places, closure of places for entertainment such as cinemas, theatres, and sports clubs. The above effects of COVID-19 largely affect trade within communities, nations and across borders, but most importantly, the pandemic has generally affected the Intra-African trade, which is the aim of the AfCTA.

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