WAPOR-GBS Joint Webinar
Pandemic, Governance, and Comparative Public Opinion Research

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COVID-19 and doing public opinion surveys in Africa: Some reflections and experiences

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About Afrobarometer

- Pan-African, non-partisan survey research network
- Core objectives:
  - Scientifically reliable data on views and experiences of ordinary Africans
  - Build capacity for survey data collection and analysis
  - Broadly disseminate/apply results
- 1999-present completed 7½ rounds of surveys in 38 countries
- Nationally representative samples
- Face-to-face, local language
- Signature topics: democracy, governance, and related issues

→ Give African publics a voice in policymaking by providing high-quality public opinion data to policymakers, policy advocates, civil society, academics, news media, donors and investors, and ordinary Africans
Overview of Covid-19 in Africa

- First cases recorded in Egypt (14 February, 2020)
- Since then has spread to all countries on the continent. Latest figures show:
  - 2,026,841 confirmed cases as of Nov. 19th, 2020
  - 48,681 deaths (3.6% of the global total deaths from the pandemic)
  - 1,714,395 recoveries
- Hardest hit countries (+100,000 cases):
  - South Africa (+760K cases; 20,671 deaths)
  - Egypt (+112K cases; 6508 deaths)
  - Ethiopia (+104K cases, 1607 deaths)
Covid-19 responses across Africa

• Initial fears that the continent’s health systems would be overwhelmed

• Different responses, from lockdowns, curfews, closure of schools; social distancing, hand sanitizing, face masks etc

• Responses generally have had positive results

• However, reports of a new spike in cases across the continent
Afrobarometer responses to COVID-19
Effects of COVID-19 on Afrobarometer surveys

- Round 8 surveys began in 2019: goal=36 countries
- **Completed:** 18 countries, August 2019 – March 2020
- Fieldwork Suspended in March following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic across the continent.
- Face to face fieldwork has resumed October 2020
Fieldwork activities suspended

- Afrobarometer Board recommended the suspension of fieldwork activities in March 2020

- At the time of the suspension, 16 surveys had been completed, two were in the field (Mali and Sierra Leone)

- Since both Mali and Sierra Leone had not reported any COVID-19 cases at the time, they were allowed to complete fieldwork activities.

- Afrobarometer staff were advised to work from home
Preparing for fieldwork resumption…

- Development of fieldwork resumption protocols post COVID-19
- Development of remote Technical Assistance
- Development of a module on COVID-19
- Exploration of telephone surveys (to be piloted in Namibia)
Resumption of face-to-face fieldwork activities (October 2020)

• New surveys in Liberia, Niger, Mauritius; upcoming surveys in Zambia and Senegal

• Fieldwork not resuming in Cameroon; Morocco and Mozambique due to Covid-19

• Collection of telephone numbers for future quick telephone surveys

• Challenges: uncertainty; limits of telephone surveys; challenges of remote Technical Assistance
COVID-19 AND HEALTH VULNERABILITIES IN AFRICA: SOME EMERGING LESSONS FROM AB DATA
Contribution of Afrobarometer data to pandemic response:

- **Highlight** popular needs and priorities
- **Measure** living conditions, gaps in meeting basic needs
- **Capture** experiences, e.g. in seeking/obtaining health care
- **Reveal** attitudes, e.g., toward leadership and institutions
- **Generate**
  - *Index of vulnerability*
  - *Index of lockdown capacity*
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough clean water for home use? Gone without medicines or medical treatment? (% several times / many times / always)
Point of access to water and sewerage
34 African countries (average) | 2016/2018
Health care in Africa: Citizens’ No. 2 priority for government action
34 countries | 2016/2018

- 53% went without needed care at least once during the previous year
- Of those who accessed health care, 45% say it was difficult to obtain needed care
- Of those who accessed health care, 13% had to pay a bribe
- 41% of enumeration areas don’t have a nearby health clinic
- 46% say their government is performing ‘fairly badly’ or ‘very badly’ in improving basic health services

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20 years of giving voice to Africans
Thank you

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