Public Governance, Livelihoods and Vulnerability in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Other Disasters

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The changes brought by Covid-19 were sudden, drastic and unexpected for citizens and governments alike. While there are some predictions of likely future trajectories of the social and economic impact of the pandemic, and the post-covid-19 world, much of the discourse reveals deep uncertainties. What appears to be clear though, is that, the impact of the pandemic is already massive and will be long-lasting. Developmental livelihood initiatives and projects have been set back and livelihood activities have been curtailed or halted altogether.

While, globally, recovery from this impact is already proving to be painfully slow for most sectors, it is the poor and vulnerable populations that are finding it most difficult to recover. The rural populace already facing numerous challenges including the impact of climatic change are in a particularly more vulnerable situation. Public institutions consistently adjust to the changing dynamics created by the pandemic and are taking proactive measures to remedy future impact. In Africa, despite numerous constraints, government responses have been fast and decisive albeit at varying degrees. Yet, some voices decry how government response does not adequately address vulnerable populations.

In this Special Issue of the African Journal of Governance and Development (AJGD), contributions from across the continent explore several issues around livelihoods, vulnerability and public governance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe

that the pandemic requires a public governance approach defined by an ability of state and non-state institutions to collaboratively respond efficiently and effectively to the real needs of the citizenry. For this to happen, as the narrative in this Special Issue suggests, an understanding of our common humanity and interdependence is vital; genuine political will and commitment to the promotion of public health strategies is critical and a research agenda in which experts participate in scholarly debates and academic discourses is encouraged. On a more practical level authors suggest that policies, programmes, strategies and resources ought to be mobilized and directed towards building the resilience of the most vulnerable in our society taking into consideration local variations and people's expectations in a way that promotes sustainable livelihoods.