**COVID-19 EXPOSING THE IMBALANCES AND INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Coronavirus, commonly known as COVID-19, is a virus that has radically exposed existing hidden inequalities and imbalances of the global community. At the time of writing this article there are infections over 2 414 098 globally claiming over 165 153 lives and with a total of 629 390 recorded number of recoveries. Locally 114 711 citizens have been tested, there are 3 158 infection with only 54 citizen deaths, 903 is the total recorded number of recoveries. To call these statistics worrisome is an understatement of the century. The first outbreak was in December 2019 with a case reported in Wuhan, China. The significantly underprivileged of the global community are the ones who will feel the socio-economic effects from this pandemic, a pandemic which knows no colour, race, age or religion and infect indiscriminately.

The predicament we find ourselves in has proven that COVID 19 has the potential of being an ongoing health crisis if urgent and decisive action is not taken to mitigate the initial impact and spread. I fear the cost will be exponentially increased resulting into needless loss of life. Due to the high infection rate of the virus, confining it to a reign of the world would be highly ineffective, afflicted countries will run the risk of being excluded in global trade and travel adding more strain to the already overburdened financial and health care systems.

As a community we need to work collectively, locally and internationally, to curb the spread of the virus and flatten the curve by sharing any and all discoveries pertaining to the fight against COVID19. In the same spirit we must provide adequate resources for health officials in the front lines of this pandemic through the above-mentioned collaborative efforts. Our viral response teams and involved organisations must have an all-encompassing and inclusive plan of action that will also address the needs of all classes within the existing social structures, including but not limited to the under privileged.

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) has done comparative studies in the field of Comparative Analysis of the Representative Agent and Micro Simulation Approaches. In the CGE paper Poverty and Inequality Analysis Within a CGE Framework compiled by Luc Savard1 the comparative study in the paper frequently analyses poverty variations and further indicate that the less educated in a society are usually the poorest. With this information it is evident that they are the hardest hit by the pandemic. It is therefore vital that our response to COVID-19 should be mindful of this existing reality in our communities.

Throughout the development of the Republic of South Africa, water and sanitation has always been a prevalent issue and talking point, due to the pandemic these issues have taken centre stage as experts stress the importance of basic hygiene as one of our lines of defence against this invasive virus. There is a high number of South African citizens that are born poor or subjected to financial strain where basic needs such as soup and food is unattainable. Have we done enough to mitigate the rapid spread of COVID-19? The question we should be asking is how unequal is South Africa? A new index has confirmed the shocking number of South Africans who are living below the poverty line. The September 2019 Household Affordability Index shows that more than half of the population are living on less than R1 230 a month. The Index also shows that a quarter of the population, approximately 13.8 million people, are living on less than R19 a day. In addition, a total of 56% South Africans 30.4 million are living on less than R41 a day. These statistics are indeed a call for concern and rapid action.

These statistics are indeed a call for concern and rapid action. Sadly, the large-scale outbreaks hitting the world has the potential to repeat itself here in Africa including South Africa due to existing inequalities and resources that are insufficient. The disadvantaged communities are severely limited during this pandemic and this might prove to be a critical factor in curbing the spread and stopping a later re-emergence of the novel Coronavirus, therefore it is our collective responsibility to “close the gaps” within our social structure and go out of our way in ascertaining that support and resources are distributed swiftly. It has been a rough couple of weeks for all South Africans, but this gives us an opportunity to realise that in any crisis there is an opportunity to self-reflect and improve as a global and local community through transparency and cooperation.

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