

Revue Africaine de Sociologie
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en Sciences Sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA)
(Incorporant le South African Sociological Review)

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La *Revue Africaine de Sociologie* est une publication semestrielle du CODESRIA à Dakar, au Sénégal. On accepte tout article des chercheurs africains et non – africains concernant la problématique des analyses sociales de ce continent et en général. La Revue existe d'abord comme support pour l'extension de la pensée sociologique et anthropologique entre les chercheurs en Afrique. Tout travail pertinent venant de l'extérieur du continent est néanmoins aussi considéré. Des contributions en anglais ou en français sont acceptées.

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EDITORIAL:

As we go to press, the world is in lockdown, an effect of the coronavirus pandemic, which has proven to know no borders. So far in Africa, this pandemic has not measured up to the historic Ebola; at least, for now (May). However, the most pessimistic modelling estimates of the eventual death toll of this pandemic when it hits Africa proper, without intervention, could reach 3000,000 this 2020 and overwhelm health systems. The Imperial College modelling released in mid-April suggested that under the worst-case scenario, with no intervention against the virus, Africa could see 3.3 million deaths and 1.2 billion infections (U.N. Economic Commission for Africa). Well, as a matter of fact, any of the scenarios would overwhelm Africa's fragile health systems. The projection is ominous. It surpasses the Ebola epidemic, which, as a matter of course, was confined to the western part of the continent. Africa, as is well known, has the highest prevalence of certain underlying conditions, for example tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Is Africa ready, really ready to confront it? This is not for us to answer; we leave it to the epidemiologists, scientists, public health officials and ultimately the politicians. One thing for sure, for those of us who have been diligently monitoring the pandemic guided by the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, US, where experts are aggregating data from multiple credible sources to track the virus, a critical variable is missing in the models so far. And that is inequality, which for years has been the daily lexicon in Africa, and indeed, the world. It is an established fact that not all social groups are affected by the virus in the same way, and significantly, between the rich North and poor South in the global socio-economic divide. In Africa, the picture that is emerging, especially if we take countries where there is sharp inequality gap between the rich and the poor, is a more deepened divide. Accompanying this is the violence of inequality. What can Africa do? Perhaps, we would need to draw from the Ebola epidemic; not the impact of the disease in terms of public health, which is the very first of lessons, but deeper than that. Given this our lead article becomes significant. In this piece, the authors offer an insight that argues that "The Ebola disease in West Africa was not just a mere public health crisis, but resulted from historical processes of sociopolitical and economic instability and violence sustained by the state's brutalities and failures that crippled people's freedoms, destroyed social cohesion and reduced opportunities for well-being." As one of the reviewers summed the article, 'the conclusion drawn from the extended discussion on Ebola in West Africa, is that the magnitude of the Ebola epidemic was rooted in a wounded history of, and embedded in a national and political economy fraught with mistrust and ethnic conflicts. Failure to grasp these and other multiple factors' will in our view exacerbate the coronavirus more than projected. An urgent renewal is the immediate challenge.

Olajide Oloyede

Editor in Chief

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