

12.3%

POSITIVITY RATE

Kenya registered on Sunday when 800 new Covid-19 cases were recorded from 6,530 sample size

# Normal matatu passenger load ill-advised

## COVID-19

KIMANI WAIRIMU

commentates on public issues

The recent directive that public transport vehicles return to carrying full passenger capacity is by all means ill-advised and bad-timed. It ironically comes at a time new cases of Covid-19 infections are soaring in the country.

As of last Sunday, the positivity rate stood at 12.3 percent with 800 new cases out of a sample

size of 6,530.

Although a good number of industry players in the public transport sector have been flouting the earlier directive on half capacity under the nose of law enforcers anyway, reversing the same directive officially might make matters worse.

It is likely to open the floodgates of new infections in the country. For starters, we are talking of an industry where a significant number of the players have a history of incredibly low compliance levels even with other regulations that govern the industry.

It is indisputable that indeed the turnover of the public transport sector as well as many other sectors of the economy plummeted following the introduction of the various containment measures to check the spread of the pandemic.

However, the cost of treating Covid-19 and the unfortunate eventuality of losing lives substantially outweigh any financial gains.

Perhaps this is something those arguing that normal passenger capacity will translate to less fare charges need to consider.

In the event the government stands its ground on this directive, other players whose operating capacity was also capped like places of worship and the hospitality industry might also demand the same treatment in the spirit of equity and fairness.

It is, therefore, imperative that the government reconsider this directive to avert a potential avalanche of infections in the country.

If anything, the long arm of the law should be on the ground enforcing the earlier directive.

We have to take some painful decisions to survive.

## EDUCATION

# Build scholarship programmes for sustainable growth

## FUNDING



**THURANIA KAUGIRIA**

former KPMDU Secretary General-Nairobi; a public health advocate

development of the country. This not only propelled them to scale the heights of their careers and to enjoy a better quality of life but also benefited the country by boosting its human resource capability at Independence.

Beneficiaries from this initiative went on to hold senior government positions and trailblaze in different fields. In this way, the programme contributed towards building a cadre of leaders, whose contribution cannot be gainsaid.

Since then, there have been many other initiatives including the Equity Leaders Programme (ELP) that is implemented by the Equity Group Foundation together with its partners.

So far, the programme has benefited 754 scholars since 1998 when the first lot went out of the country. This includes 118 young, academically promising Kenyans who recently jetted out of the country and have been admitted for undergraduate studies in institutions across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North and South America. They are in Ivy League universities, such as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Cornell, Dartmouth and Brown.

Competitively selected from top performers in national secondary school examinations, from every county across the country, they are now on full scholarship.

This programme has produced individuals who have gone on to become captains of industry and thought leaders in different fields. Besides giving beneficiaries dignity and expanding opportunities for them, this, again, is translating into building a battalion of leaders from different spheres of life.

Even more critical from this programme is the huge exposure that these scholarship opportunities afford learners, in today's globalised world.

Education is transformative. It pries open floodgates of success for those who go through it, irrespective of the field or industry.

Whether they opt to seek a job or start a business or pursue their passion, school enhances chances of success. Even those who believe that street-smarts trump book-smarts recognise that some level of school helps.

Thus, any opportunity presented to academically gifted learners to pursue higher education, especially if they come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and would likely have missed it due to penury is impactful.

It changes their quality of life, lifts their households from poverty and inspires generations about the benefits that come with a good education.

Besides the individual career development benefits, it translates into ripple effects of benefit to their families and communities and the economy. The World Bank views this as an important component to promote economic development and shared prosperity in the developing world.

Throughout generations, there have been initiatives to offer such higher education opportunities to the youth.

There was the airlift championed by Tom Mboya that supported many young people in the newly independent Kenya to access further studies and put them in good stead to contribute to the

national statistical data offices in Africa with the ability to analyse data. Since the collaboration kicked off, GVG has worked with Statistics Botswana to support them through a skills transfer on Business Process Mapping using data from Mobile Network Operators (MNOs).

## TECH SOLUTIONS

These skills can be imparted upon the youth to support their governments in making sense of the data that is collected on the different segments of the economy. Furthermore, this will enable them to take advantage of the technology available, while giving them the platform to develop technological solutions of their own and the space to implement them.

If these efforts are made collaboratively, the strength of the programmes will be boosted and ease their replication in multiple African markets, in addition to the refinement of the systems to better suit the needs of the various countries.

The development journey is picking up steam, especially after the slowdown in economic growth in 2020, as economies open back-up. But we must remember the lessons we have learnt about the role technology has in development and at the same time consider the importance of making sure that the African youth are imparted with the knowledge and capabilities that will assist them in driving the growth of the continent

**Edouard Docteur**, Director of Operations at Global Voice Group

## @ Letters

The editor welcomes brief letters on topical issues. Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher. They may be edited for clarity, space or legal considerations. Send via e-mail to [bdfeedback2@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:bdfeedback2@ke.nationmedia.com)

# Key talent Africa requires to develop faster

Africa is home to a budding, young population living in the age of technology and globalisation. No longer are they competing for opportunities just with their compatriots at home, but they are part of a global marketplace where opportunities keep emerging. The rate at which globalisation is occurring calls for equipping the next generation with the skills and capabilities to compete on a grander stage.

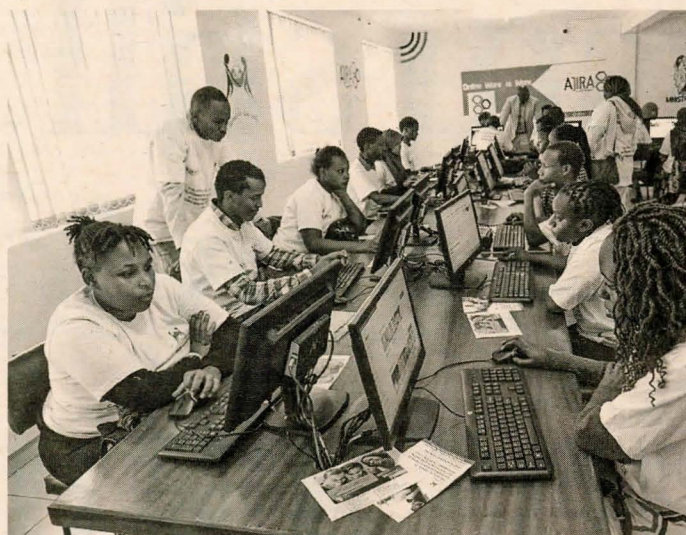
By 2035, sub-Saharan Africa will have a larger working population than the entire rest of the world combined, in contrast to other workforce in the world that are ageing. That owes to the fact that 19 percent of the global population of 15-24-year-olds is African, according to the UN World Population Prospects.

It is, therefore, imperative that Africa is part of the conversation when it comes to providing young people with the skills required.

As recently as 2019, as per data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Africa was home to the five fastest growing economies in the world – Ghana (8.79%), South Sudan (8.78%), Rwanda (7.8%), Ethiopia (7.7%) and Côte d'Ivoire (7.4%).

Those statistics paint a promising picture for the continent and shows that there is immense potential for growth if the continent is empowered and the young population are given the skills.

Further to that, Africa's participation in the creation of new solutions and technologies that



Students at a Kamukunji Constituency innovation hub during the official opening of the Carlifornia Resource Centre in Nairobi. – FILE

move the world forward in development has equal potential for growth.

We have witnessed the kind of contribution that Africa can have in the development of revolutionary solutions and technologies, with the development and adoption of mobile money systems as a primary mode of money transfer.

Mobile money came about through the need for a system to provide the unbanked access to financial services that are usually inaccessible to them through the existing financial institutions due to restrictions in infrastructure, mobility, locations, documentations and cost.

The system has been a huge success when it comes to promoting financial inclusion, with some African markets having over 85 to 90 percent adoption

of the system. That is but one example of what can be achieved when solutions emerged from within the communities facing the challenges and to sustain this process the young population in Africa requires the necessary support and skills.

In addition to that, today's world is dominated by the collection and analysis of data. Huge quantities of data are collected and there is a consistent need for an efficient system to analyse it.

For the advancement of the digitisation of African countries in general, these skills in data analysis must also be imparted to enable data-driven decision making and sustainable development going forward.

GVG has a partnership with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) which seeks to support