

Back to work amidst a pandemic – the Nairobi way

25 August 2020

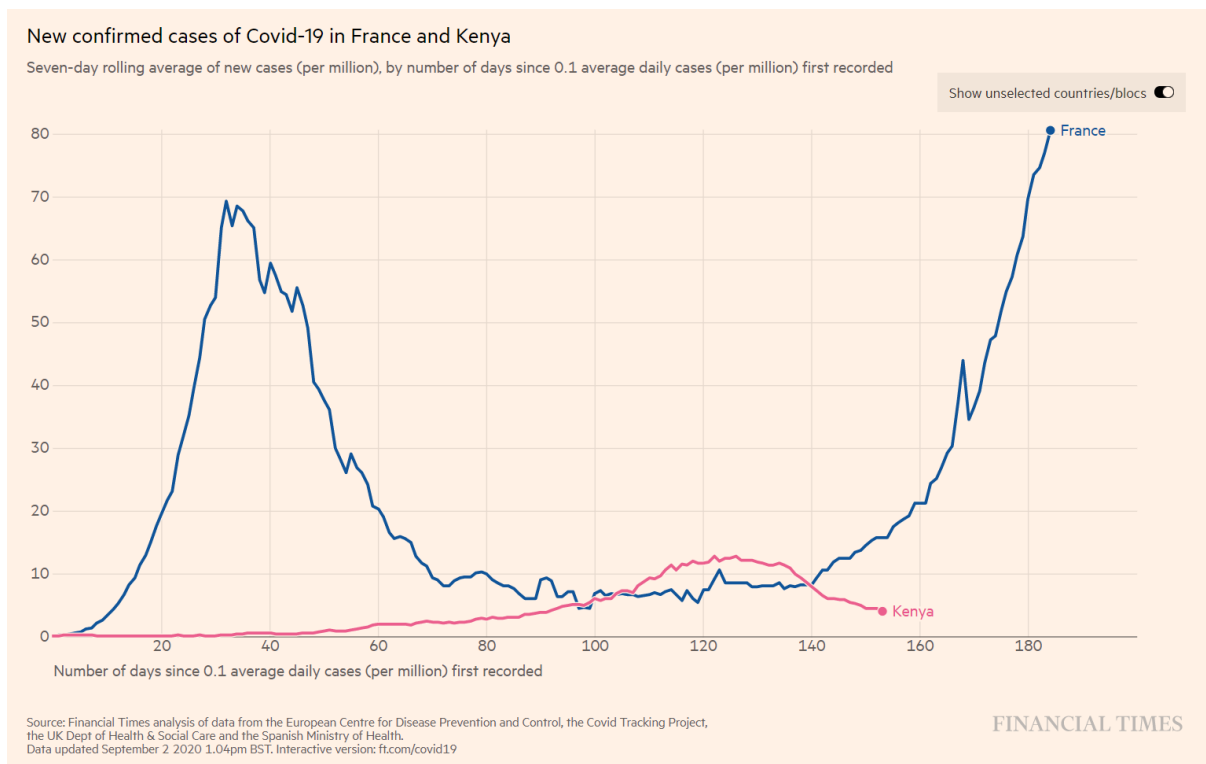


My Mauritian Dodo. Are we next as a species?

As statistics show a marked decrease in both new cases and new casualties in Kenya, OIE staff is increasingly returning to work from the OIE office in Upper Hill, Nairobi. The below comparative graph, courtesy of the Financial Times' [Corona Tracker](#) puts it all a bit into perspective (per million inhabitants, and on a linear scale, not logarithmic) compared to the situation in France. Sure, there is undoubtedly less testing in Kenya and maybe more people dodging the surveillance system, but the tendency is towards less, not more. The same goes for deaths, a fraction of the numbers in France (2 - 3 per day lately). The population of France is 67 million, that of Kenya 52 million.

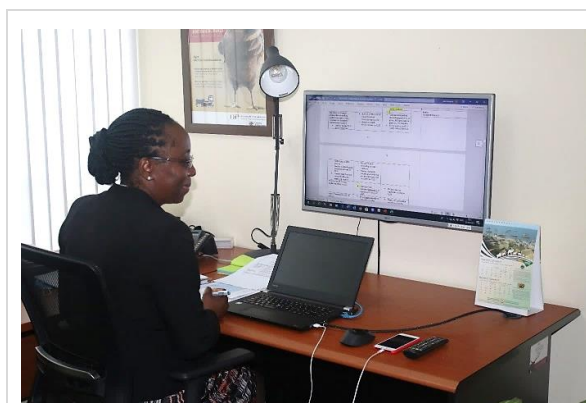


While hand-sanitising and wearing of masks in common spaces was compulsory all along we now also register contact details of visitors, contractors and delivery agents and register their temperature; the same goes for any staff member entering the office in the morning. That's over and above the measures applied by security personnel for the whole building.



Let us be crystal clear here: the office has never been 100% shut. In the worst of times, only one or two staff would come to the office on a weekly basis and any visitor or delivery would be prohibited. As the stats improved and government loosened some of its confinement measures, we went from allowing no more than two staff a day to currently five staff a day. At this stage (25 August), no more than 5 staff members are allowed in the office per day (knowing that here, every staff member has his/her own office). The expectation is that by mid-September, everyone will be back at work 5 days a week¹.

Last week colleagues from FAO and Kenya Ministry of Agriculture even worked for the whole day in our office boardroom to fine tune the national AMR multi-partner trust fund project proposal, keeping a safe distance and keeping face masks on at all times.



Dr Jane Lwoyero, AMR Programme Officer, working from her office, sensing someone is watching her.



Newly refurbished office waiting for its new occupant, as we are recruiting new technical staff.

¹ Note: this article was written before the publication of the OIE HR working from home guidelines on 1 September 2020.

Going back to work in an office environment is one milestone, the organisation of physical meetings is another one and one which is not about to materialise any time soon. Travelling abroad is still a nightmare of conflicting and opaque health regulations, usually involving either or both quarantine or PCR testing.



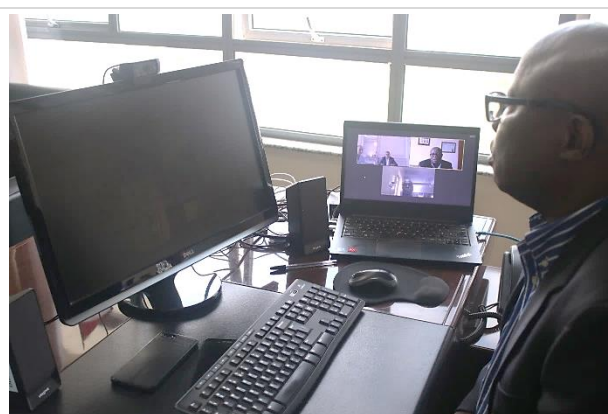
Taj Towers, in the Kenyan 'rue du Prony', the meanwhile very posh Upper Hill Road. Posh means: 'no potholes'.

If one can be so blunt to regard the crisis in Kenya as largely 'over', only time will tell why most African countries escaped the worst of the COVID-19 crisis : was it the BCG vaccination in children, the overall (cellular) immunity status due to an upbringing in less sanitary environments and high infection pressure, the meanwhile (in)famous malaria-treatments with hydroxy-chloroquine, the general outdoors living or the overall lower average age of the African (city) dweller?

None of the OIE staff meets all of these criteria, so despite the resumption of certain routines and habits, health and safety remain the order of the day and we all hope we will get through this unscathed.



Samuel and Grace winding up a tender-awarding in the board room.



Zoom meeting with the OIE DDG, Jean-Philip Dop and headquarters' and regional colleagues.

We wish to thank Patrick 'Bas' Bastiaensen and all our colleagues from the Nairobi office for submitting this article to the OIE News Team.