Dear Members and Stakeholders,

In light of the ongoing developments regarding COVID-19, we take this opportunity to inform you that our thoughts and prayers are with those affected by this pandemic in Kenya and around the globe.

At IQSK, the well-being and safety of our team, membership and partners has been our top priority by ensuring that members and stakeholders at large are able to access our services remotely through our digital platforms such as the IQSK website in order to ensure social distancing. As we closely monitor the evolving impact of the pandemic, we are implementing measures to

continued to page 2
ensure that the membership and stakeholders are engaged and kept abreast with current affairs of the institute, the country and the globe at large.

To that end, we do believe that we have robust technology and a culture of flexibility that enables our staff to efficiently and effectively perform their duties with limited contact with our stakeholders. We will continue to tailor our approach to meet your specific needs, adjust and communicate with you as circumstances change.

In the meantime, we want to assure you that we will continue to provide uninterrupted services to you as we navigate through these challenging times. We shall roll out a series of webinars on how to adapt during these times and how businesses can stay afloat. These engagements will be done through tele-conferencing and digital interactions with all our stakeholders in due course.

We are reminded of how fortunate we are to be part of this strong built environment community that supports each other to accomplish great things. We would like to appeal to the membership to continuously support the institute to remain afloat by paying annual subscriptions. It is the power of this goodwill initiative that will propel us through this, to greater times.

On behalf of the Institute, we wish you and your loved ones' health and safety during this time.

We encourage feedback on the journal via our contacts and via https://twitter.com/IQSK_Official, and https://www.facebook.com/IQSKKenya/. Search for the page also on LinkedIn and you should get us. If you prefer WhatsApp, please reach us on 0721676823.

We also encourage members to adhere to the government regulations, #staysafeathome, and comply with health advisories on the COVID-19 Pandemic. We shall overcome.

Peter Kariuki
IQSK, Chairman
We are in extraordinary times. The world is currently engulfed in a battle. The assailant is known but unseen without aid. Cunning are its ways; for it is an assailant that thrives in our midst and more particularly with us as its hosts. Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. However, some of the measures instituted to help us win this war against COVID-19 have disrupted the normal lives of professionals. One in particular is the 'stay at home' advisory. Unmistakably, as is fond of our race, we have devised ways to adapt. The solution, this time, is remote working. This is an arrangement in which employees do not have to travel to a central place of work. It helps avert the pandemic while keeping businesses going. However, it is not without challenges. There are four skills that keep businesses ticking: critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. Remote working makes the last two difficult.

Digital tools have been developed to make collaboration and communication easier. The use and take up of such tools has been expounded elsewhere in this newsletter.

Freelancers may have already adopted a way of working from home by having a dedicated desk, space and time in the house which cuts out the noise from the rest of the home, especially if you have children who may be a distraction. In addition, the other home users are well oriented with the program and have adjusted accordingly. As to the rest us, it is baptism by fire, disrupting not only our work life but also the usual home conditions. So here is a simple guide on how to go about working from home:

How professionals can work remotely
1. Treat it like a real job – have a working space

This means you must dedicate a proper ergonomic desk and chair at the least to be able to effectively work. You will be bound to spend the same amount of hours as you would your normal job. If this is not possible, identify the best furniture in the house for this. Make sure that there is a space in the house (preferably a room) where everyone knows it is your work space during the working hours. Let everyone in the house know that although you may have to do a little more explaining to the younger ones.

2. Stick to your work schedule

Wake up and go to bed according to your usual schedule it is critical to stick to this. If you decide to wake up later because there is nowhere to commute to, you are setting yourself for psychological failure at work. Similarly, staying up too late may affect your overall effectiveness.

3. Dress up to work

Avoid working in flip-flops, pajamas or tracksuits. You will tend to view the job the same way you are dressed. You may lose the tie if you want, but shower up and dress up in the morning- especially men!

4. Have breaks

Take regular breaks as you would your normal job, you deserve them as much.

5. Don’t isolate- ramp up the communication

Catch up with colleagues, check on the progress of others especially if you are a manager. Offer to help others where difficulties arise. Ask colleagues if you are having difficulties with a task. If you can use communication, ensure that it includes a video (face-to-face) interaction. More on some of these tools is covered elsewhere.

6. Enjoy your time off

Spend time with your family in more meaning ways after work. Take a walk together while keeping to issued health guidelines. Get a giant puzzle to fill up as family. Play hide and seek with younger kids. Teach your kids some school lessons from home or something entirely co-curricular altogether like playing Chess. Try cooking something new together as a family Have Karaoke sessions with everyone in the house. Tell stories. Encourage one another. Remember if you don’t work on weekends, you shouldn’t have to when you are working from home.

Last but not least, whether remote working will work for or against you depends on you. As Charles Darwin put it, “It is not the strongest of species that survives, nor the most intelligent. Rather, it is the one most adaptable to change.” All the best as you adapt to new ways of doing business.

We also not that working from home is best suited to knowledge workers and professionals. Not everyone can work from home and you should not feel guilty that you cannot work from home. We urge employers to let workers who can, work from home. At the end of the day, humanity is more important than money.

By: Ernest Nyakundi & Team
The global economy has been thrown into shambles by the measures to try and mitigate a pandemic that nearly matches the 1919 Spanish Flu. First reported in China, the country’s industries’ were grounded to a halt as the government struggled to contain the novel coronavirus. In the consequent months after 23rd January 2020 to the first month of April 2020, China and specifically the province of Wuhan has been on a permanent lockdown with people ordered to stay home.

While this seemed like a Chinese problem in the beginning, the reality began to hit on the global impact when orders started being overwhelmed. Unfortunately, governments have since had the macabre choice between the economy and the lives of its citizenry. All along, governments that have prioritised the latter have had better outcomes in the management of the pandemic.

Nevertheless, by the month of February, it was evident that this was not going to be business as usual. Here we highlight some of the expected impacts on the economy and construction.

1. **Slowdown in economic growth – recession.**

   This will reduce in the short term investment in the construction industry by both the public sector and the private sector. Leading economist, Paul Krugman has described it aptly; it is not a recession due to reduction in aggregate demand, rather like a medically induced coma on the economy which is likely to bounce back stronger once this is over.

2. **Lower pollution levels**

   Satellite photos of pollution levels in Beijing, Calcutta, and other major industrial hubs have shown reductions in the pollutant nitrogen dioxide. This is good for the environmentalists and may guide future policy on pollution.

3. **Unemployment**

   Construction as an industry is a slow moving industry, whereas the immediate impact was the laying off, furloughing and drastic reduction of staff across the world has already happened. The US for example has had more than 22 million applications for unemployment claims in four weeks of lockdown. Most third world countries do not keep reliable data on unemployment but the same results may be inferred.

4. **Digital transformation**

   There has been a shift in modes of work and collaboration. Traditional office spaces have been challenged. It is likely that some of these changes might be permanent even after the pandemic.

5. **Government change**

   It is predicted that governments may change policies or indeed be forced to change with the electorate being informed by the actions surrounding this pandemic. South Korea incumbent government won their election by landslide mostly as a result of their handling of the disease in the country. Governments will be judged by their policy and action in the face of their pandemic.

6. **Secondary impact**

   Includes the delays in approvals, permits and financial facilities necessary to start up large scale and even small projects. Prices of oil have plummeted and may lead to lower production costs in the short term. As well, governments have intervened to cushion industries and thus lowering some of these costs in the short term. In Kenya, the reduction in both oil prices and VAT from 16% to 14% will see consequent reductions in the short term. It will be noted that despite these reductions, industries may not enjoy as the labour costs have gone up as well as drastic reduction in production capacity knocking off these savings.

By: Editorial Team
The current unprecedented challenges due to the outbreak of the worldwide pandemic, Covid-19 have not left the construction industry out. As a result of the extraordinary steps taken by the government to control spread of Covid-19, more people are now working from home. It is precisely in this crisis situation that digital tools such as videoconferencing can make a valuable contribution in order to ensure that they see their work progress.

Other than the day to day softwares that individual professionals use, e.g. quantity surveyors use WinQS, QSCAD, etc.; architects using Autocad, Archicad, etc. or project managers using Smartsheet, Wrike, etc., there are other softwares that can come in handy and bring in colleagues to work together despite being away from our offices. It will be noted that most of these softwares have BIM components that allow collaboration which can now be tapped into. Microsoft office 365 and Google Spreadsheets allows multiple users to work on the same documents in realtime. Discussed here are but a few examples.

1. Video Conferencing Tools
   - **Zoom** - This app provides high quality video, audio and screen sharing. One is able to connect using their mobile device or personal computer.
   - **Google’s Hangouts** - this app features high-definition video meetings with up to 100 participants. It is designed to work with Google Calendar, which makes it easy to schedule, view meeting details, and join right away.
   - **Free Conference Call** - This allows the flexibility of holding online meetings with HD audio, videoconferencing, and screen sharing. The app provides free audio conferencing for up to 1,000 participants and online meetings with screen sharing.
   - **Skype meetings** - This is an offering by Skype video calling that allows people to have meetings online, without limitation of time. It is easy to download the app on the phone or computer and setting up meetings is also quite easy with other users not necessarily having to register.

2. Project Management Tools
   - **Instagantt** - This comes with features such as the ability to create tasks and subtasks, templates for different types of projects, guidelines, milestones, notifications, baselines, critical path, and automatic project scheduling, which help one be sure of what’s going on with projects at all times.
   - **Microsoft project 365** – This is a cloud version of the MS project module by Microsoft, allowing several users to collaborate and document project activities.
from virtually anywhere.

Other collaboration and Project software include Quire, Smartsheet, Wrike etc.

3. Cloud Storage

- **One Drive** - With One Drive one can synchronize files between the cloud and a local folder; you can access files from multiple devices; you can easily share files, photos, and even entire folders. For iOS users, the counterpart for One Drive is icloud.

- **Google Drive** - Google Drive keeps all your files in one secure and centralized location. The files can be synced across devices, so the individuals can view and update them from anywhere.

- **WeTransfer** - This online tool, stores files for a short period of time (7 days) but allows for sharing very large files – up to 2GB - amongst workmates.

- **Dropbox** – Most used for sharing but can also serve as cloud storage location

Note that with a paid subscription of not more than Ksh 10,000 per annum you can access realtime storage of more than 1 Terabyte. Most however, offer quite significant storage for free if you do not have too much data requirements.

4. Remote Access Tools

- **TeamViewer** - This is a software application for remote control, desktop sharing, online meetings, web conferencing and file transfer between computers.

- **AnyDesk** - The service allows for a two or more users to have access to and control a single computer or device. This is useful for technical applications like remote IT assistance and for personal users needing to access a physically distant device.

- **Slack** - Sometimes it’s easier to show than tell. Slack has built-in screen sharing with which you can show others your desktop and the files and apps you have open— and they can watch as you work on your computer.

5. Whiteboard and Mapping Tools

- **Stormboard for creating multiple whiteboards in a single brainstorming session; Sketchboard for saving and organizing multiple, unrelated whiteboards; and Conceptboard for large, complex whiteboards.**

- **Miro** – This is a collaboration software that works like a digital whiteboard. It is especially useful to architects and team leaders who are the initial concept and detailing phases of the project.

This is not an exhaustive list and some tools will fall across the categories, having multiple functionalities. Nonetheless, it will be enough to get you started. As you make progress in working remotely, you may discover other tools that suit you better.

By: Faith Tangara.
Prior to Covid-19 outbreak, Global Data had predicted an accelerative growth in Global construction industry at a rate of about 3.1%. Due to the pandemic in China and other leading economies worldwide, predicted growth in 2020 is now at 0.5%. This shows a significant drop in the growth rate of the industry occasioned by the virus outbreak due to the following:

Governments have undertaken extreme quarantine measures including lockdowns on entire countries to curb the spread of the disease. This includes movement restrictions and international travel restrictions imposed on major economies. This might have a supply shock impact in the construction industry which might hamper the progress. It has also affected most contractors and consultants having projects outside the locked down regions or counties from accessing them resulting in delays in construction.

Most of the construction sites will experience shortage of labour. This is due to the fears and anxiety among the workers as a result of the health concerns posed by the virus. Further to this, the social distancing requirement and crowd avoidance calls for labour shifts in site, less of sharing of tools which will in long run result in slow down of work on site. Mental health is also a concern to not only employees but employers in the construction industry which poses a concern.

Covid-19 will have an impact on the contractual issues in the construction industry. In as much as is an unforeseeable circumstance, time delays and cost overruns will still lie within the contractual agreements between parties to contract. This calls for proper follow up and interpretation within the confines of the conditions of contract. Some might result in time extensions while some might require contract reviews as per the clauses as stipulated in the contracts used.

Further to this, the virus has affected not only the clients with ongoing projects but also the potential clients. Due to the uncertainty posed by the virus, delays in payment might be experienced as a result of this. The projects which are to start might be delayed a bit with a view to monitor the virus’ impact. New investors in the real estate industry may also be scared as a result of this uncertainty.

With these potentially hazardous impacts on the industry, industry players and policy makers should move fast and act to reduce the impact this pandemic will have on our sector. In comparison with other pandemics such as Spanish Flu, the impact of Covid-19 might not be severe due to technological advancement. It is quite encouraging that most stakeholders have adopted remote working which will not only aid in guarding the health of workers but also reduce devastating impact of this pandemic. However, on site workers ought to strictly adhere to the MOH guidelines through proper use of PPEs and the contractors should ensure that workers work in shifts. Our responsibility now is to join hands in the fight against this deadly menace, through strict adherence to the guidelines given by the Ministry of Health and the government. Above all, let us all in the industry join in prayer to the Almighty God in these trying times, heartened by the words of our president “… even science needs God.”

We shall indeed triumph!

By: Komen Boaz
Personal health (physical, mental, relationship) & development when under lockdown

At such a time where the world is battling with a pandemic and social interactions have been put to a standstill, people are probably wondering, how do you maintain your physical and mental wellness? How do you still maintain relationships between family and friends? To keep a vibrant life, all we have to do is look at life from an optimistic point of view and this is how to go about it:

As many people are greatly affected by watching news update on the rising cases of COVID-19, the primary aid to reduce the anxiety is by reducing the number of hours spent on following up on the updates. One should decide to probably watch news, or check notification on their phone only twice in 24 hours and spending the rest of the hours doing something productive.

It is also important for people to use this time and strengthen the family bond. This means less screen time and more interactions hence keeping the mind occupied. For business owners who have been forced to close down during this period, it is the high time to think of better ways to improve business. All is not lost. Sit down, make plans and see how working from home can also be incorporated in your line of work.

Personal development is also crucial during this time hence individuals should focus on emerging out of this better than they were before. People should embrace activities such as writing articles and newsletters, learning a new language, doing an online course, gardening, puzzles, craft, sewing, reading, among other activities that we normally don’t have time for. Consulting a psychologist is also advised for those who are too overwhelmed.

Checking up on people is also advised at such times, especially to friends and family who are facing COVID 19 first hand like the health practitioners and journalists. It will help maintain social relationships and also calm those who are overwhelmed with anxiety, emptiness and worry. Thanks to technology, we have so many platforms where we can use for video calls such as skype, WhatsApp and zoom.

Given that lifestyle diseases have become the order of the day; we should adopt healthy living by using a fraction of our time to exercise. A simple mat and good internet connection is all you need as many fitness instructors offer classes online, or you can opt to walk up and down the stairs or do small meter runs on the compound for an hour or two. Doing these makes the body release chemicals that make the body feel good, and it’s also linked to better sleep, reduces stress and anxiety. However, we should carry on with such a routine post COVID 19.

Consider the less fortunate in these times. If you can, consider sending food donations to people you know that are personally affected by the lockdown. If you know or have had a domestic worker, casual laborer or other non-permanent staff that has had to go home without pay, consider paying them over this period. You will be glad you did so when things get back to normal.

Above all, we need to remain steadfast in prayer. There is peace of mind, body and soul where spirituality reigns. Let us all pray that COVID 19 pandemic ends and normal is restored.

By: Poulet Maina
Safe construction in the face of COVID-19

The government has already issued guidelines on how to prevent the spread of the virus. Construction sites have not yet been closed but here is how to keep up the safety if your site is still up.

1. Healthy and safety policy – if you are a compliant contractor, chances are that your health and safety policy is sturdy enough. You must have proper PPE for all works, you must ensure works have protections from dangerous materials such as Rockwool and asbestos.

2. Masks - With regards to Coronavirus, we suggest that all workers must be dressed in full PPE at all times. While dust masks are okay, you can substitute these with surgical masks. It is not advisable to obtain the famed N-95 masks as it most likely would result in a shortage for those who really need them – the health workers. The masks have been determined to be really helpful in preventing the spread of the virus even though they may not be effective in preventing the wearer from getting the virus. Ensure masks are only worn once and discarded appropriately.

3. Gloves – ensure all works have gloves at all times. Gloves will prevent contaminated surfaces and workers will not likely touch their faces with their gloves. Ensure that workers do not share PPE.

4. Sanitisation - constantly sanitise surfaces especially common facilities such as toilets and canteens. Food handlers must be properly attired as the rest of the workers. Fumigate the entire construction site regularly every day. Provide proper cleaning facilities for workers on site. Ensure that there is someone in charge of this aspect of health and safety on full time basis. Do not switch tools between workers unless proper sanitisation has been done.

5. Proactive checks – Ensure that no workers report to site sick. Check for temperatures regularly, anyone with cough or fever is promptly sent home and follow up is done to ensure that they have not contracted Covid-19 as well as being given proper medical attention. If a worker who was on site is reported to have the Coronavirus, it is advisable to close the site and quarantine all workers who were in contact with the infected person. In addition, call upon the health authorities to fumigate the site accordingly before resuming construction.

6. At risk workers - consider paid leave and furloughing at risk workers. At risk workers (vulnerable) include workers older than 55 years. Workers with existing medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes, asthma, digestive and kidney ailments are also
Coronavirus Prevention

It has been established that these are the workers most at risk of fatalities from coronavirus and it is the duty of the contractor to protect them.

7. **Consider a shift policy** – consider workers working in shifts, it might slow the work progress but will ensure to reduce the risk of infection.

8. **Reconsider your program** - Pace out the jobs that are not on the critical path, discuss with the Client on the need to postpone or delay works. Consider freezing the work if possible.

9. **Have some workers work from home as much as possible** – In light of the shift policy, and program revisions, you may have some workers especially senior managers, site supervisors working from home. Now is the time to introduce video link to site for continuous monitoring.

10. **For large sites, ensure that the workers have been isolated from the outside world may be very beneficial**. Provide communication tools to workers to ensure them interact with their families virtually. Onboard them on the need to reduce physical interactions. If you can treat the entire site as quarantine site while maintaining the rights of all workers, the better. You can for example provide food centrally and organise for deliveries to workers who may feel the need to go outside the site to obtain supplies. Close off the site from visitors.

11. **Change your methodology of work to reduce physical contact between workers**. Consider using machines to carry out manual jobs. Maintain distances between workers.

**Editor’s note:** the National Construction Authority in conjunction with relevant government ministries has issued detailed guidelines on Standards for Management of Construction Sites and Welfare of Workers available on https://nca.go.ke/#downloads. You are advised to adhere to these guidelines as they are regulatory.

By: Editorial Team

Construction sites have not yet been closed but here is how to keep up the safety if your site is still up.
Most contractors, professionals and developers have been wondering how to treat the pandemic and the consequent actions by Government to contain it. To begin with, even where the government has not ordered complete lockdown, drastic measures have led to challenges at the construction site. In addition, global supply chains have been severely disrupted risking huge delays in deliveries of imported components as well as changes in pricing. We shall try to guide you on the major effects on the construction contract and the subsequent actions necessary.

**Force majeure**

Most standard contracts contain a clause known as Force Majeure which is defined as simply the occurrence of unforeseeable events affecting the contract that are not within the control of either party. In examples, Acts of God such as floods, earthquakes are usually regarded as such. Pestilences such as this Covid-19 have been mentioned in some contracts. The general consensus by contract experts on COVID-19 is that it generally falls under this category.

Several issues emerge here:

1. Force majeure invocation is not a dereliction of duty by either party and does not create room for explicit non-performance of contract.
2. Immediate impact expected would be time delay in meeting obligations – Most contracts allow for procedures on how to communicate and mitigate.
3. Another impact is on costs escalations – again due to disruptions. Contracts that have fluctuating prices will work out smoothly, fixed price contracts may have to be re-evaluated if they do allow so.

In addition, global supply chains have been severely disrupted risking huge delays in deliveries of imported components as well as changes in pricing.
4. Duty for contractor to mitigate the effects. Again because most obligations of delivering the project are on the contractor, standard contracts provide for them to try as much as possible to mitigate damaging effects of the event.

5. Communication – contracts provide avenues for communication on the matters above. It is imperative that the parties take them into account and ensure that proper procedures are followed. There is little room for assumed communication in contracts and ambiguity leads to detrimental positions for the ignorant party.

We note that China, the first country to be affected by the pandemic has already issued a record number of ‘Force Majeure Certificates’ to exporters in a bid to shield them from claims due to inability to meet contractual obligations. While powerful within China, the certificates’ legal implication outside the jurisdiction remains largely vague.

**What to do**

As noted, the first point of contact is what the specific contract provides for. In relation to Covid-19, we advocate for protection of human life at all costs. It simply beats even common law guidelines to put contract obligations ahead of human life. Indeed, some contracts like the JBC Green book allow for the architect to intervene and close the site if they deem there to be hazard on site and some architects may invoke this if a worker on site tests positive or the contractor refuses to adhere to requisite health and safety guidelines.

Once we are done with protecting human lives, it is imperative that actions are taken to not only safeguard the contract but prevent the stalling of the same. Suggestions would be for amicable meetings between contracting parties to agree on a way forward. Such way forward would be revision of the program to note delays, complete freeze of the project, worker welfare and compensation during the period. Concessions and ex gratia agreements for the mutual benefit of the contractor and developer.

**Role of consultants**

Consultants must not adopt a wait and see attitude. They must promptly advise the parties where they deem appropriate. It is not to anyone’s benefits that projects are frustrated. Proactive communication must be made to the parties on the various remedies available to them.

**Resources**

The International Federation of Consulting Engineers has issued comprehensive guidelines accessible on [https://fidic.org/COVID-19](https://fidic.org/COVID-19). This includes access to webinars on the matters. The Kenya Joint Building Construction Council (JBCC) has also issued a communique on the issue that is in wide circulation and continues to update members on the same. They are reachable at mail@jbcc.or.ke.

**Editor’s note:** This article outlines contractual matters and advisory notes of a general nature, you are advised not to use the information without appropriate expert advice on the particular circumstance and contract.

By: Editorial Team
Do and don’ts of keeping safe

**DOs**

- Do maintain personal hygiene. Use a handkerchief or disposable towel to cough. Cough into your elbow if you cannot.
- Do wash and sanitise your hands regularly.
- Do wear a mask in public spaces.
- Do keep a distance of at least 6ft from others in public spaces.
- Do follow government issued directives.
- Do act like you are an infected person to prevent yourself passing it to another.

**DON'Ts**

- Don’t listen to myths on social media. Follow reputable news organisations for updates on treatment and other issues surrounding Covid-19.
- Don’t go out when feeling sick, having a fever or coughing.
- Don’t despair or act carelessly. This scourge will go away in the eventual course of time. It seldom leads to a fatality and most people experience very mild symptoms.
- Don’t stigmatise those who are infected. It is possible for anyone to get and most to get infected without their knowledge.
- Don’t discriminate certain persons. This virus is not visible; you cannot racially profile persons based on the misconceptions. If you feel that you need to discriminate against a certain person based on their colour, nationality or other profile remember you are targeting an innocent person.
- Don’t go into public spaces unless you really have to. When you do, keep a distance and wear masks.
- Don’t hold parties and visit unnecessarily. Instead get in touch virtually.
- Don’t self-medicate. If your suspect you have the virus, get in touch with relevant authorities. Please don’t bother with the garlic, mouthwash concoctions that are peddled online. Most important drugs like Chloroquine have dangerous side effects and must be prescribed by a qualified doctor. This and other drugs have not yet been proved to be effective therapies.
- Don’t spread disinformation and fake news. Call out those who spread fear and disinformation in this period. No, 5G networks do not spread the virus.
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