



BUSINESS AND COVID-19

INSIGHTS REPORT



National
Business
Compact on
Coronavirus

A YEAR ON

A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR RAPID COLLABORATION?

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with



HARVARD Kennedy School
Corporate Responsibility Initiative

funded by



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FOREWORD

BUSINESS AND COVID-19

Over the past year we have seen people and organisations come together in new, innovative and inspiring ways against a seismic, global challenge not seen in a generation, the COVID-19 pandemic. Our news feeds are filled with heartfelt examples of human beings helping one another, increased community engagement and volunteerism and new types of partnership. They are also filled with heartbreaking examples of the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on the lives, livelihoods and learning of hundreds of millions of people.

New partnerships will be integral to helping communities recover from COVID-19 and build resilience against future shocks.

It is impossible to ignore the stark reality that this impact has been highly uneven, as a result of deep-seated structural and systemic inequalities in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, income and type of work.

We know that future pandemics are likely to occur, alongside other systemic shocks and sudden-onset disasters resulting from the climate emergency, inequality and failures in our health, food, energy and economic systems. And, we know it will be impossible to prepare for, respond to or build resilience against these shocks and disasters, especially for the most vulnerable households and communities, without new models of collective action and collaboration between governments, business and civil society organisations.

What lessons can we learn from collective action that has occurred during the pandemic? What makes some collaborative initiatives more successful and transformative than others? What role can, and should, the business sector play? These are questions that require a concerted focus in the coming months and years. This report looks at lessons learned from one national-level collaborative platform that was established within days of WHO declaring COVID-19 as a pandemic – The National Business Compact on Coronavirus in Kenya (NBCC).

Coalitions with active business leadership or engagement generally fall into four broad structural ‘types’. In addition to the formation of new coalitions that are innovative, agile and targeted at addressing a specific emergency or challenge, like the NBCC, there are established business leadership coalitions that are focused



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on scaling inclusive and sustainable development more broadly; traditional, representative business organisations (such as Chambers of Commerce or trade associations) that mobilise their members to work together in times of crisis or to address specific sustainability issues; and long-term, multi-stakeholder platforms, usually focused on addressing a specific, systemic challenge, such as GAVI – the Vaccine Alliance and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, to name just two.¹ The latter three types of coalitions have important roles to play, but with COVID-19, this new type of partnership really came into its own: managing to mobilise a rapid, cross-sector response in a matter of days.

¹ Jane Nelson (2017) [Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Collective Action by Business, Governments and Civil Society to Achieve Scale and Transform Markets](#).



The NBCC mobilised something new, novel, and due to the lack of a formal entity, everyone felt ownership and part of its success.

As Dave Prescott, Creative Director at The Partnering Initiative, said during an [online discussion](#) hosted by Business Fights Poverty, “COVID-19 provided a blueprint for how to do things differently”. In my mind, the NBCC took that blueprint and ran with it.

Established at a rapid pace, the NBCC built on existing relationships and trust, worked in alignment with government priorities, and harnessed core business competences alongside public, philanthropic and donor funding. Whilst working nationally, they ensured that inter-governmental actors such as the UN and international donors were involved, and crucially, the private sector was a major player, both mobilising and convening others as well as making ambitious public commitments.

One of the key elements of the NBCC's set-up was its fluid structure and lean governance model. When faced with the rapidly moving and changing context of a global pandemic, the coalition was able to adapt and pivot to emerging needs. It was also able to manage both funds, fundraising, and in-kind donations, and then shifted

to include logistics, public health announcements and service delivery. It was an excellent example of an adaptive model of systems leadership.

The NBCC mobilised something new, novel, and due to the lack of a formal entity, everyone felt ownership and part of its success. Instead of talking about what its members were doing individually, the NBCC mobilised collective on-the-ground action. Individual and institutional leaders came together to collaborate. They developed an adaptive framework that, I believe, can be harnessed for future rapid onset crises, and perhaps even some of the systemic challenges our society and planet face. The model that was developed and some of the lessons learned are worthy of review, analysis and application more broadly.

Jane Nelson

Director of the Corporate Responsibility Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 presented a major threat to Kenya's economy and the health of its people. The urgency and context in Kenya required a rapid and innovative collective response and within days of the WHO declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic, the National Business Compact on Coronavirus (NBCC) was launched.

The more agile approaches to partnering that have emerged over the past year could hold the potential to change the way that organisations work together

A year on, this report looks at the main lessons learned from collective action that occurred during the pandemic, and what makes some collaborative initiatives more successful than others, with an in-depth look at the inception, structure and participants, and delivery and impact of the NBCC.

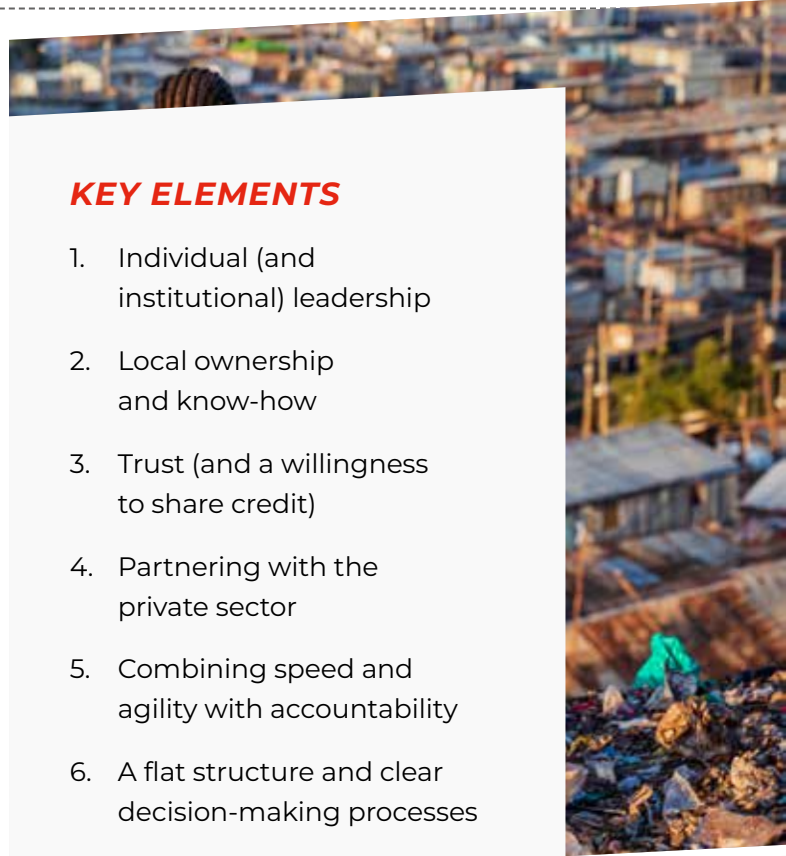
Through analysis of NBCC materials and its work over the past year, a survey of those involved, together with first-hand interviews with key leaders, we identified ten key elements that were integral to its success:

KEY ELEMENTS

1. Individual (and institutional) leadership
2. Local ownership and know-how
3. Trust (and a willingness to share credit)
4. Partnering with the private sector
5. Combining speed and agility with accountability
6. A flat structure and clear decision-making processes
7. Leveraging partners' competencies within a coherent strategy
8. Inclusion of young people
9. Community engagement
10. Embracing digital

The more agile approaches to partnering that have emerged over the past year could hold the potential to change the way that organisations work together for future crises and challenges.

Coalitions based on the adaptive NBCC framework could: 1) bring stakeholders together for a common purpose for a time-bound period, 2) help form a bridge between potentially competing organisations and companies, 3) fill a gap where organisations and business have not yet marshalled their own responses to a rapid onset emergency, and 4) perhaps even address some of the systemic challenges our society and planet face.



CONTEXT

COVID-19: A COMPLEX, RAPID ONSET EMERGENCY AND SYSTEMIC SHOCK

The first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) was reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in December 2019 and it was subsequently declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020. COVID-19 quickly spread across the globe with the first case in Africa being identified in Egypt in February 2020. Kenya's first case was confirmed on 13 March 2020.

To respond to COVID-19, many AU Member States emphasised prevention, using a combination of containment and mitigation measures to delay a surge in cases that could overwhelm the availability of hospital beds, while protecting the medically vulnerable, including the elderly. By the end of March 2020, most African countries had imposed travel bans on most affected Asian and European countries and had instituted mandatory quarantine periods for most travellers.

COVID-19 presented a major threat to Kenya's economy and the health of its people. While many developed countries deployed lockdown measures, these were more challenging long-term in a low-income context, and where the majority of people - [around 15 million Kenyans](#) -

are employed in the informal sector and often live in crowded housing conditions with inadequate access to clean water and sanitation.

In Kenya, a Presidential Directive established a structure for multi-stakeholder engagement, and the Kenyan Ministry of Health received praise locally and internationally for the speed of its response. The UN launched a flash appeal for Kenya on 9 April 2020.

At this time, and according to the World Health Organisation, handwashing was the first and best line of defence against the spread of COVID-19. Good hand hygiene was an inexpensive way to limit the spread of COVID-19 as well as most other infections. However, around 38 million Kenyans lacked access to basic hand hygiene facilities at home, and 48% did not routinely wash their hands.

Additional basic measures, such as maintaining physical distancing and use of masks could help limit the spread of the virus, but both required behavior change interventions and supplies. The urgency and context in Kenya required a rapid and innovative collective response. That came within days, with the formation of the National Business Compact on Coronavirus (NBCC).



OVERVIEW OF THE NBCC

INCEPTION

Officially launched on 16 March 2020, the [NBCC](#) had three main objectives:

- To raise public awareness and long-term behaviour change in hygiene practices through good communications;
- To support the government's rapid response measures through the establishment and management of a Flexible Fund; and
- To provide the public with access to hygiene products and handwashing facilities.

Together with the founding partners, the coalition engaged a broad range of multi-sector stakeholders to deliver its objectives, including soap manufacturers and hygiene companies, retail companies, social enterprises, business networks, communications organisations and digital experts, NGOs and funders.

The NBCC was committed to aligning with the Kenyan Ministry of Health's priorities, adhering to market-based solutions, contributing to local and global best practice sharing, and ensuring it operated with a collaborative and inclusive approach by pooling resources and leveraging existing platforms.

In addition, a Secretariat was established to manage and coordinate activities, particularly as much of the support received were in-kind donations. The Secretariat was held accountable for delivery.

STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPANTS

A Board was set up of representatives from several key organisations: Amref, the Marketing Society of Kenya, the UN represented by the UN SDG partnership platform and the Kenya Association of Soap Manufacturers, with Myriam Sidibe as the Chair in order to make decisions quickly and effectively. They saw themselves very much as supporting and amplifying the priorities established by the Ministry of Health.

In addition, a Secretariat - composed entirely of volunteers in the beginning - was established to manage and coordinate activities, particularly as much of the support received was in-kind donations. The Secretariat was held accountable for delivery.

A key standout of the coalition was the many organisations involved and mobilised over a short period of time. These included corporate competitors, such as hygiene and soap manufacturers Unilever and Renkitt Benckiser and local players Chandaria and Pwani with brands Lifebuoy and Dettol at the forefront

Jael Amara
Dr Juliana Kasiimbii
Joel Okwemba
Caleb Wafula

of the campaign. Retail companies and community organisations such as Copia, Rotary and Sanergy were involved, and social businesses including Heroes for Change, Shujaaz, Jumia and Twiga who all helped in the delivery of the messages as well as placing handwashing facilities in their businesses. Being part of the NBCC also connected innovative local organisations to partners outside Kenya, helping them to build on their reach and impact.

The NBCC also partnered with Ogilvy Africa, Project Hand Up, BRCK Moja and Alfluence to extend its reach, especially to younger demographics.

The Business Fights Poverty Action Toolkit “[How to build and mobilise a local coalition](#)”, developed by Myriam Sidibe of Brands on a Mission, and in partnership with the Corporate Responsibility Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School, provides more detail on the establishment of the NBCC.

NBCC BRAND PARTNERS





MAGGIE RARIEYA

Head of Secretariat, National Business Compact on Coronavirus

“Unlikely organisations came together and found that we were better together”

Myriam asked if I would head up the Secretariat of the NBCC and I said yes! I did not know what I was getting myself into. I have a marketing and sustainability background with some of the biggest brands in the business, but this was a new, unique partnership at an unprecedented time.

It took over my life, I pulled in volunteers from everyone I knew to help run the different workstreams - all were experts in their own right and from the private sector, they came with that speed, agility and the “get things done” mindset already built into their psyche.

I was overwhelmed with how people wanted to help and get involved. One of the first people I met during these online meetings was Tim Steel, CEO of Copia, whose sense of urgency in taking action impressed me. He offered the use of his agents to place handwashing stations outside their stores, and helped us fast track the procurement of handwashing stations by giving us his. This is but one example of how different organisations and people generously put themselves forward for this cause.

We had a good balance of people who could get things done, and experts who knew what we needed to do

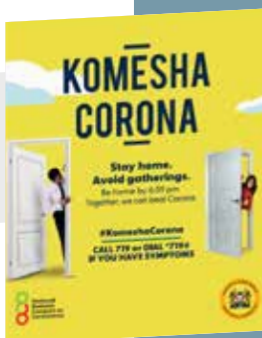
Leading and working with a coalition is not without its set of challenges. Each stakeholder comes with his/her set of Ps (perspectives, personal interests and personality). It's a constant juggle trying to assimilate the needs of stakeholders and to find common points of collaboration that can augment joint actions while keeping everyone moving with speed and agility in the same direction. The success of the NBCC is not down to luck. We are bound by a shared vision and purpose and an understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This keeps us focused amidst all the noise.

When our team finally met in person nearly seven months after we'd been working together, we were like a family of sorts, those connections had been forged amongst the urgency and action. We had a good balance of people who could get things done, and experts who knew what we needed to do, the NGO involvement was crucial for the latter.

DELIVERY AND RESULTS

3

DELIVERED THREE MULTI-MEDIA CAMPAIGNS



'Komesha Corona' media campaign reaching a total of 17 million people through TV, radio and billboards with awareness and behaviour change messaging



a second campaign following the lifting of lockdown, and which was focused on the **re-opening of the economy**



and a third campaign which shared messages on the **use of face masks and handwashing.**



5,400

facilitated provision of 5,400 handwashing stations and supplies to cover 75% of Kenya (in line with government identified hotspots), and provided 100,000 masks and 300,000 bars of soap alongside these stations.



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

supported the Ministry of Health with their rapid needs through the NBCC Flexi Fund, including equipping government quarantine facilities, aiding the proper disposal of medical waste and providing food and transportation for medical frontline workers.

K

100 MILLION KSH

RAISED IN COUNTRY (1 MILLION USD)

raised over 100 million KSH (\$1 million USD) in cash and in-kind contributions, **AND 3.7 MILLION USD** as FCDO/ Unilever Grant via Amref.



NBCC has been an agile partnership in responding quickly."

NBCC stakeholder

REFLECTIONS

From a community healthcare worker and local business owner on the effect of COVID-19 on their communities and the impact of the NBCC campaign.



The First Lady of Kenya, Mrs Margaret Kenyatta, supporting the National Campaign #Nimenawa on Global Handwashing Day.

THE HYGIENE & BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COALITION (HBCC)



Unilever and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) established a £100 million response to tackling COVID-19 in low and middle income countries which built on Unilever's expertise in hygiene interventions.

The NBCC was able to draw on support from the HBCC to build on its mandate. Funds from the HBCC went to support communications campaigns, the dissemination of thought leadership and collaboration on learnings.

MARGARET KILONZO

Community Healthcare Worker, Kibera, Kenya



"The campaign made our jobs easier."

"We work with communities to inform and support them on all issues concerning health and we refer people to local clinics. I've been working with communities since 1998, and last year everything was about COVID-19. Initially there was so much fear, no one knew what to do next and everyone just saw death in front of them. There were impacts on cash for work programmes, children's education, gender-based violence, pregnancies increased, crime increased, and of course, economic impacts with people losing their jobs, and lack of access to food.

In Kibera, which is a very poor area of Nairobi, Kenya, there are sometimes problems for people to access water, so that was an additional challenge at this time.

Before COVID-19, people had a relatively normal attitude towards washing hands - before they ate, after using the toilet, but because of the communications campaign, they started washing their hands more regularly, they became more empowered with that knowledge. Together with the communications campaign, we worked with the community to change behaviour.

The campaign had a big impact because it reached so many people, and it was straightforward and easy to understand. The campaign made our jobs easier. Sometimes people would see things in the media, and that meant it became easier for us to talk to them about it."



SIMON MANAMBO

MD, Exp Agency

You can make your profit or sell your product, but if your community is in distress, you have nothing.

We heard about NBCC early last year, due to our close working with the Marketing Society of Kenya. We had already been discussing the sustainability of businesses during this period and how to support our customers. Our 2020 strategy went down the drain and before we thought about profits, we had to consider the safety of our family and colleagues.

As a marketing agency that does 40 percent of our business in behaviour change communications campaigns including with organisations like Unicef, we are usually communicating to the communities. This time, the community was us.

We shared our knowledge and had strategic discussions with the Marketing Society leads about how to work with communities on the NBCC communications campaign. We had a complex matter and needed to simplify it. We put all our challenges aside and we focussed on what we needed to do as a community for sustainability and survival.

From a business standpoint, we needed to keep relevant and adapt to digital engagement. Everyone was now online, but we had a duty to understand why they were there - was it fear, frustration, or anger - and we had a responsibility not to fuel that but to give hope.

Personally, this was a time for great reflection, the birds and the butterflies were back - I hadn't seen butterflies since my childhood. There was a realisation that we can create better ways of living instead of suffocating our environment. I believe we have learned a lot about how we plan for the future, the biggest drivers of change are disasters.

From a business standpoint, we needed to keep relevant and adapt to digital engagement.



I am passionate about people and this was an opportunity to be involved."

NBCC stakeholder

ANALYSIS AND LEARNINGS

MODELS OF NATIONAL BUSINESS-LED COLLABORATION

The COVID-19 pandemic spread rapidly around the world, creating the worst humanitarian and economic crisis in a generation. The response to this pandemic needed to be equally rapid and innovation was required at many levels.

The pandemic was also fairly unique in that it was both a rapid onset crisis and a systemic shock and had similarities to both an immediate emergency (like floods or hurricanes) but also required a system-level, longer-term response.

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked at least three main types of national-level collaboration.

1st New coalitions were created that brought together government, companies, civil society, and international organisations, including the National Business Compact on Coronavirus in Kenya, and similar coalitions in [Zambia](#) and [Nigeria](#).

2nd Existing business leadership platforms focused on global development challenges prioritised action on COVID-19 through their national-level affiliate organisations. These included organisations such as the World Economic Forum, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the United States Council for International Business, Business Call to Action and Business Fights Poverty, who mobilised their members to support national initiatives and created dedicated online platforms.

3rd Existing traditional business associations created COVID-19 Response hubs, taking advantage of their widespread membership and local knowledge to collaborate with national responses. These included organisations such as the CBI, US Chamber of Commerce and the Business Unity South Africa, which for example, launched the Business for South Africa initiative amid the government's preparations against the pandemic.

All three types of national, business-led collaboration platforms played an essential role in the fight against COVID-19.

For the newly created national collaborative platforms that were mobilised and fully dedicated to addressing the pandemic, their mandates fell into three main categories according to Dave Prescott, Creative Director, The Partnering Initiative - **advocacy**, **funding** (which could also include mobilisation and coordination of other resources), and **transformation**.

Advocacy

This includes collective efforts for a public policy response, for example where a coalition of organisations or alliances might work together to advocate for better conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic for workers.

Funding or resource mobilisation or coordination

This might include partnering for fundraising or to leverage funding for joint efforts, or the establishment of a “Flexifund” for financial donations, as well as coordinating other in-kind and voluntary resources, as in the case of NBCC. During this period we also saw crowdfunding campaigns emerge.

Transformation

This includes efforts to aid recovery and bring about systemic change. For example, OCHA’s Connecting Business Initiative brought the UN system together with business in 13 countries and is also providing valuable data and advice to guide the response of key sectors.

Elements to consider when seeking to replicate a rapid coalition model:

- Be wary of creating an initiative that will compete for scarce resources or public attention within a country response
- Prepare for a loss of momentum when the urgency passes
- Consider attrition of staff or volunteers, especially if time/resources are provided pro bono
- Be prepared for limited attractiveness of unbranded communications campaigns to private sector partners
- Plan for evolution or dissolution when moving towards longer-term systemic impact.



KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM NBCC

A shared sense of urgency and purpose due to the COVID-19 global pandemic brought people and organisations together to create partnerships that were new, unique, innovative, accountable and fast-acting. There were many other initiatives at this time, both in Kenya, elsewhere in Africa, and around the world - but what was it that made the NBCC successful?

From analysis of NBCC materials and work over the past year, a survey of those involved, and first-hand interviews with key leaders involved, we have highlighted the following ten elements:

1. *Individual (and institutional) leadership*

A small number of committed, passionate experts who were able to leverage and mobilise their existing networks and platforms with a shared sense of urgency. This was the key spark that ignited NBCC.

2. *Local ownership and know-how*

Crucially, it was local leadership in Kenya and southern Africa who were the driving force behind the NBCC, people who lived in the country and knew the context and could access and leverage their existing local networks and platforms. The NBCC would not have been as successful if it had been a campaign driven by entities in the US or UK, for example

... the COVID-19 global pandemic brought people and organisations together to create partnerships that were new, unique, innovative, accountable and quick-acting.

and implemented in Kenya. It worked because it was run in close collaboration with the Government and rooted in Kenyan society.

Advocacy was vital, particularly in the first few weeks when endorsement was secured by the UN system and Kenyan Ministry of Health, and this was spearheaded by individual leaders with authority and credibility who were known and could command attention. The NBCC had a high profile and appeared in Forbes Africa, BBC, Daily Nation, Business Daily, CNBC Africa, the WEF blog, Nutrition Connect and regular local coverage in Kenya, which added to its reach and credibility.

3. *Trust (and a willingness to share credit)*

Building on individual leadership, many of those involved already had existing partnerships and relationships and there was a level of trust. Where there was not an existing relationship, introductions were made by other trusted parties to build that trust quickly. Because this was a movement for purpose, people and companies opened their pocket-books, and there was a sense of everyone being in it together.

There was an acute understanding from the private sector - both local and global - that they needed to respond to the pandemic quickly.

4. Partnering with the private sector

There was an acute understanding from the private sector - both local and global - that they needed to respond to the pandemic quickly. This was followed by an acknowledgement that due to the scale of national-level impact required, in addition to all the actions companies were taking to protect the health and safety and livelihoods of their own employees, customers and business and community partners, they would be more effective coordinating their efforts with others, including their competitors, and by leveraging their core competencies.

With the Marketing Society of Kenya on board, the NBCC had access to more than 3,000 organisations with considerable reach in terms of communications in the country on behalf of their brands and clients. Securing the support of multinationals who were early adopters and who could see how the coalition supported their core business aims, was crucial, and they used their influence to encourage the participation of others.

5. Combining speed and agility with accountability

We heard time and time again that the NBCC delivered quickly and according to their objectives, despite the fact that most people involved were volunteers or offering their time pro bono. They were united by a moral obligation and shared sense of urgency, which was the impetus to deliver and were held accountable by the Secretariat, the Steering Committee, the Government, and donors. The speed and agility also meant that the communications campaign, which was the foundation of the NBCC's mission, could adapt to changing messages - from handwashing, to social distancing, to stay at home messaging.

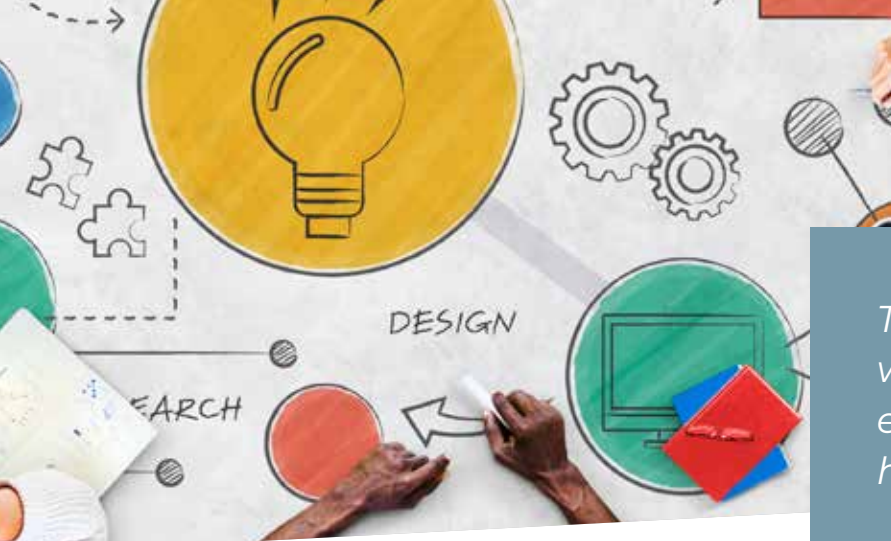
6. A flat structure and clear decision-making processes

There was very little bureaucracy within the NBCC. A small committee made decisions very quickly and there were clear lines of communication, and clear roles and responsibilities.

7. Leveraging partners' competencies within a coherent strategy

With such a comprehensive whole-of-country response to the pandemic required, the primary responsible body in the country was the Ministry of Health, from which the NBCC received direction and priorities. This meant that vital time was not lost discussing which approach was best or what the priorities were.





The NBCC worked closely with communities directly, especially in remote or hard-to-reach places

These priorities were then executed by the coalition's experts utilising their networks and expertise. Everyone involved played to their strengths and according to defined workstreams and decision points. By working together in this way, the coalition was able to reach scale very quickly.

The NBCC sought to augment the government's response and their support allowed for government funds that would have been spent on communications campaigns, for example, to be spent directly on medical needs and healthcare.

8. Inclusion of young people

The NBCC included groups that can sometimes be ignored and not viewed as part of the solution - notably young people. The coalition created multi-platform campaigns focused on young people to increase awareness and understanding of COVID-19 and ensure they were engaged and informed. They invested in mobilising young people to act by connecting them to hygiene stations while encouraging them to support their communities. As Elsie Wandera from Heroes for Change highlighted at the time, "let's be intentional about inviting these young people to the table, let's not make it like a PR stand. They are actually solution providers."

9. Community engagement

The NBCC worked closely with communities directly, especially in remote or hard-to-reach places, in order to share behaviour change messaging. While the communications campaign operated at a high level to engage the public with awareness, partnerships with networks of community-based organisations were crucial to increasing access to handwashing facilities, soap, and public health information. The campaign could not only be government-owned but needed the buy-in from communities.

10. Embracing digital

Key to the NBCC's reach was the use of digital, including communication apps, big data tracking and user-generated videos to ensure that the voices of young people were being heard in decision-making processes. In Kenya, a partnership between the government and a tech company extended 4G internet connection through balloons to areas that did not have internet previously. The NBCC capitalised on this opportunity and used it as a way to inform people about public health measures.

LEADER INTERVIEWS

JUSTIN APSEY

Vice President Africa Transformation, Unilever



From the start, NBCC was hyper-inclusive, moved at speed, and decisions were made quickly.

It was very clear that all of us going out with our own campaigns would be very confusing. Now was not the time to compete.

When COVID-19 hit, we didn't know what it was going to look like from a marketing perspective in Kenya. Like every other company around the world, Unilever was sailing into uncharted waters and no one knew where this thing was going to go. But we knew we had to do something.

Luckily for us in Kenya, NBCC came in - a bold coalition, backed by credible partners we knew, from the UN and NGO sector, and which had government backing. Here was an initiative we could get on board with quickly, and was being delivered by an independent body, which gave my team and I the space to focus on our business at this unprecedented time. Being part of the NBCC meant we could all respond quicker to a national crisis and use our own resources more efficiently.

Importantly for Unilever, I also needed to ensure that other manufacturers were on board to be confident that I wasn't going to lose out competitively. I did a ring round, and actually didn't have to convince a lot of people to join us, mostly just make them

aware. Everyone was already thinking about how they could help and what they could give - resources, in-kind donations, media spots. So many people pulled in favours.

From the start, NBCC was hyper-inclusive, moved at speed, and decisions were made quickly. Crucially, it was managed in a way that let people and organisations use their core competencies.

The NBCC filled a gap in Kenya when the rest of the world didn't know what they were doing and could not help. I could see this kind of lean, fast, and local model working again. But it would need to be the same kind of agile and highly targeted response, tailored to a specific rapid onset crisis. We should not confuse the role it played with the kind of standing institutions and structures needed to tackle things over the longer term.

SIDDHARTH CHATTERJEE

**Former UN Resident Coordinator to Kenya,
now UN Resident Coordinator to China**

“We do not need a rowing team. We need a good football team where there is scope for individual brilliance.

In Kenya, and under the leadership of the government, the UN had built a model to catalyse public-private action: the SDG Partnership Platform in 2017. COVID-19 was a once in a lifetime public health emergency, a time where humanity had to come together. We put our practical experience with the SDG Partnership Platform to the test, and ensured we came together with the private sector to deliver something practical, united by a common purpose. At the outset, personalities were crucial to getting the NBCC off the ground and became the driver for institutional engagement. The leadership of Dr Myriam Sidibe who led and coordinated this important initiative was critical.

In this, the last decade of the SDGs, we need to do things differently and this is a model I can see being used across a range of issues if there is a common agenda



With the UN's backing and our robust relationship with the government of Kenya, we were able to build a strong foundation of trust, and the private sector was crucial for innovation and scale.

In this, the last decade of the SDGs, we need to do things differently and this is a model I can see being used across a range of issues if there is a common agenda – from health and malnutrition, to the climate emergency. But to flip the orthodoxy will take a lot of effort, and we must resurrect the spirit of multilateralism. As John Dunn once said, 'No man is an island, every man is a piece of the continent'.



It was an exhilarating time because it was the first time in my career that we had faced such a global challenge

DESTA LAKEW

Global Director of Partnerships and External Affairs at Amref Health Africa

One of the most successful partnerships I have seen in a very long time.

We launched the NBCC within a week of the first COVID case in Kenya. There was a critical time element within which to act to, and an uncharted challenge to meet. This was a global issue which required global action within local context. Everyone was looking for a place to plug in and we knew that if it worked, we could make a difference.

Amref was involved from the outset as a founding member of NBCC. We had the reach across Kenya to help implement the vision, and the financial management experience with large donors. We had fiduciary oversight of the flexible fund and brought in other funders. The commitment of the early players really helped us act quickly and build momentum.

We had the right players in the room from the get-go. They had influence in their respective areas and came from known institutions - this lent a lot of credibility to our efforts.

Crucially, we had a unified agenda and common priorities driven by direction and requests from the Ministry of Health. We were not arguing about what the priorities were or what we thought the strategy should be.

Our lean governance committee structure allowed us to be nimble. We operated with such efficiency and we were able to make instant decisions.

It was an exhilarating time because it was the first time in my career that we had faced such a global challenge which required all actors and stakeholders to engage. We were on the cusp of a new sort of partnership, and the partnership was singularly focused on delivering critical interventions fast. There was no room for egos or logos. When we are aligned, committed and put people first, magic happens. Those are the most rewarding partnerships.



DR MERCY MWANGANGI

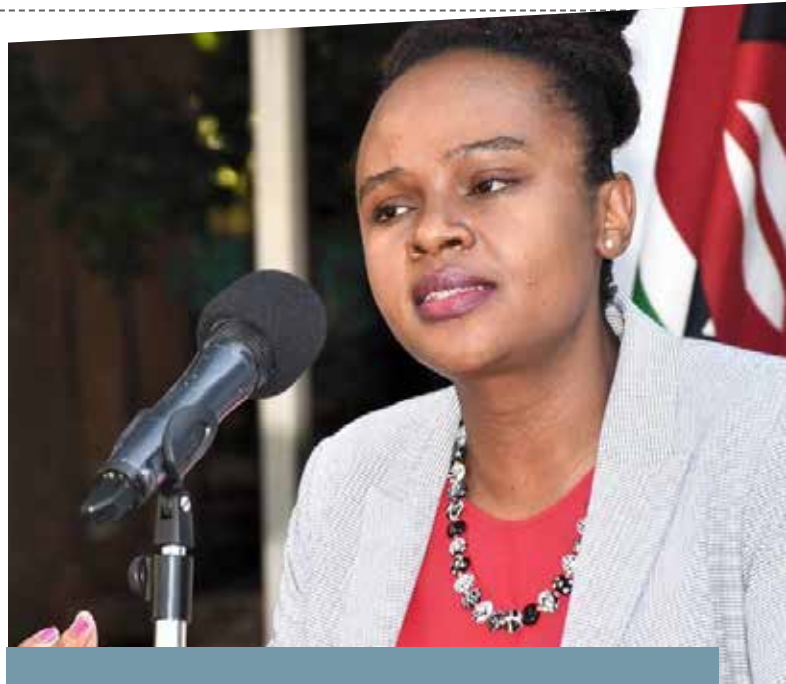
**Assistant Minister of Health,
Ministry of Health, Kenya**

“The NBCC has left a framework that could be used for other social good issues.

The day before the first COVID-19 case was confirmed, we had been discussing the role of the private sector in our efforts. In Kenya, the private sector has always played a key role in helping the government move initiatives along.

As government, we were looking for support to help communities understand the role of soap and water in prevention, and we needed commodities, on a massive scale.

The NBCC became the perfect magic spell. They helped to deliver a large-scale public-facing communications campaign and established a flexi-fund to help cover costs we didn't even know were going to arise. A lot of credence must go to the founding members of NBCC, and they did well to engage the government early on.



Because of the involvement of the UN and other key industry players, we trusted the coalition and held the team accountable, and they delivered.

There was a very good advocacy push by the initial cohort, and for the first time ever, competitors (who would usually compete for business and market access) were all at the same table.

Because of the involvement of the UN and other key industry players, we trusted the coalition and held the team accountable, and they delivered. There was a timely mechanism for reporting back to us – we always knew what was going on, and that was critical to our efforts.



PHEODOR MUNDIA

Chairman at The Marketing Society of Kenya and Marketing Manager, Unilever

“We built our credibility by being fast and agile.

We knew it was a matter of “when” and not “if” for COVID-19 to have an impact in Kenya, and we were already considering how we could best support the government’s efforts to combat COVID-19.

When the first case was announced on the 13 March 2020, we realised we needed to accelerate our efforts. We knew it would take a major communications campaign to drive the right behavior and the role of The Marketing Society would be crucial. We had a crisis coming and we didn’t have all the answers, but we knew we had the right people. We leveraged our personal relationships and networks and we cast a wide net to reach out to different stakeholders for the kick-off meeting.

Within a month we launched our adverts – TV, Radio, digital, billboards and print – across Kenya. Companies and organisations donated their own ad spots to run our campaign, everything was created pro bono.

What stands out for me about the NBCC is that we were all humans being human. I believe what we did saved lives.



We partnered with the Advertising Practitioners Association to design the National Emergency Response Committee logo which would be the distinctive identifier for all COVID-19 Official Government communication. We worked with the Ministry of Health and the Public Health promotions team to craft a unified communication strategy. There was no time for brand recognition, you had marketing directors approving creative with none of their logos on it.

What stands out for me about the NBCC is that we were all humans being human. I believe what we did saved lives.



MYRIAM SIDIBE

***Founder, Brands on a Mission and
Professor of The Practice at London School
of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine***



When we started, we didn't know where our funding would come from, just that we had to do something.

How much can be done if we are not competing.

When COVID-19 struck, there was a strong desire to help. Everyone felt compelled to do something. What we needed to do was establish a model that would harness that energy into a vision that brought it all together.

There were already good connections between the key players who came on board: Unilever, the Marketing Society of Kenya, the UN, the Government of Kenya, and everyone was an expert in their own right.

Many of us had existing relationships, I knew all the soap manufacturers and players in the hygiene sector, and the trust had already been built. There were no egos or silos; here was COVID-19, bigger than all of us.

When we started, we didn't know where our funding would come from, just that we had to do something. We built a light structure with very little bureaucracy, our quick and unique delivery model drove the structure rather than the other way around. The social impact space is littered with bureaucratic structures.

THE FUTURE

RAPID COLLABORATION: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE?

The more agile approaches to partnering that have emerged over the past year in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic could hold the potential to change the way that organisations work together, most notably where there is a rapid onset emergency.

It is clear from everyone involved, as well as the reach of its efforts and impacts, that the NBCC had a significant and effective role to play in the fight against COVID-19 in Kenya. The question moving forward is whether its model can be replicated for other contexts. Many of those who were involved and interviewed for this report believe so. Can the agility and speed of the NBCC, and other coalitions like it, be harnessed for other threats - such as the climate emergency - or does the model need to evolve in order to respond to longer-term systemic issues?

Many of those that we interviewed emphasised that having a clear and relatively narrow strategic focus was one of the key elements of NBCC's success. As we move from crisis response to recovery, more holistic responses will be needed to protect lives, support livelihoods and ensure access to learning in the wake of COVID-19. It may be that we see established business leadership coalitions spearhead these more more holistic responses.

Where initiatives like the NBCC could make a difference, is in times of urgency. Without an agenda, these rapid models could help to bridge the gap between potentially competing organisations and companies and unite actors with a common purpose for a time-limited period.

Overall, there is no doubt that the NBCC helped to fill a gap while other, larger organisations took the time to work out their responses to the COVID-19 threat, and that there are key learnings to be harnessed to enhance all models of collaboration.



RESOURCES

ACTION TOOLKIT:

[Rapid Innovation through Partnerships](#)

ACTION TOOLKIT:

[Handwashing and other Preventative Measures](#)

ACTION TOOLKIT:

[How to Build and Mobilise a Local Coalition](#)

BUSINESS FIGHTS POVERTY ARTICLE:

[COVID-19 in Africa: the spread and response](#)

BUSINESS FIGHTS POVERTY ARTICLE:

[The Role of Businesses in Preventing Further Spread of COVID-19](#)

FIVE INSIGHTS:

[National Collaboration Platforms for Rebuilding Better: The Case of Action against COVID-19 in East Africa](#)

FORBES AFRICA OP-ED:

[How Multilateralism Through Public-Private Partnerships Is Key To Flatten The Curve](#)

ONLINE DISCUSSION:

[How Can Business Help in the Building of National Coalitions to Fight COVID-19](#)

VIDEO:

[Paul Polman: Call to Action on Business and COVID-19](#)

WEBINAR:

[Interview with Alan Jope, Unilever and Myriam Sidibe, Brands on a Mission](#)

WEBINAR:

[Business Fights Poverty Briefing with the National Business Compact on Coronavirus, Kenya.](#)

WEBSITE:

[National Business Compact on Coronavirus - Kenya](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was authored by Amy Fairbairn, Business Fights Poverty with support from Myriam Sidibe of Brands on a Mission and Maggie Rarieya from NBCC. With thanks to all interviewees featured and to Jane Nelson from the Harvard Kennedy School for her Foreword and inputs.



