



EDITORIAL

Reopening schools a tricky balancing act

ONE WOULD not want to be in Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga's shoes at this time.

She is indeed caught between a rock and a hard place – between the desire to salvage the school year, and the need to preserve life in doing so.

Motshekga's proposal for matrics and Grade 7s to return to class next week will, in equal parts, be welcomed and shunned.

Many parents are keen for their children to return to class, not wanting them to repeat the year, while others are adamant that no school should reopen until the safety of pupils and teachers is guaranteed. The latter requires the country to achieve a zero infection rate, which could take months and effectively destroy any hope of resuming the academic year.

And it appears it will be extremely difficult to achieve a happy medium.

Motshekga's plan requires shortened June and September holidays and a longer fourth term to make up for the days already lost, a proposal which will go down like a lead balloon among unions, which are already leery of returning to class in compromised circumstances.

It will also place added responsibility on teachers to ensure the physical distancing rules are followed. They may also be called on to conduct temperature checks and to ensure that pupils keep masks on and maintain high standards of hygiene.

Reopening schools will also place a huge burden on the Transport Department, police and other law enforcement authorities – to ensure that the regulations for scholar transport are strictly adhered to. Can the already struggling taxi industry be trusted to carry a maximum of seven pupils per load? Who will ensure that pupils sanitise before getting into the taxis?

The plan also requires the delivery of hygiene packs, including masks for pupils and temperature scanners, to the country's thousands of schools before May 6, and ensuring provision of water – without which it is difficult to ensure personal hygiene is undertaken – to those schools without in the few days left before they are due to reopen.

Opening a school should be contingent on delivery of all these items, and the staggered introduction of other grades should depend on how schools deal with just matrics and Grade 7s.

Health and safety must come before the also important need to salvage the school year.

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opinion

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COMMENT



NONSIKELELO NCUBE

GBV IN LIGHT OF COVID-19: CAN WE RID SA OF BOTH?

ONE CONFIRMED case of Covid-19 is one too many; one confirmed case of gender-based violence is one too many. Can we simultaneously rid the country of both pandemics?

President Cyril Ramaphosa has dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic laudably, showing decisive action and leadership. Now he needs to show the same leadership in dealing with GBV.

The extended lockdown has left many breadwinners faced with the grim reality of possible job losses and pay cuts. Many attach their sense of self-worth to their economic status and there are negative emotional and psychological consequences when this is threatened.

Men are most likely stressed and anxious because of economic uncertainty and women find themselves at the receiving end of these heightened emotions and violence.

A research study on GBV conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in 2017 revealed that "the social backlash faced by some men with competing notions of masculinity pushes them to assert an assumed lost power through committing violence against women".

Women are vulnerable and highly susceptible to abuse – now more than ever. They are locked down in the same places as their perpetrators. This has presented challenges, as seen by the high incidents of GBV cases recorded by the SAPS during lockdown, with over 2 230 cases in the first week.

GBV has continually emerged as a recurring theme and key area of concern during this period and women are now literally at the mercy of their abusers as they are economically dependent on them.

The president needs to show the same leadership with GBV

The norm is that women who are abused are moved to shelters of safety. I can only imagine how traumatic it must be for a woman to be abused by an intimate partner, yet be expected to leave the place she calls home in order to evade the person who abused her. This practice is biased towards the interests of the perpetrators of GBV and is not a victim-centred approach.

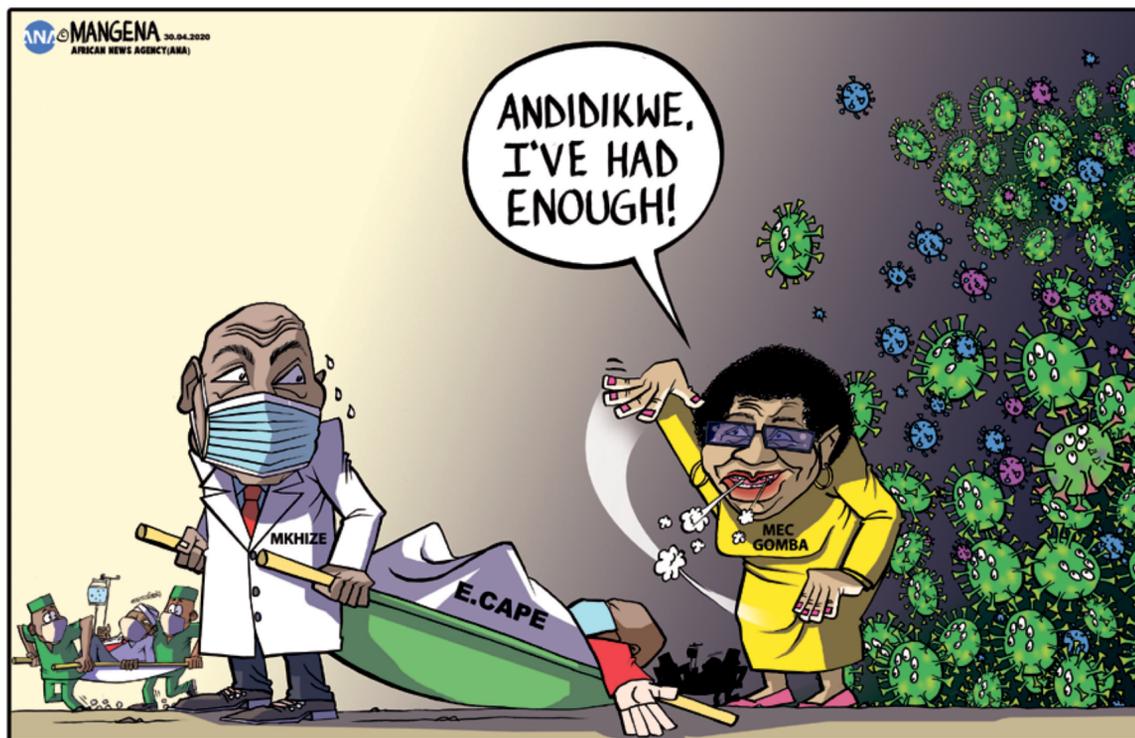
It's high time that the powers that be challenge this status quo and set a precedent by removing the perpetrators from these shared spaces – not their victims. The authorities have demonstrated during lockdown that they have the capacity to deal decisively with any and all forms of breaking the law. This stern stance must be extended to perpetrators of GBV.

One would argue that removing an abusive man (who is most likely the breadwinner) from his home would leave his family without anyone to provide for them. But I would counter-argue that such action would force the perpetrator to reflect on his actions and their consequences. This would also deter would-be perpetrators.

The government should also set aside a fund for families who would find themselves in this position and use a multisectoral approach to support the remaining family members. Civil society organisations are already at the forefront of assisting the marginalised in communities and an intervention by government will go a long way in consolidating their efforts.

The government has set up a GBV Command Centre hotline, 0800 428 428, but this is not enough.

Ncube is an executive assistant at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation



A humble revolutionary

A tribute to former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda on his 96th birthday

COMMENT



GODRICH GARDEE

EACH year on April 28, Africa and the world mark the birthday of an African patriotic giant, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, former president of the Republic of Zambia and founding father of the Zambian nation.

On Tuesday he turned 96. Very few among us shall be blessed to reach that age. We join the rest of Africa and the world in celebrating his day of birth.

Popularly known as "KK", Dr Kaunda is a recipient of our country's order of honour, The Order of the Companions of OR Tambo in Gold bestowed on him in 2002 for his exceptional contribution to the Struggle against apartheid and for justice in the southern African region. The North West province named a district municipality after him in 2008.

The contribution to the Struggle for justice by ex-president Kaunda was never confined to the southern African region. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation of Palestine, Polisario Front of Western Sahara and Sudan People's Liberation Army had representative offices in Lusaka.

His government and the people of Zambia never relented in their belief that the freedom of Zambia and Africa would be incomplete until the rest of Africa was free from colonialism.

At the expense of lives and the economy of his country, he never bowed to pressure from Western countries to disassociate his government from the military struggles of the people of the world. Numerous military cross-border raids by the evil forces

of Ian Smith and PW Botha never discouraged him, but strengthened his resolve to increase assistance to the liberation movements.

He was a caring leader who provided a guest house at his official residence for then ANC President Oliver Tambo for his safety and security. His white handkerchief would be a magic wand as he was at the centre of resolving intra-party disputes among liberation movements.

He was a modest, humble leader who fought the demon of tribalism fiercely. Cognisant of the more than 72 ethnic groups in Zambia, he coined and proclaimed the slogan "One Zambia is One People" as the basic principle of nation-building.

Dr Kaunda would, from time to time when concluding his public address, add another slogan to the national chant: "One Zambia, One Nation – One Africa, One Revolution".

An accomplished songwriter, guitarist and golfer, he used his singing skills to forge unity amongst the peo-

ple of Zambia and also to rally support for the liberation of southern Africa.

His signature song *Tiyende Pamodzi* means "We go together", and has achieved a status similar to the national anthem among Zambia's people.

Kaunda correctly understood that at the centre of the liberation struggle stands the land question. He remained among the few who refused to demonise President Mugabe over the land repossession programme by the people of Zimbabwe from the white settler generation.

He continues to work at his advanced age through the Kenneth Kaunda Peace Foundation, dedicated to the establishment of peace and conflict resolution on the continent and ending the Aids epidemic and poverty in Africa.

Kaunda is a true statesman who has never shied away from the responsibilities of his post-presidency, as evidenced by his intervention in the Zimbabwe military coup that unseated the late president Robert Mugabe.

An avowed Christian, when asked about the meaning of his white handkerchief, he said it symbolised love and peace.

A lone voice in the Frontline States that met three white leaders, John Vorster, Ian Smith and PW Botha, notwithstanding the backlash that followed, he never minced his words and told them up front what needed to be done or to face the consequences.

Zambia is amongst the few countries in Africa that never suffered a

civil war, thanks to his teachings as he preached oneness among the people. It is a country of peace, tranquillity and unity.

Kaunda was never apologetic to foreign multinationals. During his presidency, the Zambian government acquired 51% equity holdings in a number of key foreign-owned corporations, and established parastatals to manage the government's shares.

Western countries withheld investments in retaliation for the nationalisation policy. It was when he left office that successive new governments and their foreign investor partners scrambled for the state assets and reclaimed them from the ownership of the Zambian people, a strategy that proved fatal.

He remains the epitome of a true revolutionary, retired with an unblemished record of leadership. There is no record of killing dissidents in his tenure as president, nor corruption by him – often the case with most long-serving presidents in Africa. He is one of the few former leaders who retired in poverty as he never stole a penny from his people.

He will always remain an inspiration to many generations for his steadfastness in the fight for justice for all, and his honesty and refusal to be tempted while in public office.

Happy birthday, Dr Kaunda! *Tiyende Pamodzi!*

Gardee is *Commissar for International Affairs of the Economic Freedom Fighters*

Why a flu jab is a good idea before winter

MARIETJIE VENTER

AS THE southern hemisphere moves closer to winter, virologists are concerned about the upcoming influenza season.

This may result in more people needing medical care for flu – including hospitalisation – while the health system is still battling coronavirus.

This may swing the pendulum in favour of SARS-CoV-2 by making it harder to control the pandemic, especially in Africa, which has recorded the lowest number of cases thus far.

Most people who get influenza only have a mild illness: a fever, cough (usually dry), headache, muscle and joint pain, severe malaise (feeling unwell), sore throat and a runny nose. But influenza can also cause more severe illness. This includes lower respiratory tract diseases that cause difficulty breathing, such as bronchitis

or pneumonia. These conditions may require hospitalisation or even be fatal.

These signs are very similar to those caused by Covid-19. It may create additional anxiety for patients and stress on the healthcare system this year. This is why it's advisable that everybody get the influenza vaccine.

It will not protect people from Covid-19, but it will reduce influenza-related illness and in effect ease stress on health services during this pandemic.

People older than 65 are most at risk and could die of either flu or Covid-19. Influenza also causes severe disease in young children. This is different to Covid-19, which has so far caused very few fatalities in children under 9.

Pregnant women and people with HIV or other immune-suppressive conditions are at high risk for severe disease and even death due to influ-

enza. People with underlying health conditions may also experience Covid-19 more severely.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends annual vaccination for high-risk population groups. These include pregnant women, children aged between 6 months and 5 years, people older than 65 years, those with chronic medical conditions such as HIV, heart or lung problems, and healthcare workers.

Every year the WHO's global network of National Influenza Centres collaborate to identify the most common strains that are circulating in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Can the influenza vaccine make you sick? No, the influenza vaccine only contains dead flu virus so it cannot give you flu.

Is it true that there is mercury in the vaccine that could be toxic? In the past, a preservative called Thimer-

osal was used in vaccines that contained trace amounts of ethyl-mercury. Ethyl-mercury is not the same as methyl-mercury, which is found in certain fish and can be toxic if consumed at high levels. Nevertheless, due to public concerns Thimerosal was removed from all vaccines in 1999.

Other viruses such as rhinovirus or respiratory syncytial virus circulating at the same time as flu can also cause an infection with the same symptoms.

The vaccine is about 50%-70% effective in preventing the flu. But by being protected from influenza, people could avoid unnecessary doctors' visits and protect vulnerable groups from potentially more severe disease.

Dr Venter is head of the Zoonotic, Arbo and Respiratory Virus Programme as well as a professor in the Department of Medical Virology at the University of Pretoria