The COVID-19 outbreak which was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 plunged the global economy into recession as countries around the world instituted containment measures. These measures including movement restrictions including curfews, local and international travel bans, and closure of offices, businesses and schools persisted through the second quarter of 2020. While restrictions were eased gradually during the third and fourth quarters as transmission rates dropped, the remaining measures including social distancing continued to limit the return to normalcy for businesses and the economy.

Closure of economic activities resulted in reduction in demand for goods and services with a chain reaction of production slowdown, employment and working hours reduction and ultimately earnings decline. COVID-19, a new social distancing index produced by CEDEFOP[1] identifies accommodation (food services), wholesale and retail trade, sales, shop work, social and personal services to be sectors with very high risk of job disruption and exposure to the COVID-19 risks. Globally, the hardest hit sectors are hospitality and leisure, manufacturing, food and drink, energy and retail, while healthcare, ecommerce, online education and pharmaceuticals were least affected[2].

Jobs that emerged from the pandemic include contact tracers, temperature takers, health monitors and workplace redesigners which are now booming[3]. In addition, specific set of roles are distinctively emerging within specific industries. These includes materials engineers in the automotive sector, renewable energy engineers in the energy sector, fintech engineers in financial services, ecommerce and social media specialists in the consumer sector, biologists and geneticists in health and healthcare as well as remote sensing scientists and technicians in mining and metals. The nature of these roles reflects the trajectory towards innovation. Sectors with most rising job listing include information technology and telecoms; advertising, media and communication; and banking, finance and insurance. There has been increase in demand for

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[1] CEDEFOP. (2020). *Cedefop creates Cov19R social distancing risk index: which EU jobs are more at risk*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/cedefop-creates-cov19r-social-distancing-risk-index-which-eu-jobs-are-more-risk

[2] FutureLearn. (2020). *How has Lockdown changed the job market?* https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/how-has-lockdown-changed-the-job-market

[3] Maurer, R. (2020). *New types of jobs emerge from COVID-19*. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/new-types-jobs-emerge-from-covid-19.aspx

technological skills (which are notably digital skills) as well as access to infrastructure (and connectivity) and services. Many jobs are fully or partially being transformed into digital hubs, rapidly expanding the digital economy.

The immediate adverse impact of COVID-19 was most felt in wholesale and retail trade, agriculture and education sectors. By June 2020, about 60% of all those working in the wholesale and retail trade sector prior to the pandemic had stopped working. The recovery has been different across economic sectors with the service sector almost fully recovered by June, while wholesale and retail trade has had a slower recovery. By August 2020, there was significant recovery in employment especially for those in agriculture, associated primarily with the beginning of the harvesting season[4]. Outside of agriculture, industries that experienced leading decline in employment are real estate; hospitality, wholesale and retail; fashion and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). The impact on education sector includes reduction of international education, disruption of academic calendar, cancellation of local and international conferences, teaching and learning gap, loss of workforce in the educational institutions, and cut in budget of higher education.

The demand for certain skills has radically increased especially among sectors thriving during the pandemic. A combination of hard and soft skills that are in high demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic include digital skills, data analytics, security and governance, emotional intelligence and critical thinking. LinkedIn research finding includes communication, business management, problem solving, data storage technology, technical support, leadership, project management and employee learning & development among skills in high demand[5]. Top skills which employers expect to continue to rise in prominence leading up to 2025 include critical thinking and analysis as well as problem-solving, and skills in self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility. These skills are needed for the jobs of tomorrow, and are in demand across multiple emerging professions. The pandemic has accelerated the trend of online skilling in these areas. Between April and June 2020, Coursera saw a fourfold increase in the numbers of people seeking out opportunities themselves for these and related purposes[6] On average, companies around the globe estimate that around 40% of their workers will require reskilling of

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[4] World Bank Group. (2020b). *COVID-19 Impact Monitoring : Nigeria, Round 4*. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34618?show=full

[5] Josh Bersin. (2019). *LinkedIn 2019 Talent Trends: Soft skills, transparency and Trust*. LinkedIn. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/linkedin-2019-talent-trends-soft-skills-transparency-trust-bersin/

[6] Whiting, K. (2020). *These are the top 10 job skills of tomorrow – and how long it takes to learn them*.

six months or less while 94% of business leaders report that they expect employees to pick new skills on the job[7].

The four (4) leading skills required to fill a job include technical skills, problem-solving, basic IT skills and people management skills . Areas where retraining is required are: digital skills , technical skills, administrative and customer skills, people management skills and skills for green jobs. Important skills required at workplace include: staff ability to manage a wider team , delivering goods and services to customers , skills related to management of ICT platform and ICT skills among the general workforce .

People lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19 in the fourth quarter of 2020, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic, and only a small percentage of those who lost their paid jobs switched to self-employment, with the proportion of self-employed rising from 21% before COVID-19 to 23% at the time of the survey. Because of the virus's dissemination and the kind of containment methods deployed, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unequal impact across nations and over time. Self-employed people work in industries that are twice as likely to be affected by containment measures, resulting in severe losses of income, clients, and network disruptions. Furthermore, within the self-employed population, these effects are likely to be uneven.

There have been particular challenges in assimilating available assistance, making it accessible, and processing claims. Furthermore, it appears that the eligibility criteria have exacerbated inequalities among self-employed people. Take-up rates appear to be lower among groups who may need the most help (e.g. low incomes, part-timers, freelancers). Some self-employed people have been overcompensated as a result of the quick implementation of the measures, while others have been undercompensated. The rapid rollout, according to estimates, has resulted in a high proportion of false claims (about 9 percent of employees claiming income support have been ineligible). Moving forward, policymakers must devise a strategy for transitioning self-employed people away from income support and toward simulating business development, innovation, and digitalization. These new measures must address the "divides" in self-employment as well as the heterogeneity of the self-employed.

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[7] World Bank Group. (2020a). Africa’s Pulse, No. 21, Spring 2020 : An Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa’s Economic Future. *World Bank, Washington, DC*. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/799911586462355556/An-Analysis-of-Issues-Shaping-Africas-Economic-Future