

Letter from the editor

On 16 March 2020, my first lecture of the day at Stellenbosch University was cancelled. At the time, I was a third year BA language and culture student.

Shortly thereafter, I received an email announcing the indefinite closure of the university because of the looming threat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A year later, I struggle to recall the days, weeks and months that followed. What I do remember is the flood of Covid-19 related news and statistics, rules and regulations.

The world was plagued not only

by this virus, but also by information on it.

Initially, it was, of course, important to stay informed because we knew almost nothing about Covid-19. It was new and the world felt uncertain, so naturally we focused all of our energy into educating ourselves on this event that would soon dominate our lives.

Now, with pandemic fatigue long having set in, we can recite the symptoms, have masks hanging next to our keys and we may feel as though we are virus experts who are

ready to get back to their normal lives. But that sense of normalcy that we were so familiar with is unlikely to be the same as before the pandemic hit.

For us to attempt to restructure our new normal for the future, it will become increasingly important to remember to take stock of the other stories that have continued to influence our lives.

After all, the things we experience, and how we remember and tell those stories, shape our view of the world we live in. However, it is precisely

these stories that were neglected as focus shifted to pandemic-related information. This is how we arrive at the 2021 edition of *LIP*; to tell the stories that weren't given the spotlight. To remind the reader that, yes, other things happened too.

While we were compiling this edition, it became overwhelmingly clear that the pandemic had (and continues to have) an immeasurable impact on every aspect of our lives. With this year's *LIP* we hope to make a contribution in recovering, at least in part, the stories of people of all

walks of life. These stories reminded us that there were other people that went through the same trials and tribulations as we did, in some way or another.

Each one is important to us because they help us to navigate and define this strange new world.

As we start to recover the stories we lost, hopefully a more complete understanding of our current reality will emerge.

Nicola Spingies,
Editor-in-Chief

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ETV Technical desk, taken in 2016 PHOTO: Maryam Adams

The stories that we missed

Alistair Seymour

Since the first case was announced, on 5 March 2020, Covid-19 dominated news media coverage locally. This was according to Nicki Gules, assistant news editor of *Sunday Times*.

Governmental restrictions and a growing online media landscape meant that there was a range of stories in the year 2020 that were missed, she continued.

"Covid-19 impacted almost all aspects of 2020, to the extent that even stories about other diseases had a Covid-19 angle," stated Marcus Low, editor of *Spotlight*, an online health publication.

The pandemic was the primary focus of the people, government, and the health sector, which meant that news media had access to an abundance of Covid-19-related information, explained Kevin Brandt, EyeWitness News (EWN) reporter.

According to Brandt, an overload of stories and information about Covid-19 was presented to the media. "If a story gets thrown your way, you report on that story," Brandt said, explaining that journalists did not have a choice over what kind of stories they reported on.

"Everything was Covid, Covid, Covid because that is all anyone [was] interested in reading," said Gules. She also expressed concern over missed stories. There were so many stories to tell, she said, but few professional journalists to tell them.

WHAT THE MEDIA MISSED

The media missed, or disproportionately covered, stories dealing with corruption, health, poverty and crime, specifically related to gender-based violence, said Brandt.

With Covid-19 taking the centre stage in the media, the government – who were usually closely monitored by the media for corruption and

“Everything was Covid, Covid, Covid, because that is all anyone [was] interested in reading”

fraud – were largely able to escape criticism, Brandt continued.

"Accountability for [the] government's response to Covid-19 has remained important at all stages of the pandemic," stated Low.

Access to hospitals was highly restricted for journalists during the height of the pandemic, said Gules. This meant that journalists were unable "to see how [the healthcare workers] were dealing with the pandemic", she explained.

"One of the biggest challenges [...] was to faithfully bear witness to the unprecedented events happening in our hospitals and in some of our communities," Low expressed.

Gules acknowledged that, in hindsight, she would have liked to have reported on more stories about poverty and the increasing wealth gap, specifically the difference between people with access to technology compared to those who do not.

'COVID FATIGUE'

Brandt expressed there was a sense of 'Covid fatigue' from readers because it has been the focus of the media for over a year.

However, key stories concerning the pandemic were still popular, he continued.

Stories that the public remain interested in are those concerning 'family meetings', the alcohol ban, and the vaccine rollout, Brandt said. "It's not that people care less, it's just

[that] more is happening [now.] than a couple of months ago."

THE WAY FORWARD

From a health perspective, Low said that it is likely that Covid-19 stories are here to stay for the foreseeable future, as the science in this field is developing quickly. "It has been, and still is, quite easy to find fresh angles for Covid-19 stories," said Low.

"We never run out of angles because there is just so much coming out," said Melanie Rice, eNCA news anchor.

She emphasised that the news is always developing, so there will always be other stories to report on.

For Brandt, being able to access institutions like courts, businesses and other sectors once again, means that journalists now have more opportunities to report on more varied stories. This meant that journalists can now cover other stories that they could not cover during the height of the pandemic.



Photo collection: Marianne Stewart
Photo: LIP team/Supplied

The children 'left behind'

Jana Scheepers

Numerous schools – especially those in townships where access to funding was difficult – feared that some learners had been left behind during the Covid-19 pandemic as schools were unable to adapt to online learning methods.

Schools nationwide closed on 26 March 2020 following the initial Covid-19 lockdown. On 1 June 2020, schools resumed classroom-based teaching for matrics and grade seven learners, while the remaining grades adopted an online learning approach.

This was after an announcement made by minister of basic education Angie Motshekga in May 2020.

Parents and learners experienced uncertainty regarding the adapted education system, according to Happiness Mdoda, the principal of Ikaya Primary School in Kayamandi, Stellenbosch.

"There was a lot of absenteeism, and learners would sometimes miss a whole week of school, because they did not know when it was their turn to come to the rotation classes, although it was communicated to the parents," said Mdoda. Limited resources prevented the adoption of online learning techniques in township schools, which became, and remains, a cause for concern across South Africa, according to Kerry Mauchline, spokesperson of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

"Western Cape township schools have definitely seen increased dropout rates in 2020 [due to the Covid-19 pandemic], in comparison to 2019," said Mauchline. The matric pass rate decreased from 82.3% in 2019 to 79.2% in 2020. This was directly



Limited resources hindered online learning techniques in township schools, according to Kerry Mauchline, spokesperson of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Photo: Jana Scheepers

attributable to the learning challenges experienced under the 2020 lockdown, Mauchline said.

TOWNSHIP EDUCATION

Successfully adapting the 2020 school syllabus during Covid-19 was especially challenging in the township community, as a new system had to be adopted in a short time frame, said Mdoda.

Ikaya Primary and Kayamandi Secondary School were unable to obtain technological resources, as a result of insufficient funding,

However, stipends from the WCED enabled schools to print work for home-based learners, stated Mdoda and Mathelo Ntshanga, principal of Kayamandi Secondary School.

"Additional communication on homework took place telephonically and via WhatsApp," added Ntshanga.

ILLITERACY WITHIN KAYAMANDI

Townships faced unique challenges throughout Covid-19, said Mdoda. Exacerbated township poverty led to elevated

criminal activity among youth, as there was no education to fall back on, according to Ntshanga.

"If children do not go to school, especially from a young age, they will not have any skills to fall back on, and resort to gangsterism and drugs," Mdoda said. Regular absenteeism was a major concern, according to Mdoda, since it directly affected dropout rates. "The school [Ikaya Primary School] had more than 1 000 learners, with approximately 40 dropout cases in 2020, compared to none in 2019,"

Mdoda explained. "It worsened illiteracy within townships because many learners could not proceed to the next grade," she added.

Kayamandi Secondary School displayed a similar trend.

"We experienced high dropout rates across grades eight, nine and ten. However, many dropouts returned in the new academic year to resume their education," stated Ntshanga.

Power Mgseni, a Kayamandi resident, was concerned about the extra costs incurred from school closure.

"It was difficult to have the kids at home, because we had to spend more money on food, and [on] everyday clothes as school uniforms were no longer worn," Mgseni said. Both he and his wife worked every day, and as a result his children were unsupervised, added Mgseni.

ASSISTING TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

The WCED allocated R71 million in 2021 to fund township schools, which was "an increase from the R50 million received in 2020", according to Mauchline.

"We also covered the cost of safety and cleaning materials, such as masks and disinfectants, that schools needed to reopen safely during 2020 and the start of 2021," Mauchline concluded.

In addition to funding, Ikaya Primary and Kayamandi Secondary School were among the schools that received food parcels from the WCED according to Mdoda and Ntshanga.

The negative effects of the pandemic on township schools remain prevalent, according to both principals. This is especially evident in the decreased matric pass rate of Kayamandi Secondary School, said Ntshanga. However, township schools are better prepared for long-distance learning in 2021, said Mauchline. The WCED has commended the positive start to the 2021 school year, she added.

Ongelykheid seëvier tydens grendelstaat

Inge du Plessis

Die grendelstaat wat sedert Maart verlede jaar in plek is, het volgens kenners bygedra tot die verdere verdieping van ekonomiese ongelykheid tussen Suid-Afrikaners.

"[Die pandemie] het strukturele spanning veroorsaak wat die toeganklikheid tot goedere en dienste wat nodig is vir oorlewing, beïnvloed het," het Professor Lindy Heinecken, hoof van die departement sosiologie en sosiale antropologie aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch, via e-pos gesê.

Suid-Afrika is in 2015 deur die

Wêreldbank se Gini-ïndeks – wat die skaal van gelykheid in 'n land bepaal – as een van die ongelykste lande ter wêreld bestempel.

"Twee uit elke vyf volwassenes het hul hoofbron van inkomste aan die begin van die grendelstaat verloor," het die Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey gestel. Dié verslag is deur akademië uitgevoer om die impak van Covid-19 op Suid-Afrikaners se lewens te bepaal.

Bestaande ongelykheid vir kinders in publieke skole – soos toegang tot internet, rekenaars en selfone – het aanlyn onderrig as 'n opsie vir hierdie leerders uitgeskakel, volgens Hopolang Selebalo, hoof van navorsing by die gemeenskapsgebaseerde

organisasie Equal Education (EE).

'n Tekort aan kos was 'n verdere probleem vir hierdie leerders, nadat die departement van basiese onderwys (DBO) die Nasionale Skoolvoedingsprogram (NSVP) opgeskort het. "EE, tesame met die Equal Education Law Centre en SECTION27, moes die DBO en agt provinsiale onderwysdepartemente hof toe vat in Julie 2020 om die NSVP te hervat," het Selebalo via e-pos aan LIP gesê.

Alhoewel hierdie ongelykheid tydens die grendelstaat duideliker gemaak is, kan die mate waartoe dié ongelykheid foutlyne en samehorigheid in die samelewing beïnvloed, nie bepaal word nie, het Heinecken gesê.



Volgens die Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey, het twee uit elke vyf volwassenes in Suid-Afrika hul hoofbron van inkomste aan die begin van die grendelstaat verloor. Foto: Inge du Plessis



The Stellenbosch train station is on the Northern Line train route that is currently not fully operational. This poses problems for commuters in the Cape Winelands area, according to Zinobulali Mihi, the acting marketing and communication manager of Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa. Photo: Kirsty Bucholz

Covid-19 pandemic derails public transport

Kirsty Bucholz

The prohibition of public transport during hard lockdown, along with the significant down-scaling of human and industrial activities, has intensified existing socio-economic problems for many South Africans, according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). The public transport ban formed part of the initial Covid-19 regulations implemented in March 2020, but has since been revised.

However, the regulations continue to place strain on the public transport industry and those who rely on it to commute to work.

According to an academic article *The Impact of COVID-19 in South Africa*, published in 2020, and authored by Dr Emmanuel Sekyere,

COMMUTING DURING COVID-19 The number of train commuters has also significantly decreased since March 2020, according to Zinobulali Mihi, the acting marketing and communication manager of Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA).

"Significant portions of our electrical infrastructure, tracks and some stations have been either vandalised beyond repair, or completely removed by vandals," said Mihi.

The vandalism occurred mainly during hard lockdown when the trains were not operating, she added.

The Northern Line – that covers the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town and extends to Stellenbosch, Wellington and Strand – is currently limited from Cape Town to Kraaifontein, according to Mihi. This poses

problems to many commuters in the Cape Winelands area, as their nearest station may not be operational, mentioned Mihi.

"In addition to vandalism, illegal electrical connections, disposal of sewage onto tracks by informal settlements along portions of the route, sporadic gang turf wars and frequent service delivery protests make it impossible to restore services without major intervention," said Mihi. "This will take time."

Before March 2020, Gladys Gwe, a domestic worker from Paarl who travels to Stellenbosch for work, used to commute via the Northern Line.

"The train system was good. It was only a problem when people used to steal the cables," said Gwe.

The Wellington route of the Northern Line remains inoperational – and with no indication as to when all lines will be fully operational – Gwe and many other commuters now make use of alternative transportation.

"We're struggling a lot. We now have to use the taxi because it's our only option," said Gwe.

HEALTH REGULATION CONCERNS

Taxis are required to follow strict Covid-19 regulations put in place by the department of transport, but according to Gwe, this is not always the case in practice.

"People stand up or sit on top of each other," claimed Gwe. "If you complain, the drivers tell you to get off the taxi."

Other commuters – like Lenthel Manomano, a cleaner at a Stellenbosch bar who travels via taxi between Kayamandi and Stellenbosch – share similar concerns.

"There is no social distancing being enforced. Some people aren't

wearing masks, no one is checking temperature, and taxis exceed capacity," claimed Manomano. "Law enforcement officers should monitor the service, because no one is following Covid-19 regulations when it comes to public transport," he added.

Travel costs were another issue for commuters. Many lost their jobs because they were unable to afford transport costs, said Gwe.

"We're using more money to pay for taxis than the R250 monthly train pass," said Gwe, who now has to spend R500 a month on transport.

Norman Masoka, a groom at East Hill Stables horseback riding centre near Stellenbosch, explained that taxis used to leave at regular intervals because many people had jobs in the area and would use the same taxi as him.

"But now I see more people lost their jobs due to [Covid-19], which means it takes much longer if I take a taxi to work because the taxi needs to be full to go," added Masoka.

Some managers, like Mareli Grobbelaar of East Hill Stables, found financially viable solutions to their staff's commuting issues.

According to Grobbelaar, public transport in the Winelands area is currently lacking variety.

"The only real option is to travel via taxis, which means that taxis can hike up their prices as they wish. Because the taxi fares are very expensive, I take the grooms to a certain point and they get a taxi home from there," explained Grobbelaar.

** LIP reached out to the South African National Taxi Association (SANTACO) for comment, but received no response at the time of going to print.*

The glass half-empty for wine industry

Lara van Zyl

The financial hit faced by wineries due to alcohol bans implemented in 2020, has been widely reported on. But the wine industry itself was not the only side affected: the hospitality end of the wine world experienced a set-back too.

NON-ALCOHOLIC, PLEASE?

On 28 December 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a return to level three restrictions, which lasted until 1 February 2021. Similar restrictions to that of the extensive alcohol ban during the initial hard lockdown were implemented, including the ban of alcohol sales and the distribution and transportation thereof.

The Franschhoek Wine Tram, which transports visitors from farm to farm for a wine tasting experience, had to completely close down for the duration of the ban.

"We were forced to close down our services in what is known as the busiest week for tourism in South Africa," said Cathrine Lombard, the hospitality manager at Franschhoek Wine Tram. "We were hoping that the increased feet, normally guaranteed during the holidays,

would ease the pressure of a non-existent operation for most of 2020."

Hermanuspietersfontein Wines (HPF) had to close their year-round market in order to comply with the regulations put in place. This was according to Wilhelm Pienaar, CEO and head winemaker at HPF.

"We were greatly affected," said Pienaar. The market, usually held on Saturdays, offered food, wine and family-friendly entertainment, according to the HPF website.

EXPLORE SOME MORE

The Franschhoek Wine Tram started an initiative on Instagram called "Explore Some More" during the December alcohol ban.

"This was to showcase non-tasting activities to inspire the locals to still visit these estates and explore the other offerings available, ensuring that some form of income was still generated from our local market," stated Lombard. Wine estates had to rely on different methods to attract customers during this time. Boschendal, located in Pniel, Western Cape, adapted their activities to remain Covid-friendly while still attracting customers.

"We decided to take this opportunity to offer our guests and visitors a taste of farm-living

through markets," said Anja du Plessis, marketing and brand manager at Boschendal. "We also launched our online shop so people could enjoy the incredible local

produce from Boschendal and surrounds in the comfort of their own home."

As for HPF, "the market remains our biggest drawing card."



Local wine sales have gone down 20% in the last year due to the alcohol bans in 2020 and 2021, according to an industry overview produced by Vinpro and the South African Wine Industry. Photo: Lara van Zyl

EFFECT OF LOCKDOWN

According to statistics shared by Vinpro and South African Wine Industry (SAWIS), the alcohol ban caused an R8 billion loss in direct sales in South Africa and a R3.7 billion loss in wine tourism revenue. The alcohol bans could cause 80 wineries to shut down in the next 18 months and 20 000 people could lose their jobs, according to Vinpro and SAWIS.

Although having a micro coffee roastery on site has given us additional exposure to clients that otherwise would never visit us," said Pienaar.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

"We were constantly preparing for the unexpected," said Pienaar. After the ups-and-downs of last year's ever-changing restrictions, institutions had to learn to prepare for the unexpected. Therefore HPF was not surprised when Ramaphosa reinstated certain restrictions over the December holiday, according to Pienaar.

In his address to the nation on 28 December, Ramaphosa said that the alcohol ban had to be reinstated. This was due to people not acting responsibly when drinking by not wearing masks and the lack of social distancing, he said. "We believe that wine estates and tasting rooms should have been excluded from the ban, as 95% of the clientele enjoy wine responsibly," said Lombard.

"When you remove the emotion from [both] the question and answer, we understand that the alcohol ban is the government's reaction to a situation beyond their control. Do we think it is justifiable? I guess the honest answer would be yes and no," said Pienaar.

Fighting misinformation while journalists lose their jobs

Inge du Plessis

Hundreds of journalists lost their jobs at a time when verified and credible information about Covid-19 figures and government regulations were in high demand. This was according to the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) *Covid-19 Impact on Journalism Report*, published in 2020.

"During the hard lockdown, people were desperate for official information about Covid-19, its statistics, and what the government planned to do," said Reginald Rumney, SANEF researcher.

Online news saw an increase in numbers, while many print publications were unable to print as they were not deemed essential services under level five lockdown regulations. "In March, the news category of sites saw a 44% increase in unique browsers and a 72% increase in page views," stated the SANEF report.

We simply cannot, as a society, afford to lock in quality journalism behind a paywall

Mia Spies, a freelance broadcast journalist, said that she noticed a lot of panic and uncertainty about the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused members of the public to share their personal experience and opinions online. "I decided to start sharing verified information on my public Facebook page to inform my followers and help them to make



Mia Spies, a freelance broadcast journalist, started sharing verified information on her public Facebook page. Her followers on Facebook increased from about 14 000 to 45 000 during lockdown. Photo: Supplied/Mia Spies

informed decisions," said Spies, via email correspondence. Her followers on Facebook increased from about 14 000 to 45 000 during lockdown, she stated. Journalists helped the public to understand findings and information about Covid-19, said Dinesh Balliah, media researcher and lecturer at Wits University.

"We need to understand that only good and strong health and science journalists have been able to clearly express sometimes very complex matters, and others have not been able to do the same," said Balliah, via email

correspondence. "This, for me, is an indication of the value of journalism in general," added Balliah.

OPERATING ONLINE

According to Rumney, the transition from print to digital media caused financial losses for large organisations that lost advertisers in print publications.

The SANEF report found that online advertisers mostly use platforms such as Google and Facebook. "There is no chance that print income can be duplicated online," stated Rumney.

The paywall, or membership model, will be able to sustain a smaller organisation, but not larger ones, according to Balliah.

"I think that there is an urgent need for independently funded journalism, as the business model for online journalism does not bode well for larger institutions," she said.

Some news organisations that are now operating online are asking for subscription fees to access information. This can be disadvantageous to the public, stated Balliah. "We simply cannot,

as a society, afford to lock in quality journalism behind a paywall as misinformation and disinformation freely pollutes our public discourse," said Balliah.

MISINFORMATION

The Global Disinformation Index, published in January 2020 has indicated that 70% of news consumers in South Africa cannot distinguish between verified news and misinformation.

"Although social media platforms helped to spread important news, for example when regulations change, it also resulted in inaccurate information spreading just as quickly. It caused large-scale panic nationwide," said Spies.

At the end of March 2020, under section 11(5) of the regulations published in the *Government Gazette*, under the Disaster Management Act 2002, it became a prosecutable offence to publish a statement through any medium with the intention to deceive about Covid-19. This includes anyone's Covid-19 infection status or government measures to address the pandemic. The penalty was a fine or imprisonment for six months, or both.

"It is easier said than done to prosecute individuals who spread misinformation because the individuals who made the claims are not always easy to find," said Spies. Spies said that she made sure to publish accurate information, from reliable sources.

This was to ensure that there was no need for the public to rely on WhatsApp messages or "voice notes" to stay updated – only to then be misled by misinformation.

"Freely available quality journalism is the only vaccine against the scourge of misinformation," stated Balliah.

According to Balliah, journalists can combat misinformation if smaller newsrooms with enough resources at hand are able to contribute free and quality journalism to communities who are unable or unwilling to pay for it.

Exploring social media as an alternative mode of education

Tina Ddamulira

When South Africa went into hard lockdown in March 2020, educational institutions had to find ways to continue to educate students. For many schools, the answer was a move to online classes. But this was not possible for everyone. LIP spoke to various educators to find out how they navigated alternative education platforms.

Social media platforms became the answer to better communication with learners, said Kerry Mauchline, Western Cape Education Department (WCED) spokesperson. Many schools across the country relied on WhatsApp and Facebook to

support at-home learning during lockdown, she added.

"[WhatsApp] is widely used and can use less data than other online streaming platforms, depending on the file sizes sent," said Mauchline.

Facebook was also used, as most mobile network operators provide access to Facebook bundles, according to Ashric Don, a teacher at Klappmuts Primary School.

LEARNING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Don made use of Facebook's "Social Learning" feature, which enables one to divide and organise all the grades and activities into different units.

In order to keep the students engaged, Facebook features such as polls, short videos and photos were used, according to a media release

from Apex High School on 19 August 2020.

Teachers who used WhatsApp groups made use of voice notes to explain content and distribute activities for the learners to complete, stated Evan Papier, Groendal Secondary School teacher, in a WCED media release from 9 April 2020.

"[The students] can send their answers back in the group, either via voice notes, photo, video, or just typing it out," said Papier.

Teachers also created videos that they would send via WhatsApp, said Marzanne van der Walt, an Afrikaans teacher at Claremont High School. "We had to record two hour-long lessons per grade and subject per week. [On Mondays] the videos and activities were shared on these groups

and learners had to respond with a thumbs up to confirm they received the work," said Van der Walt.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

WhatsApp is widely used, making it the most accessible option for students. This was according to Mafungwashe Msileni, an agricultural sciences teacher from Kayamandi Secondary School. However, issues arose when it came to student engagement, she added.

Academically stronger students would participate in discussions on the WhatsApp group and send through their answers, whereas "the academically weaker students would not participate in the group discussions", said Moses Mlombo, principal of Mandlesive High School.

The lack of student engagement was also a result of students not always

having access to phones, according to Msileni.

"There were students who had to share a phone with their relatives and at times didn't have access to that phone during class time," said Mlombo.

Using WhatsApp made it difficult for teachers to understand why students were struggling with certain sections of the work, according to Van der Walt. When students returned to school for face-to-face classes, teachers had to repeat the content that was taught online.

"Unfortunately we had to reteach important language concepts," she said. "We had to go over it again, so I could give them activities and physically see how they tackled the [content]."

Pandemic pollution worsens South Africa's plastic problem

Tamsin Metelerkamp

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a significant rise in the use of disposable personal protective equipment (PPE) and single-use plastic products in South Africa.

This was according to a World Wildlife Fund South Africa (WWF SA) report from 2021 on waste management under lockdown. The rise, coupled with temporary closures of many community recycling centres during lockdown, has led to an increase in the mixing of general household waste with plastics and Covid-19-related waste, according to the report.

"You often see these items – masks, gloves – being discarded," said Amarein Fourie, microplastics research leader at the Sustainable Seas Trust. "Unfortunately, we see these types of things a lot more commonly in the environment these days."

The latest data shows that plastic consumption in South Africa increased by 24% – from 1.5 million tonnes to 1.9 million tonnes – between 2010 and 2018. This was according to a WWF SA plastics report, *Plastics: Facts and Futures*, from 2020.

"The interesting part about waste is that it will impact the environment the same way that we have been seeing before," said Nhlanhla Sibisi, climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace SA. "It's the same thing with PPE, especially with the single-use masks. The manner in which [people] discard them has a multiplier effect."

Plastic pollution causes fatalities among marine, freshwater and land animals through ingestion and suffocation. There have been cases

in which animals became tangled in mask strings, according to Fourie. Single-use PPE and plastic products that enter the environment, degrade due to exposure to UV light and natural elements. This results in small synthetic fibres and microplastics that are consumed by animals and humans, said Fourie.

Fourie stated that while the impact of microplastics on human health is still under study, "there may be a potential risk to those people consuming them".

While single-use PPE has a vital purpose within the healthcare industry, it is not a necessary measure for members of the general public, according to Ayanda Sibisi, chief environmental health practitioner at Sebokeng Hospital in Gauteng.

"If you are not in a hospital environment, I don't think it's necessary for you to be using [...] disposable PPE, because [...] that PPE ends up in the general waste stream," said Sibisi.

Reusable PPE products are effective as long as people employ proper standards of hygiene. Sibisi recommended that the general public use reusable items, such as washable cloth masks, as much as possible.

South Africans can further reduce plastic pollution by avoiding single-use plastic packaging.

"The rise in single-use plastic products to maintain hygiene in the food sector [...] has not been based on scientific evidence, rather a false narrative which has spread fear and overconsumption," stated Lorren de Kock, project manager of circular plastics economy at WWF SA, on the rise in single-use plastics during the pandemic.

According to Greenpeace's Nhlanhla Sibisi, part of the problem around plastic pollution in South Africa is that the country lacks a culture of good waste management.

"We're one of those countries that are actually fortunate in having very good legislation around waste management," said Sibisi. "But as we would know, the problem is always around enforcement of that legislation."

In the case of single-use PPE and plastic waste, Sibisi suggested that there has been a systematic failure on the part of government to create

awareness around responsible waste disposal strategies, and to enforce those strategies effectively.

"There are people that don't know about waste management," said Sibisi. "So, we need to continue [...] to a point that [...] it becomes their second nature to make sure that they keep their environment clean."

The LIP team reached out to the department of fishery, forestry and the environment, but they had not responded at the time of going to print.



Members of the City of Cape Town solid waste management services clear debris from Brokenbath beach in Seapoint in April. Photo: Tamsin Metelerkamp



Litter lies scattered throughout the mounds of water weed dredged from the Liesbeek River in Cape Town in April. Photo: Tamsin Metelerkamp

Medical waste disposal during Covid-19

Covid-19 has increased the amount of waste generated by hospitals, as many departments that did not use personal protective equipment (PPE) prior to the pandemic, now use it as a standard precautionary measure, according to Ayanda Sibisi, chief environmental health practitioner at Sebokeng Hospital in Gauteng.

All medical waste, including Covid-related PPE, is required by law to be incinerated or sterilised, rather than

transported to a general landfill site, according to Avinash Ramsaywok, national process operations manager at EnviroServ Waste Management.

"The waste gets incinerated at very high temperatures, and the product or the waste that comes out of that is an ash," said Ramsaywok. "That gets taken to a hazardous landfill site."

PPE waste that ends up in general landfills poses a

contamination risk to humans and the environment, according to Averda Waste Management.

While there are direct policies that guide the disposal of PPE in hospitals, enforcement of these policies is challenging according to Sibisi.

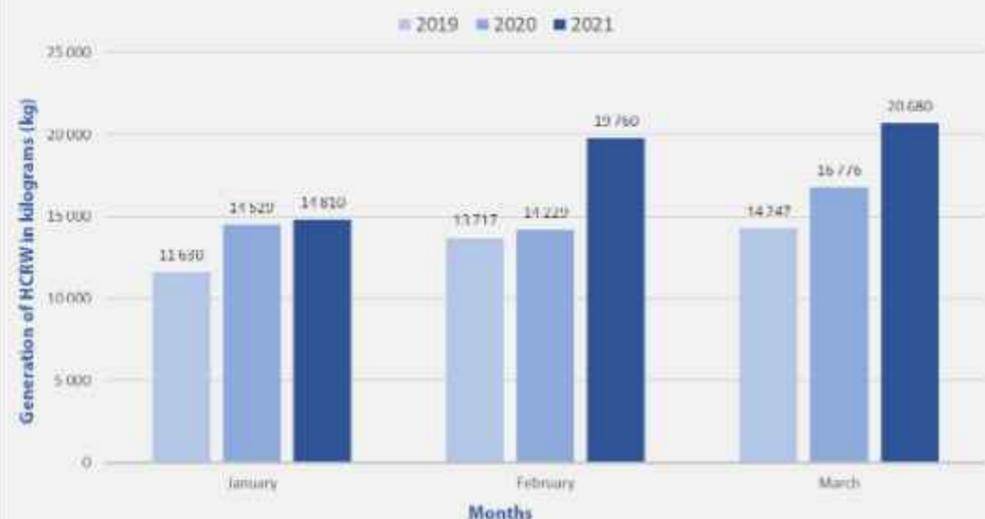
"I think the biggest challenge with the legislation or the application of the legislation, is human behaviour," said Sibisi.

“If you are not in a hospital environment, I don't think it's necessary for you to be using disposable PPE”



During the second wave of Covid-19 in January 2021, Averda Waste Management treated over 600 000 kg of Covid-19-related waste. This was a significant increase from previous months, according to Gerhard van der Merwe, operations manager in healthcare at Averda South Africa. Photo: Supplied/Averda

GENERATION OF HEALTH CARE RISK WASTE (HCRW) BY SEBOKENG HOSPITAL IN KILOGRAMS, 2019-2021



*Figures rounded off to the nearest unit

There has been a rise in the generation of health care risk waste (HCRW) in hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in part due to an increase in the use of Covid-related personal protective equipment (PPE) by medical staff, according to Ayanda Sibisi, chief environmental health practitioner at Sebokeng Hospital in Gauteng. Graphic: Tamsin Metelerkamp

Escaping 2020... with art

Kimberley Schoeman

The hard lockdown imposed on all South Africans on 26 March 2020, following the first confirmed local Covid-19 cases, forced the nation to move inside their homes and towards the inner spaces of their thoughts and imaginations.

This was according to Emily Roniger, founder of 5 O' Clock, a Cape Town-based embroidery brand.

Moments of joy from films, books, craft, and art, created the opportunity for escapism, expression and activism to anyone and everyone during lockdown, added Roniger.

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Sachin Somers, a Cape Town-based business analyst, pursued his own creative challenge during lockdown via his Instagram account. He did this with a daily photograph series titled "#ThunderBuddies", a reference to the 2012 film *TED*.

Somers used a teddy bear to recreate the friendship between *TED*'s main character and his best friend, a personified teddy bear. This allowed him to document his daily life during the first three weeks of lockdown in March 2020.

Zeitz MOCAA (Museum of Contemporary African Art), published an open-call via their Instagram, on 1 September 2020, to participate in a "democratic celebration of art belonging to, and made by the people of Cape Town," according to the museum's Instagram post. This was kick-started in response to the growing number of creative works shared online. Somers' project made the cut.

"Having photos of me with my teddy bear on the wall in Zeitz MOCAA is a slap in the face to modern art, because it is important for someone to see my photos as something you can relate to and have a good chuckle at," said Somers.

Works submitted by artists, crafters, children and casual hobbyists were all exhibited in the "Home is Where the Art is: Art is Where the Home is" exhibition from 22 October 2020 to 26 April 2021.

"I am not much of a creative, but I am a bit of a geek and sociable person, with an interest in pop culture. In some way I was subconsciously inspired by movies or comic books, which you can see in the photos," said Somers.

Somers was in pursuit of human connection during a time when his mental health was suffering. His Instagram stories were a reflection of his own experiences, explained Somers.

The community felt mobilised and passionate, which is the crux of the museum, and the reach that art has



A small selection out of the 2 000 exhibited pieces of art in the "Home is Where the Art is: Art is Where the Home is" exhibition at Zeitz MOCAA. Photo: Kimberley Schoeman



Works submitted by artists, crafters, children and casual hobbyists were all exhibited in the "Home is Where the Art is: Art is Where the Home is" exhibition from 22 October 2020 to 26 April 2021. Photo: Kimberley Schoeman

SAVE THE SIX

The District Six Museum in Cape Town struggled to raise money during lockdown, prompting the community to pool its resources in an effort to save the museum – through crowd-sourced art, photography, and sculptures.

This was according to Shannon van Wyk, project manager of the "Save the Six" initiative.

Van Wyk's family members were forcibly removed from District Six during apartheid.

"Save the Six leaned on art as a platform to raise funds for the museum via an Instagram auction of donated artworks from people with connections to the community," stated Van Wyk.

Art is a reaction to culture, and the initiative was a reaction to the pandemic, as a way of retelling stories, said Van Wyk. "That is why we used Instagram," Van Wyk explained.

"We did not spend any money on the campaign. We reached out to the

community, raising over R100 000. The community felt mobilised and passionate, which is the crux of the museum, and the reach that art has," said Van Wyk.

5 O' CLOCK

Roniger's brand, 5 O' Clock, is a slow-fashion brand focusing on contemporary embroidery.

Roniger explained that during lockdown, already having a routine centered on a few commissions, kept her sane. "I spent the first weeks on commissions, which I ended up ignoring because I leaned on my creativity more as a distraction than for work. I worked on passion projects, like an embroidered piece the size of a door frame, more than commissions," Roniger explained.

"Lockdown played a role in my creativity, but my creativity also played a role in my lockdown. I allowed myself to dream a little bigger outside of my work to be peripherally creative," said Roniger.



Artisans from Me&B were sent home during lockdown level five to sew at home. Photo: Unsplash/Marilia Castelli

The fashion industry: comfier attire, tighter belts

Marianne Stewart

The fashion industry was one of many industries that drastically changed because of Covid-19. The lockdown regulations brought with it a massive decline in economic activity, restrictions on fabric imports, and halted production processes.

This was according to the South Africa Textile Market Report of 2020.

Many retail platforms and outlets struggled a lot, and as a result, had to close for a period of time. This left Sama Sama Cpt, a Cape Town-based fashion brand, with less avenues of income than before Covid-19, according to Kimberly Lardner-Burke, owner of Sama Sama.

"We really started to place a lot more attention towards social media and our website. Paid advertising, discounts, and posts helped a great deal to keep things going last year," said Lardner-Burke.

"The shipments of [fabric] into South Africa were greatly delayed, so local designers were forced to look at stocks and things available to make sure [that they] had stock," said

Kelly-Grace Swart, designer at Me&B, a Cape Town-based clothing brand.

The artisans at Me&B "went into a cutting frenzy" to cut fabric into patterns, when they caught wind of the initial lockdown. The artisans were then sent home to sew the clothing. This guaranteed them an income as orders could still be delivered to customers, according to Swart.

"The promotion of my collections had to be done a bit differently. I had to shoot the collection at home, with my flatmate as my model," said Stellenbosch-based designer, Ruan Goosen.

The financial instability of the South African fashion industry forced some designers to make the shift to loungewear.

"We are now doing comfier clothes, with no sparkle," said Marian Park-Ross, owner of Mungo & Jemima, a clothing shop in Cape Town.

This shift to loungewear was largely due to the fact that people had to stay home. "Of course a larger shift was made more towards wearing practical, durable, comfortable clothing that showed long lasting sustainability," Lardner-Burke said.



A decline in clothing sales ensued nationwide as people did not shop as frequently as they did before Covid-19. Photo: Sibulela Bolarinwa

Grendelstaat trek gordel nóg stywer vir Afrikaanse fliekvervaardigers

Anri Matthee

Afrikaanse fliekvervaardigers sukkel nou meer as ooit tevore om befondsing vir nuwe projekte te verkry. Dit is volgens vervaardigers wat meen dat verlede jaar se Covid-19-erwante uitdagings nog vir lank 'n impak op dié flieklandskap sal hê.

"Ek maak nou al vir 15 jaar lank flieks, so dis vir my regtig 'n passie en 'n liefde," het Danie Bester, vervaardiger by The Film Factory South Africa, gesê. "Maar die begrotings wat ons [voor die pandemie] gehad het, gaan net nie meer beskikbaar wees nie."

Fliexspanne moes sedertdien, volgens Bester, noodgedwonge geld spaar deur minder akteurs te gebruik, en op minder plekke te skiet.

"Dit beteken nie dat daar minder waarde in só 'n rolprent is nie. Dit is maar net 'n ander tipe rolprent," het hy gesê. "Daar gaan weer groter goed kom, maar ek dink dit gaan baie minder wees en dit gaan 'n tydjie wat om te herstel."

Fliexbegrotings en produksie-spanne vir Afrikaanse projekte, was voor die pandemie reeds nie groot nie. Dit is volgens Zandré Coetzer, vervaardiger by Nagvlug Films.

UNIEKE UITDAGINGS

Die meeste plaaslike vervaardigings-maatskappye is volgens Bester afhanklik van verskeie befondsingsbronne.

'n Tipiese fliexbegroting word gedeeltelik deur televisieverspreiders ondersteun, terwyl die res van die kapitaal kom van private beleggers, produkplasinge en regeringsfondse, soos die produksie-aansporingsprogram (PA) van die departement van handel en nywerheid (DTI). Bester is egter onseker of hierdie model "óóit weer sal herstel".

Coetzer het verduidelik dat 'n voltooiingsverband aangegaan moet word om finansiering van die DTI te verseker. Sou onvoorsiene uitdagings tydens produksie opduik, sal só 'n verband verseker dat geld uitbetaal word om die projek te voltooi. Aangesien Covid-19-erwante uitdagings egter nie gedek word nie,



Die toekoms van die Afrikaanse fliexbedryf sal nog lank deur die impak van die Covid-19-pandemie beïnvloed word. "Film en televisie, dink ek, gaan vir altyd anders wees," het Zandré Coetzer, vervaardiger by Nagvlug Films, gesê. Foto: Anri Matthee

kan hierdie voltooiingsverbande tans nie gesluit word nie. Finansiering van die DTI is dus buite bereik vir vervaardigers se nuwe projekte.

Die DTI het teen druktyd nie kommentaar gelewer op die huidige stand van die PA nie.

Buiten befondsingsprobleme vir nuwe projekte, sukkel vervaardigers ook met die voltooiing van bestaande projekte weens vertraagde produksie.

"Die bottelnek kom, [want] afleweringdatums bly nog altyd dieselfde, maar ons kon dit nie geskiet het soos ons beplan het nie," het Coetzer gesê.

'KREATIEWE OPLOSSINGS'

Ten spyte van die uitdagings wat die bedryf nou in die gesig staar, het die grendelstaat ook geleenthede vir innovering meegebring. Paramedici is byvoorbeeld nou meer betrokke op fliexstelle, het Coetzer gesê. Hulle is voorheen slegs gebruik wanneer gevaarlike toertjies geskiet is, maar nou is hul teenwoordigheid 'n voorvereiste vir enige projek, het sy verduidelik.

Aangesien fliex wat aanvanklik

internasionaal geskiet moes word nou weens reisbeperkings tot ons eie landsgrense beperk is, moes vervaardigers "kreatiewe oplossings op stereoiede" vind, het Coetzer gesê. Sy het vertel van 'n nuwe projek wat gedeeltelik oorsee geskiet sou word. Nou word vervaardigers egter gedwing om "Nederland en Thailand" op hul agterstoep te vind, het sy gesê.

Die vervaardiging van oorspronklike materiaal was nie altyd moontlik nie. Fliexvervaardigers moes dus kreatief te werk gaan deur, byvoorbeeld, argiefmateriaal uit bestaande databasisse te gebruik, het Coetzer gesê.

DIE PAD VORENTOE

Die Afrikaanse vermaaklikheids-bedryf het volgens Bester spesifieke uitdagings wat aandag verg.

"Ek dink ons moet absoluut fokus op die jeugmark. [Die Afrikaanse bedryf] skeep dit geheel en al af," het hy gesê.

Om die bedryf as 'n geheel te ondersteun, word 'n geïntegreerde benadering benodig. Dit is volgens Nicola van Niekerk, senior bestuurder vir teksgedrewe produksie en aktualiteit by M-Net.

"'n Industrie kan nie op net een vlerk vlieg nie," het sy per e-pos aan LIP gesê. Volgens Van Niekerk benodig die bedryf beide "gevestigde fliexmakers en nuwe stemme om seker te maak dat die nodige opleiding en innovasie plaasvind".

Die vermaaklikheids-wêreld as 'n geheel beweeg tans al meer weg van losstaande fliex, en in die rigting van reekse en aanlyn stroomdienste, het Bester verduidelik. Alhoewel die versekering van befondsing dus meer uitdagend word, meen Van Niekerk dat daar ook nuwe verspreidingsopsies vir projekte beskikbaar is, en dat innovering in hierdie opsig 'n fokusarea behoort te wees.

Bester meen dat die publiek se insette belangriker as ooit is vir die toekoms. "As hulle wil hê dat [die bedryf] moet voortbestaan [...] dan moet hulle dit ondersteun," het hy gesê.

The Lockdown Collection: supporting vulnerable artists

Carla Visagie
Jana Scheepers

The Covid-19 pandemic left many artists without a source of income due to a lack of platforms for the launch and sale of their work.

The Lockdown Collection was created as a means to support "vulnerable artists" by auctioning off their Covid-19-related art pieces, according to The Lockdown Collection's website.

The initiative was founded by Carl Bates, chief executive of the Sirdar Group; Lauren Woolf, founder and owner of Mrs Woolf, a strategic creative marketing consultancy; and Kim Berman, founding director of Artist Proof Studio (APS) and visual arts professor at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

"For the first 21 days of the lockdown, I, together with the two co-founders [Bates and Woolf], invited established artists whose works would fetch over R25 000 each to be a part of The Lockdown Collection initiative," explained Berman.

"Thereafter, the founders of the collection employed a curator for the Extension Collection.

As the title suggests, this project was an expansion of the initial collection, in which works of 21 additional South African artists were showcased, according to Berman."

"We also felt that it [was] important to include students in this initiative, because they are the generation who will inherit the challenges of the world post-Covid," Berman said.

This resulted in the Student Collection, which focused on 21 artworks from selected students, mostly from (UJ) and APS, according to Berman.

Being part of The Lockdown Collection created the opportunity for artists to earn an income during Covid-19, but also to be widely recognised, according to Senzo Shabangu, an artist whose artwork was showcased on the collection's website.

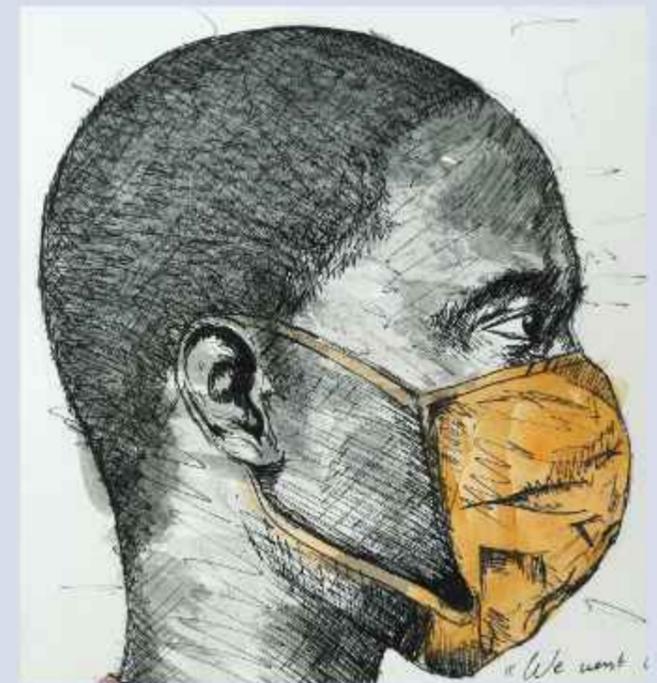
"My artwork resembled the essential workers on the frontline. I thought I would pay some sort of homage to them, as the people who were highly at risk at that time," stated Shabangu.

The Lockdown Collection also distributed grants of R3 000 each to over 300 artists, according to Berman.

"Some could receive up to three grants over five months," Berman stated.

Stephen Langa, an APS student and artist whose work was showcased in the Student Collection, said that 2020 was a challenging experience for him, because he was left without financial surety.

"However, lockdown definitely enhanced my creativity and taught me new technical ways and concepts for my work," said Langa.



An artwork by Stephen Langa, a student at Artist Proof Studio, that was showcased in the Student Collection. The goal of the initiative was to show how the pandemic has affected individuals, according to Langa. Illustration: Supplied/Stephen Langa



Grafika: Anri Matthee

CHERISH: the study for children affected but uninfected by HIV

James Cameron Heron

An ongoing study at Stellenbosch University (SU) is seeking to find answers to immunity problems experienced by children affected but uninfected by HIV.

This was according to Professor Amy Slogrove, paediatrician and epidemiologist in the department of paediatrics and child health at SU.

The study, Children HIV Exposed Uninfected Research to Inform Survival and Health (CHERISH), was sparked almost a decade ago by specialists from Tygerberg Hospital that started to recognise that some children appeared to carry similar opportunistic infections of an HIV positive child, but tested negative, explained Slogrove.

"The only thing that they could find or name was that they [the uninfected children] were born to moms with HIV. That was the difference," said Slogrove.

UNINFECTED... BUT EXPOSED

The study focuses on children who are HIV-exposed and uninfected (HEU). Working from data collected from a modelling study between 2000 and 2018, Slogrove and her colleagues "established the first global estimates of the population of children who are HEU (0-14 years) and the geographical and temporal trends in HIV high-burden countries", according to a

co-authored article by Slogrove from *Lancet Global Health*.

There are an estimated 14.8 million children worldwide who are HEU. Of that population, 3.5 million reside in South Africa, revealed the 2019 modelling study. Slogrove told *LIP* that, "a quarter of our children are HIV exposed and uninfected. A quarter of the world's population of these orphan children are in South Africa."

These children do not get infections more often than a child unexposed and uninfected, but they do experience them more severely.

"They more often need to be hospitalised, and would more often die from the infections compared to a child born to a mom without HIV," said Slogrove.

The study aims to help a population of children who have been neglected by the public, according to Slogrove. When the prevention of HIV infection was discovered, the success seemed to blind people from other effects, she added.

"There was a kind of 'head in the sand ostrich mentality' amongst the global community thinking that this research was making a mountain out of a molehill, and that there is nothing going on with these kids," Slogrove told *LIP*.

Since the establishment of CHERISH, the HIV community has slowly accepted that these uninfected children are also encountering problems and are needing attention, said Slogrove in a SU article about the relevance of the study.



Professor Amy Slogrove, head researcher of the CHERISH study. Photo: Supplied/Amy Slogrove

THE ROLE CHERISH PLAYS

Along with gathering research about, and raising awareness for children who are HEU, CHERISH attempts to highlight all the issues surrounding the relationship between HIV, the infected, and the uninfected, according to Professor Mark Tomlinson, director of the institute for life course health research in the department of global health at SU.

"It is trying to get a picture of all the issues. For example; a woman who is HIV positive is more likely to experience stigma, more likely to

have her partner leave her, and both of those have a huge impact on child development," said Tomlinson.

"Trying to find ways to communicate effectively to bring attention to this is a huge thing," said Tomlinson about the responsibilities of CHERISH.

Educating people about the importance of being HIV positive and taking antiretrovirals to prevent transmission to babies is particularly important, according to Tomlinson.

Raising awareness for HEU children and their families is equally as important as supplying

"A quarter of our children are HIV exposed and uninfected. A quarter of the world's population of these children are in South Africa"

care and support for them. Without any care or support, "children are sometimes neglected because of their mother dying with HIV", said Leroy Legolie, a clinical nurse practitioner from De Doorns HIV clinic at SU's Worcester Campus.

"The responsibility of the child often falls upon the next of kin which is sometimes the grandparents or the uncles and aunts," Legolie continued.

Whilst stating the importance of CHERISH and HIV-related studies, Legolie said that "health education and emotional support is the most important thing when dealing with women who have HIV but their children are negative", said Legolie.

"You need to advise, you need to educate, you need to work and understand the importance of HIV-related illnesses and keeping the child negative," he added.

Thrifting industry flips consumer ethics



With the relaxation of lockdown restrictions, outdoor thrift markets have returned. Photo: Sibulela Bolarinwa

Sibulela Bolarinwa
Nicola Spingies

The Covid-19 pandemic has likely turned people into more ethical consumers, by making them reconsider where and how they acquire various products, including clothing items. This is according to a *BBC News* article published in January 2021.

But Leah Setai, co-owner of a Stellenbosch-based online thrift store, @tamai.thrifts, thinks that sustainability was already a "hot topic" before the onset of Covid-19. Sustainable fashion plays a big part in the ethical engagement with clothing, which mostly originated from thrifting, Setai told *LIP*.

"[Thrifting] aims to reduce the waste that disposed clothing creates," therefore making it a sustainable practice, said Setai. Consequently, the lower the demand for unethically mass-produced clothing items, the greater the positive environmental

impact, according to Raquel Theron, BA fashion student at the Future Excellence Design Institute South Africa (FEDISA).

As thrifting gains more popularity, people need to consider "how much use they will get out of a piece of clothing" so that it doesn't become a wasteful practice, Setai added.

However, sustainability entails more than just sourcing clothes ethically, said Nerine Visser, owner of @gotitfrommymama online thrift store.

"[Sustainability] is also part of fair trade. Fair trade ensures that your business is profitable, that the items are affordable for [your customer], and that you do not overcharge for the quality of the product either," said Visser.

At this stage, sustainable fashion practices are unlikely to trump the fast fashion market, but at least there are strides being made towards more environmentally friendly means of production, said Setai.

Xhosa initiations: perceptions of the rite

Giuseppe Rajkumar Guerandi

(Trigger warning: Mention of "corrective" sexual assault is made in this piece. This term is used due to linguistic limitations and for general comprehensibility.)

The Xhosa initiation tradition, *ulwaluko*, is a custom by which boys are expected to transition from boyhood to manhood.

During level three of the national lockdown, a temporary ban was imposed on such initiations.

In light of the Western Cape Cabinet's announcement to lift the ban by 1 June 2021, *LIP* investigated this rite.

WHAT IS XHOSA INITIATION?

Initiations most notably involve the circumcision and healing process, lessons from elders, an introduction to one's ancestors, as well as learning the "language of initiates" called *isikhweta*.

This was according to a 2016 journal article by Dr Anathi Ntozini and Dr Hlonelwa Ngqangweni, "Gay Xhosa men's experiences of *ulwaluko* (traditional male initiation)".

"You are not forced to go, but your status within the community you live, won't be respected. You can't take part in customary rituals and would always be regarded as a boy, regardless of how old you

are," said Mzwandile Stuurman, a community patriarch within Langa who has facilitated initiation processes for his family and clan.

Opting out of initiation therefore appears to be costly.

Luzuko Mavela, initiate and Stellenbosch University (SU) student, corroborated this sentiment.

Mavela told *LIP* that he does not regret going to the bush, as he made the choice to appease his family and to avoid what he called "complications" with the community.

A LEARNED MANHOOD

The lessons of manhood taught during initiation are "rooted in your traditional understanding of what a man would be", commented Lukhanyo Ngamlana, chairperson of SU's Student Parliament and Xhosa initiate. "It's deeply rooted in patriarchy."

For Mavela, even the earlier mentioned dialect of *isikhweta* is used as an exclusionary mechanism by some. He added that the language is "merely a way to be able to ridicule those who are not 'men'".

"There isn't much growth or room for nuance in understanding how masculinity can manifest in different forms. There's a very strict and narrow understanding of it," said Ngamlana.

WOMXN & QUEER PEOPLE

"I was rather different to my fellow initiates, which was something they

observed as well," said Mavela of his experience as a queer individual.

"There were moments where I felt emotionally and physically endangered because of this. There may have been times where I had to act vastly different to who I am," Mavela added.

According to Nandipha Calana – human rights coordinator for the United Nations Association of South Africa (UNASA) society at SU, and Xhosa womxn – *ulwaluko* fosters a "boys club mentality". While boys receive a rite of passage to become men, girls are not afforded an equally revered transition, according to all interviewees.

The closest approximation of this would be marriage. "Womxn get celebrated by being shipped off to another family," said Calana.

According to Mavela and Ngamlana, no consideration is given to transgender or gender non-conforming people who might need to opt out of *ulwaluko*. "As it stands, the culture does not recognise these groups of people as part of their community and culture," said Mavela.

Ngamlana recalled a group conversation that took place during his initiation; queerness and initiation violently intersected during a pro-corrective-rape discussion.

"The idea was allowed to fester. The problematic discussions

around that were allowed to happen," said Ngamlana.

THE WAY FORWARD

So, how do the AmaXhosa people bring this centuries-old tradition into South African modernity?

"Calling for its discontinuation will not solve the problem, but a holistic approach to regulation will have an impact," said Luvuyo Ntombana, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) lecturer and doctor of anthropology. For Ngamlana, the possibility of

reformation feels less within reach.

"Any discussion to try and evolve it, is met with immediate rejection, because it's met with the idea that you're trying to dilute the culture," said Ngamlana. "I personally don't see a way to evolve the practice. I think it should be abolished."

However, Stuurman doubts that such an outcome is possible. "It's a ritual that is entrenched in our society and will never be stopped by government or legislation; it's what makes us unique as a nation and a clan," said Stuurman.



Luzuko Mavela (left) and Lukhanyo Ngamlana (right), wearing the formal attire one is required to wear for up to six months after returning from initiation. Photo: Giuseppe Rajkumar Guerandi

Foster care facilities see a drop in adoptions

Erin Walls

Safety homes and adoption homes around the country experienced a drop in adoption numbers following the hard lockdown in the beginning of 2020.

In 2019, Door of Hope, a home for abandoned and unwanted babies, had 45 adoptions.

The number dropped to 33 adoptions in 2020, the majority of which were done in levels one and two of lockdown, according to Nadene Grabham, operations director at Door of Hope in Johannesburg.

"The negative of Covid-19 was

[the] drop in adoptions," Grabham reiterated. The legal processes surrounding adoptions were influenced by lockdown regulations.

"During levels five and four, it was not possible to arrange dates at courts for biological parents to sign consent, which also delayed the legal processes," said Tilda Fock, a social worker at ABBA house in Pretoria, a children protection organisation.

"People were not able to adopt children [in hard lockdown], and once they could, the courts only operated for emergencies. Everything was very slow," said Janice Spencer, manager of Starfish Babies NGO.

The adoption process was further hindered by the fact that official

departments were not fully functioning.

"It was a huge challenge, due to other official departments who did not operate to full capacity, and sometimes a children's court would close due to someone being infected. In other words, children became older before they could be declared adoptable," said Fock.

Once the strict lockdown was eased, adoptions could resume.

"There was a sudden increase in adoptions once we entered level two of lockdown, which was most probably due to the bottleneck experienced in levels four and five," said Spencer. "Children's future has and had essentially been placed on hold," Spencer continued.

A NEED FOR COUNSELLING

There was an increase in the need for counselling throughout lockdown, said Lynn Andrews, a social worker based in Eersteriver.

"During the stricter lockdown levels, I was unable to operate from the office and provide necessary group therapy sessions to children in need," said Andrews. Job losses among parents was a prominent reason for the need for counselling.

"There has been a marked increase of biological parents finding themselves in crisis who are coming in for counselling, the crisis being motivated by lack of financial support due to job losses themselves or in the family," stated

Fock. The impact of lockdown was seen not just financially for mothers but cases of gender-based violence and children having been left unsupervised due to school closure," according to Fock.

Children who received family visits were no longer able to see their family. It had to be reiterated that the families stayed away because of the virus, and not because they forgot about them, according to Andrews.

STAYS WITH SAFETY PARENTS

Safety parents, who temporarily care for children, had to care for them longer than initially anticipated due to restrictions, said Fock.

"Safety parents struggled, because the longer a baby stayed, the more they bonded, and the more difficult it became saying goodbye when the children were finally placed with their forever families," said Fock.

"It was not possible to place children who had been matched with parents before lockdown during level five. This delayed their stay in safe care or Child and Youth Care Centers," she continued.

"It was hard. We lost sponsors, visitors and volunteers," said Spencer. There was also a reported increase in the need for children to be placed in safe homes. "Baby homes were and continue to be extremely full, to the point where hospitals were having to keep them. Covid-19 has really had

a negative effect on children's lives," said Spencer.

"Our intake was the same; however we did have to refer many sources to other organisations as we were full," said Grabham.

She said that there was an increase in mothers asking them for help, even with older children.

"Babies are brought in by the police, mothers and family, hospitals and child protection organisations," said Grabham. Children were also brought in through drop-offs at Door of Hope.

"We have a BabyBox where mothers can safely relinquish their babies, instead of unsafe abandonment where babies can die," said Grabham.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Health measures were implemented once Covid-19 began. "We stopped all visits and volunteer help and transported our staff so they did not have to use public transport," said Grabham. "It was also hard to implement [social] distancing, as we accommodate 28 residents at a time, ages six and below, which made it hard for them to understand," said Andrews.

According to Spencer, the "full effect of Covid-19 has not been felt yet". "Babies will continue to suffer, as 'lockdown babies' are still going to be born, and a lot will not be wanted or provided for," said Spencer.



Door of Hope had 45 adoptions in 2019. The number dropped to 33 adoptions during 2020. Photo: Supplied/Door of Hope

The stories of queer lives in the church



Laurie Gaum, former Dutch Reformed Church minister, hopes that LGBTQ+ members will begin to play a larger role within church structures. Photo: James Cameron Heron

Wessel Krige

The controversial battle surrounding same-sex marriage within Christian denominations is an ongoing challenge for queer individuals in the church. This was according to Laurie Gaum, former Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) minister and current project coordinator at Genderworks, a non-profit organisation (NPO) that provides training on gender equity.

When the media covers the topic, the common focus is on the legal battles and statements that surround same-sex marriage in the church. The voices of queer churchgoers from all denominations are seldom heard, leaving their stories unknown to the public, according to Chad*, an Anglican Christian and medical student at Stellenbosch University's (SU) Tygerberg Campus.

Many queer congregants that spoke to *LIP* said that there had been positive developments to make them feel accepted in the church environment. Yet, there is still work to be done.

"I think it is a misunderstanding and misapplication of theology that leads churches to a position against same-sex marriage," said Chad.

"Conservative theology, while attempting to protect the sanctity of marriage, actually undervalues it," he added.

FINDING ONE'S IDENTITY

For many queer Christians, the journey of shaping an identity is a difficult "existential struggle", according to Gaum. He added that queer churchgoers are often ostracised for their sexual orientation and gender identity from a young age.

Gaum was outed as a gay man to the public and his church in 2005, and was subsequently stripped of his title as minister. His title was reinstated a few years later.

"Obviously, that [negative] influence on one's upbringing and one's coming into your own identity is very traumatic and very fierce," commented Gaum, on the impact that religious structures have on queer youth. "Kids come out younger and they get excluded from all the rights, or just from the right to be."

"I have been bullied a lot in school and church, where people told me I cannot conform to being a Christian if I am homosexual. People would physically and verbally abuse me by telling me that I have to choose one, or else I am going to hell," said Ethan Conradie, a fourth year education student at SU – and a Christian. "Some would call me 'the devil's child' and say that I am doing the works of the devil by being gay and entering a religious space."

The struggle for queer people does not only manifest in the form of exclusion, but also in the form of internal conflict, according to Chad.

He would try to convince himself that he was just being stupid, and would "pray to God to make [him] straight".

THE ROLE OF FAITH FOR QUEER BELIEVERS

Gaum believes that queer congregants play an important role in the future of churches, but that their contribution is often unappreciated "for what it can bring to enrich faith".

"What LGBTQ+ people bring to the party is very important and very life-giving, with the promise that it can invigorate faith anew," Gaum commented.

Despite being ostracised for their queerness, many Christians still maintain strong faith and have managed to reconcile their religious beliefs with their queer identities, according to Elton Eugene Shipena, BA international studies student at SU.

"The Bible tells us to live in our truth and love everyone, which is what I try to follow every day," commented Shipena, "and be who I am as much as humanly possible."

In Gaum's case, he had to make peace with the realisation that the opinion of the church he was a member of, is not his main concern when coming to terms with his identity.

"What people think of you is not as important, at the end of the day, as what God thinks of you," he commented.

*The source requested that a pseudonym be used.

Maatskaplike werk – óók ingeperk

Candice Jantjies

Die begin van die grendelstaat weens die plaaslike uitbreek van die Covid-19-pandemie in Maart 2020, het 'n groot impak op maatskaplike kwessies en maatskaplike werk gehad. Dit is volgens verskeie individue in die maatskaplike ontwikkelingssektor.

"Ons sit met 'n verandering in die samelewing. Ons staar nuwe struikelblokke in die gesig – struikelblokke wat deur dié hele pandemie veroorsaak is," het Simtho Cupido, 'n honneursstudent aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) se departement maatskaplike werk, gesê.

Middelmissbruik het byvoorbeeld verhoog by mense wat weens die grendelstaat hul werk verloor het, het Cupido gesê. Alleenbroodwinners het dikwels "nie geweet hoe om [met werkloosheid] saam te leef nie", en het dan soms in dwelm- en alkoholmisbruik verval, het hy verduidelik.

MAATSKAPLIKE WERK ONDER VLAK-VYF-GRENDELSTAAT

Tydens die eerste maand van die vlak-vyf-grendelstaat, is maatskaplike werkers nie as 'n noodsaaklike diens beskou nie, en hulle kon dus nie so gereeld op ingrypingsveldtogte uitgaan nie. Dit is volgens

Nicolette van der Walt, nasionale bestuurder van kinderbeskerming by die ACVV, 'n nie-winsgewende organisasie (NWO) in maatskaplike dienslewering.

"Die eerste maand het ons toe by die huis gewerk, want ons het nog nie permitte gehad om uit te gaan nie," het Van der Walt gesê.

Die ACVV is, volgens Van der Walt, onkant gevang toe maatskaplike werkers in April verlede jaar van die huis af moes begin werk.

"Die [organisasie] beskik nie altyd oor die finansies om vir elke mens 'n skootrekenaar te gee om by die huis te kan [werk] nie, maar waar ons kon, het ons vir maatskaplike werkers in April verlede jaar skootrekenaars gegee," het sy gesê.

In hierdie tyd is die opdrag ook aan werkers gegee om slegs vir dringende kinderbeskermingsake uit te gaan, het sy bygevoeg.

INDERHAAS GENOODSAAK

Die minister van die departement maatskaplike ontwikkeling (DMO), Lindiwe Zulu, het in April 2020 besluit dat maatskaplike werk ook 'n noodsaaklike diens moet wees. Daarna moes maatskaplike diensverskaffers inderhaas permitte aan maatskaplike werkers gee, het Van der Walt gesê.

Die ACVV moes tydens hierdie tyd, volgens Van der Walt, 'n "hele paar" kinders uit huishoudings

verwyder en in pleegsorg of kinderhuise plaas.

Hoewel dié organisasie se werkers teen 4 Mei verlede jaar teruggekeer het kantoor toe en weer al hul normale dienste begin lewer het, was werkers steeds beperk weens streng Covid-19-protokolle, het Van der Walt gesê.

Die beperking van maatskaplike dienslewering aan die begin van die grendelstaat, het volgens Cupido veroorsaak dat mense wat tydens dié tyd 'n behoefte aan maatskaplike noodhulpdienste gehad het, ook vir 'n lang tyd nie toegang tot doeltreffende ondersteuning gehad het nie.

Dit het daartoe gelei dat maatskaplike werkers se werkslading "soveel meer was, nadat dit alreeds so baie was", het Cupido verduidelik.

"Die manier waarop jy jou [ingryping] doen [...] is so onpersoonlik – en dit moet vinnig gaan – dat jy op die ou einde van die dag sit met *rebounding clients*," het Cupido gesê. In sekere gevalle was slagoffers van maatskaplike mishandeling in dieselfde huishoudings as oortreders vasgevang, met geen toegang tot maatskaplike noodhulpbronne nie, het hy bygevoeg.

MAATSKAPLIKE KWESSIES VERERGER

Bestaande maatskaplike probleme is ook deur die inperkingsvererger – veral weens werksverlies en die



Bron: <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>

Grafika: Candice Jantjies

Die manier waarop jy jou [ingryping] doen is so onpersoonlik

sluiting van skole wat deur die grendelstaat teweeg gebring is. Dit is volgens Karen Badenhorst, vrywilliger by StellCARE Stellenbosch en Distrik-familiedienste. "Mense het onmiddellik hulle inkomste verloor. Dit het drankmisbruik, gesinsgeweld en ook [...] molesting verhoog," het Badenhorst beweer. "Omdat ouers nou by die huis was, was hulle meer betrokke in rusies en seksuele misbruik, en dit het dan ook gelei tot kinder-verwaarlosing." Sy het

bygevoeg dat mishandeling teen kinders verhoog het omdat hulle tydens hierdie tyd nie by die skool kon wees nie. Volgens Badenhorst dien kleuterskole vir StellCARE as 'n belangrike platform om kindermishandeling te voorkom, omdat onderwysers daar kan monitor of kinders fisies en emosioneel gesond is. Die grendelstaat het dus veroorsaak dat dié monitering nie kon plaasvind nie, het sy gesê.

LIG IN DIE TONNEL

Die terugkeer van kinders na kleuterskole na afloop van die vlak-vyf-grendelstaat, het volgens Badenhorst tot 'n verbetering in die situasie gelei.

"Ons [kan] weer 'n oë hou oor die kinders en seker maak hulle is versorg, kry kos, is nie siek nie, ensovoorts," het sy gesê.



Sandra Nagel, a prominent leader in the anti gender-based violence movement at a protest held in 2020. Photo: Supplied/Sandra Nagel

Maryam Adams

Restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of Covid-19 since March 2020 meant that many spheres of society had to move online. As a result, activists had to move onto various social media platforms as a means of affecting change.

This was according to Luke Waltham, social justice mission ambassador at The Justice Desk, a human rights non-profit organisation that operates in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. "Online activism is being able to implement your values, actions and aims on online platforms with the goal of broadening the avenues of

Changing the world one click at a time

achieving justice," Waltham told *LIP*.

However, people from different demographics had different levels of access to getting involved in online activism. People who live below the poverty line did not always have access to this form of activism, for example. People with disabilities had heightened access and an opportunity to add their voices, said Jordan Pieters, founder of online social justice platform We'll Do It Ourselves, which aims to educate and equip the South African youth with the knowledge they need to become advocates for change.

According to Waltham, online platforms have become an important tool for a physical movement to be successful.

Waltham further explained that the two are now reliant on one another in order for a movement's momentum to continue.

"Most [physical] student movements in the modern day era have been successful because of activists' abilities to mobilise with each other on social media," stated Waltham.

Although online activism has the ability to foster change, some activists feel that through physical protesting, change can be effected at a much faster pace.

This is because during a physical protest, the issue cannot be ignored. It can be seen and heard through singing and shouting, said Sandra Nagel, Cape Town-based photographer and prominent

leader in the anti gender-based violence movement.

"The raw emotions are the biggest driving factor for me. You don't get those emotions when you post, reshare, comment or like a post," said Nagel.

TAKING ACTIVISM ONLINE

"Many 'protests' had to become online dialogues and pressure groups which would tag, make hashtags and contact specific politicians to get our message across to them," said Waltham. The use of infographics on these platforms were prominent in 2020. They were used as a tool for learning and teaching, according to Nagel.

However, Nagel suggested that online activism is not the be-all and end-all of activism.

"We must read and learn outside of Instagram infographics. We must think critically. I also think that one's views must line up offline and online," she said.

Although social media provides a platform for online activism, it comes with its own challenges, said Nagel. "Social media is an echo-chamber as we can choose what we would like to see."

PERFORMATIVE ACTIVISM

There is a viral trend where online activism is being performed without being representative of real concern or action. Rather, it can come from a desire to want to be part of a trending conversation, explained Pieters.

"Online activism may easily make people lack empathy in certain situations which can result in the lack of constructive engagement," said Waltham.

In terms of performative activism, "there have been growing concerns in recent years that allies use social platforms to dominate social discourse and attempt to represent marginalised groups, instead of assisting in empowering marginalised groups", explained Waltham.

"There's so much more to activism than an Instagram post," Nagel said.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

"Online activism can expose the activist to legal action if any of the content posted constitutes defamation, 'naming and shaming' or crimen injuria (the unlawful intentional impairment of a person's dignity)," said Diana Schwarz, social media lawyer and children's rights activist, via email correspondence.

Schwarz explained, for example, that although many women find strength and solidarity in online movements such as the #MeToo movement, it is not legal to identify an alleged perpetrator online.

"In general, remember that your 'right to freedom of expression' is not absolute and cannot trump another person's right to dignity or reputation," advised Schwarz to anyone engaging with controversial material online.

Art as a weapon against GBV

Sibulela Bolarinwa

(Trigger warning: Mention of sexual assault is made in this piece.)

Activism in art came to the cultural forefront in 2020 when President Cyril Ramaphosa declared gender-based violence (GBV) South Africa's second pandemic, during a presidential address on 17 June 2020. "Gender-based violence has been around for a lot longer [than Covid-19]," said Leanne Berger, UK-based co-founder and co-director of The Embrace Project. Berger added that GBV has been exacerbated by the pandemic, since it mainly occurs in the home environment.

The Embrace Project is an online-based organisation that sells donated artwork from South African artists, explained Berger. "The proceeds are donated to South African grassroots organisations fighting against GBV," said Berger.

Police minister Bheki Cele identified July, August and September as particularly dangerous months for women in the country. In Cele's quarterly crime report, released on 13 November 2020, he stated that 8 922 rape cases were recorded during these months. Berger mentioned that the "skyrocketing of GBV statistics" in South Africa during the pandemic prompted the establishment of the project

in May 2020. The goal has been to approach the "heavy subject matter of GBV in a creative, accessible and non-threatening manner", explained Berger.

ACTIVISM IN ART

"Art can lead to discussion; a piece of art is always viewed differently by the eye of each person," said Dora Prévost, a Johannesburg-based sculptor whose work focuses on breaking the silence surrounding GBV. "Art has been a powerful political tool for most of history. It has the power to make the viewers stop and reflect upon its message," said Prévost. She explained that through her exploration of women as the main subject in her sculptures, she hopes to "empower other women to speak out, and learn to say no to violence".

Tari Nyamayaro, a slam poet based in Johannesburg explained that using art as a form of activism, has been around for many years. Nyamayaro performed her poem "Auditioning for my funeral" on Instagram, in response to the murder of Asithandile "Kwasa" Lugalo, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, in August 2020. Nyamayaro said that the writing and recording processes took her an hour.

"I really wanted to remain as raw and pure as Kwasa's story, a story that has become too familiar to South African women," expressed Nyamayaro.

On 1 August 2020, Carin Bester, a Cape Town-based performance artist, sat for 8 hours and 40 minutes typing out the words "She had a name" 2 695 times.

"This was the number of murdered womxn in the 2019/2020 statistical year," emphasized Bester. She explained that the aim of the performance was to force people to conceptualise the magnitude of the statistic.

Bester said that it bothered her that "murdered womxn are reduced to a number and we only hear about the few that make it to the media".

Bester said that people have approached her regarding the lasting impact her work has had on them.

"My aim is to get people thinking about the little things that they can do to create awareness and combat GBV," stated Bester.

NEEDED CONVERSATION

Collectively fighting against the disproportionate rate at which women are being murdered is paramount, explained Nyamayaro.

In order to find a resolution to GBV, broad cultural awareness, social change and extensive dialogue between all genders is required, according to Prévost.

It is important to hold conversations that allow people to reflect on the effects of their behaviour on an individuals' human dignity and self perception, said Berger.



Performance artist, Carin Bester, typed the words "She had a name" 2 695 times in commemoration of women who were murdered in the 2019/2020 statistical year. Photo: Supplied/Carin Bester



An illustration created by Leanne Berger, co-founder of The Embrace project, for the virtual project against gender-based violence in 2020. Photo: Supplied/Leanne Berger

Rekordgetal kuberaanvalle tydens pandemie aangeteken

Carla Visagie

Die meeste kuberaanvalle nóg is wêreldwyd in 2020 aangeteken. Dit is volgens die jaarverslag van Risk Based Security, 'n internasionale inligtingstegnologiemaatskappy.

Die verslag dui aan dat ongeveer 37 miljard kuberaanvalle wêreldwyd aangeteken is in 2020. Dit is 'n toename van 141% teenoor die gevalle van die voorafgaande jaar, en die grootste getal kuberaanvalle sedert die maatskappy in 2011 gestig is, lui die verslag.

Faktore wat bygedra het tot hierdie drastiese toename is, onder meer, besighede se digitale werksaamhede vanweë die pandemie, die feit dat werknemers van die huis af gewerk het waar hulle nie die normale korporatiewe sekuriteitsstelsels in plek het nie, en die groot hoeveelheid geld wat kuberkraakers daaruit maak. Dit is volgens Noëlle van der Waag-Cowling, koördineerder van die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) se Sekuriteitsinstituut vir Regering en Leierskap in Afrika (SIGLA).

HOE KUBERKRAAKERS DATA BEKOM

In die era van waarneming is niemand se internet- of netwerkonneksie privaat nie, volgens Van der Waag-Cowling.

"Selfoonmaatskappye in Suid-Afrika laat privaatspeurders toe om foonoprope op die netwerk te onderskep. Die Openbare Beskermer het juis [selfoonnetwerkdienverskaffers] gevra vir verslae oor hoe hulle dit gaan beheer," het Van der Waag-Cowling gesê. Met gevorderde spioenware (sogenoemde *spyware*) is dit ook moontlik vir toepassings om

SES MAKLIKE STAPPE OM DIE KUBERKRAAKERS WEG TE HOU

Noëlle van der Waag-Cowling, koördineerder van die Universiteit Stellenbosch se Sekuriteitsinstituut vir Regering en Leierskap in Afrika, gee wenke om die sekuriteit van jou persoonlike inligting te verbeter.

1 DINK VOOR JY DEEL

Wees versigtig om inligting soos jou ID-nummer, selfoonnummer en adres op sosiale media te deel.



2 STOOR INLIGTING REG

Maak seker om gereeld kopieë van jou data op verskillende toestelle te stoor, en stoor data in 'n gekodeerde formaat.



3 VERMY DIE VIRUSSE

Installeer 'n anti-virusprogram op jou selfoon en rekenaar, en dateer sagteware gereeld op na die nuutste weergawe.



4 LAAI VERSIGTIG AF

Moenie net enige toepassings afaai nie. Kyk mooi na die toestemmings wat jy vir toepassings gee en lees die terme en voorwaardes.



5 DINK VOOR JY KLIK

Maak net skakels oop van betroubare kontakte, aangesien sommige aanhangsels en skakels kwaadwillig kan wees.



6 HOU JOU INLIGTING DOP

Skandeer die kode hier regs om op die webtuiste havebeenpwned.com gereeld te kyk of jou inligting uitgelek het.



Grafika: Carla Visagie

persoonlike data van selfone af te oes, of gesprekke af te luister, volgens Van der Waag-Cowling.

Terwyl dié spioenware nie dikwels gebruik word om lede van die publiek te teiken nie, kan toepassings wat met virusse besmet is per ongeluk afgelaai word, meen Professor Bruce Watson, departementshoof van die departement inligtingswetenskap aan die US.

"Jy moet onthou dat dit ook [vir kuberkraakers] moontlik is om jou kamera aan te skakel en video of foto's te begin opneem," het Watson gesê.

WAT GEBEUR MET JOU PERSOONLIKE INLIGTING?

Persoonlike inligting word onder meer by finansiële ondernemings

gebruik om sekuriteitsvrae oor iemand se identiteit op te stel, en dit is een van die redes waarom hierdie inligting nie in die verkeerde hande moet beland nie, het Watson gesê.

"Jy stel byvoorbeeld wagwoorde op wat verband hou met jou aanstaande, iemand in jou familie, of jou hond se naam. As kuberkraakers eers genoeg inligting versamel van sosiale media af, is dit maklik om wagwoorde te begin raai, wat kan lei daartoe dat iemand jou bankrekening leegmaak," het Watson gesê.

Kuberkraakers kan ook persoonlike inligting bewapen vir manipulasie of afpersing, of dit kan op die donkerweb verkoop word, volgens Van der Waag-Cowling.

Jessica Macleod Smith, 'n honneursstudent in sielkunde aan die US, was onlangs die teiken van een van dié kuberaanvalle toe haar foto's en naam gebruik is om 'n vals Instagram-rekening en webtuiste oop te maak. Die skakel na die webtuiste is in die vals rekening se Instagram-beskrywing geplak, en dit is geadverteer as eksplisiete "18+"-inhoud van Macleod Smith.

"Ek was baie kwaad. Wie de hel dink jy is jy om net hier in te kom en iets so vulgêr soos dit te doen? Ek is nou baie meer bewus van wie na my sosiale media kan kyk," het sy gesê.

Die rekening is volgens Macleod Smith 'n dag en 'n half ná sy dit aangemeld het deur Instagram verwyder.

KYK HIÉRVOOR UIT

Die toepassings wat die grootste gevare vir persoonlike data-veiligheid inhou, is volgens Van der Waag-Cowling dié wat "gratis of goedkoop" is.

"Daar is geen app wat oolt 100% veilig is nie. Wat jy oor die algemeen moet probeer vermy, is toepassings met advertensies, gratis musiek, letterdiewery (*piracy*) en skakels in WhatsApp-kettingboodskappe. As jy nie daarvoor betaal nie, is jy die produk," het Van der Waag-Cowling gesê.

Deur die gebruik van sosiale media, vind 'n onbewustelike uitruiling van persoonlike inligting plaas, en in ruil vir hierdie inligting, kry sosiale media-gebruikers gratis toegang tot sekere dienste, meen Watson.

"Baie van ons persoonlike inligting leef voort by ander organisasies. Ons laat dit toe, omdat ons iets [van] daardie organisasie wil hê. As jy byvoorbeeld iets by Facebook wil hê, gee jy jou persoonlike inligting vir hulle," het Watson gesê.

KAN KUBERKRAAKERS VASGETREK WORD?

Die gewysigde wetsontwerp op kubermisdaad en sekuriteit vir 2020 sal binnekort in die staatskoerant afgekondig word, en is een van die wette wat Suid-Afrikaners teen kuberkraakers sal beskerm, het Diana Swartz, privaathedskenner en sosiale media-reg-prokureur, gesê.

"Dié wet verseker dat as kriminele op kubersekuriteit inbraak maak, hulle vir hul dade verantwoordbaar gehou kan word. Dit sal ook nou verplig wees om verdagte transaksies aan te meld," volgens Swartz. Dit is egter moeilik om kuberkraakers te vervolg, aangesien hulle bedryf word as internasionale sindikate, wat dit uitdagend maak om die kriminele op te spoor, het Van der Waag-Cowling gesê.



The divide in access to digital services has been exacerbated by the migration of the working world to online platforms. Photo: James Cameron Heron

Digital divide widened in 2020

Kimberley Schoeman

The digital divide in South Africa has been intensified by the transition to remote working and online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was according to Anri van der Spuy, advisor for CyberBRICS, an organisation that develops digital and data-security policy suggestions for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS).

"Covid-19 has shown that the current status of division calls for legislation to promote safe and publicly accessible internet-based services – especially in rural areas and townships," said Van der Spuy.

Where you live, your age, and the usability of devices also impact the accessibility to services that are now only accessible online. This was according to Lwandile

Tshona, a petrol attendant based in Stellenbosch. "I live in the townships, so there is not much internet. We have to look for hotspots when you walk through suburbs or town," said Tshona.

"Older people here are not interested in technology because they do not know how it works. It is getting harder as they get older," Tshona added.

Another challenge that South Africans face is high data costs, resulting in them not making much use of online platforms.

This was according to Riaan Wolmarans, head of digital at Arena Holdings.

"We cannot afford data because it is too expensive, so we do not use our phones that much," said Marina Gwala, a Johannesburg-based domestic worker. "I have to renew my driver's license online, but without data, I cannot do that."

Internet usage surges during pandemic



The pandemic resulted in South Africans having to engage more on their device screens during the pandemic, because "we have all been pushed into our homes and [are] left with a lot less activities than perhaps we are used to". This was according to Alexa Scher, clinical psychologist. Photo: Carla Visagie

Carla Visagie

South Africans spent a daily average of 10 hours and six minutes on the internet in 2020. This is roughly 44 minutes more per day than recorded in 2019. This was according to Digital 2021, a collaborative data report between Hootsuite and We Are Social, specialists in social media management.

The website that got the highest amount of traffic in 2020 was Google, with YouTube and Facebook following in second and third place respectively, according to the report.

The increase in the amount of time spent on the internet can be attributed to the pandemic, according to Alexa Scher, a clinical psychologist.

People were not able to engage in person and "had to turn to other ways of getting information and distracting ourselves", according to Scher.

Increased screen time is not necessarily bad, but the internet can become problematic when it starts to have negative effects on other areas of one's life, according to Scher.

Social media could have a negative impact, because "[it] causes a release of dopamine that triggers the reward system in the brain", said Scher.

These online activities reward you with feel-good chemicals when, for example, someone gets engagement on social media or completes missions in games, according to Dean McCoubrey, founder of MySocialLife, a digital life skills program. "If you spend a lot of time [on social media], what you have to realise is that those chemicals are going to be spiking," said McCoubrey. "The more time you spend online, the more rewards you get, the more yearning there is for those chemicals."

Rupert Bothma, a recovered gaming addict, said that his greatest regret about his compulsive gaming during high school, was that he grew up feeling isolated and alienated from anything other than entertainment media.

Bothma's advice to someone who feels gaming or social media is controlling their lives, is to fill their time with something meaningful.

The degradation of femininity: a South African assault

Opinion

Giuseppe Rajkumar Guerandi

South African femininities are some of the most diverse in the world.

They are rich in their multi-cultural roots, from Hindu to Ndebele femininities, and revolutionary in their queer heritage, from figures such as Kewpie to Sally Gross.

The construction of femininity in this country has always been defined by ground-breaking diversity. Therefore, the wound aches more profoundly when we confront the simple truth of our reality: femininity is under attack.

"The way that the patriarchy is constructed is not male versus female and intersex people, it is the persecution of femininity," said Shaniae Maharaj, student activist and law student at Stellenbosch University (SU).

To speak of femininity with definitional universality would be misguided at best. The characteristics of the femininity being discussed have been taken from social signifiers and identified in conversation with many feminine-identifying people. Stereotypically, these are traits of passivity, sensitivity and other feminine-ascribed artifacts.

"I think South Africa is unique, in that we still have a very rigid understanding of femininity. It is still very sexist and biological. It is still informed by historic norms," stated Corlia Kritzinger, vice-chairperson

of SU's Student Parliament.

Professor Juliana Gouws, head of the gender unit at the faculty of theology at SU, elucidates the feminine dilemma by observing that "African culture has a strong patriarchal sense; what all our cultures have in common is gender-based violence".

The attack on femininity is a violent one which has taken the lives of women and queer people almost by the hour. Based on femicide statistics for 2017/2018, provided by the South African Police Service, a woman is murdered every three hours in South Africa.

This violence extends to the psyche, corrupting the security of the feminine subject; it is the anxiety forever woven into the threads of the skirt you wore, when that group of men catcalled you. It is the fear you harbour in your heart as you make yourself smaller and cross your legs tighter after being groped by that stranger. It is the terror embedded in your brain, a learned caution you have practiced since consciousness.

Unopachido Mubaiwa, psychology master's student at SU, provides insight on this front.

"I feel like every single day there's a target on my back. Every single day I'm constantly calculating which spaces are safe for me... which are not. What do I need to wear today?" said Mubaiwa. "And that just goes to show how we've attached all of these things to what we think about when we speak about femininity."

On an intersectional level, it is important to recognise that "the performativity of female gender

does indeed increase the possibility of violence", said Professor Amanda Gouws, a political science professor at SU specialising in gender politics. She added that this is specifically the case for transgender women, since they are often perceived as not being "real women".

The performativity of gender, as theorised by Judith Butler in her essay *Gender Trouble*, published in 1990, is blatantly observable within our national context. Across cultures, the learned behaviours of presentation are particularly difficult to navigate within the realm of femininity.

To what extent is one's femininity autonomous and non-supplementary to masculinity? Can one's femininity be disentangled from the male gaze? These are questions that plague the feminine experience, trapping the subject in a cycle of gendered gaslighting, a form of psychological abuse where a person or group makes someone question their sanity, perception of reality, or memories.

The reach of this attack extends to gender non-conforming individuals who occupy femininity, and for whom the binary is a guillotine.

"South African society reinforces the gender binary every day," said Chulumanco Nopote, chairperson of the QueerUS student society at SU.

If gender non-conformance is a threat to the binary, then South Africa ought to be the impetus behind that threat. If not for the protection and equality of its citizens, then to honour its post-apartheid constitutional promises. For South Africa to move beyond the binary, it need only consult its independence.



Shaniae Maharaj, Lukhanyo Ngamlana, Khanya Jantjies, Nandipha Calana, Sammy Chordnum and Corlia Kritzinger, in a joyful group of feminine-identifying people. Photo: Giuseppe Rajkumar Guerandi

Where does femininity go from here? Maybe it can be defended when we broaden its meaning, freeing it from the shackles of narrow prescription, as suggested by Mubaiwa. Perhaps it is in feminine bodies taking up space, reclaiming the agency to define femininity, as posited

by Maharaj. Should we opt for Kritzinger and Nopote's approach, and do away with rigid norms altogether, opening the floodgates for people to experiment with femininity and fluidity? South Africa knows the answers. It is now time to act on the courage of our collective convictions.

Words Open Worlds goes online

Kyra Rensburg

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Words Open Worlds (WOW) project stayed active by optimising their projects and moving online.

WOW, an annual project of the Toyota Stellenbosch University (SU) Woordfees, moved their projects online for the first time in the 18 years they have been active. In the past, WOW solely functioned on an in-person basis, explained Fiona van Kerwel, WOW project manager.

"The biggest challenge WOW faced is that we could not do face-to-face visits to the schools anymore, due to Covid-19 restrictions," said Shireen Crotz, co-ordinator of the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival.

WOW has five focus areas that are manifested in different projects, explained Van Kerwel. This includes a reading and writing project, language development through the spelling festival, cultural projects, the recruitment program and professional development.

WOW started as a recruitment program and is still active in schools that were considered historically disadvantaged. These schools are known as WOW schools, and they form part of the WOW 50-schools project, Van Kerwel said.

The project aims to "broaden perspectives, empower people and

to discover and develop potential", said Van Kerwel.

MOVING ONLINE

WOW starts working with students in reading circles from around the age of five. They provide literacy, and arts and culture projects throughout students' schooling careers, until university, explained Van Kerwel.

"Many WOW events could not take place in 2020 and will not be able to continue in 2021 either, said Van Kerwel. The organisation is currently planning to move its reading circle online."

WOW has already developed virtual alternatives for the debates and reasoning festival, the spelling festival and the recruitment program. In 2021, WOW will have workshops on Google Classroom to prepare students for the debate festival, said Van Kerwel.

"We'll see what we can do in the third quarter. We plan for six debate festivals with twelve schools, but it will have to be [in] twelve different places and spaces. You can't really do the debate virtually. It's not going to work," said Van Kerwel.

WOW also had to adapt the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival to happen via correspondence, said Crotz. They send a word list to certain schools and students are required to do an online test, explained Van Kerwel.

"We still want to enrich learners'



Words Open Worlds (WOW) is a culture, language and arts program that has five focus areas. WOW organises various projects that take place during the Toyota SU Woordfees. Graphic: Kyra Rensburg

language skills and therefore we have drawn up a document with options to make sure the Sanlam WOW Spelling Festival goes ahead for 2021, albeit with limited grades," said Crotz.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

"[Schools] lost time and with the time that was lost, they lost some academic input," said Van Kerwel.

Last year WOW's winter school moved online for the first time, explained Jeneen Wallow, the organisation's student recruiter.

WOW provided the schools with data so that 90 students could actively participate in an online

Google Classroom, added Wallow.

"The WOW student recruitment programme aims to get students from the 50-schools project into SU," explained Wallow.

The teachers of the schools will inform Wallow which students want to study further. WOW then works closely with these students by providing tutors, who are education facilitators, to sharpen their skills for exams, stated Van Kerwel.

"Sometimes learners in our schools feel like they can't reach the University of Stellenbosch because they look at their grades and it's 60%," said Wallow.

Van Kerwel believes that if they can

get 60% to 65% at WOW schools, had the ability to perform even better if they had more resources and support. Only 50% of the WOW winter school learners passed the 2020 end-of-year matric exams, said Van Kerwel. To remedy this, they will start the winter school early, by the end of June, for 2021.

WOW will assist them with the application process, pay the National Benchmark Tests (NBT's) if necessary, and help students find bursaries.

"At least [if] we can get one learner from each school to come and study, then we are doing something right," explained Wallow.

Animal welfare societies fetching the short end of the stick

Marianne Stewart

The Covid-19 pandemic forced a significant amount of people to give up their animals due to a decline, or loss, in income, according to Cecilia Jacobs, founder of Imagine Animal Dreams.

People made their own health a priority, so the well-being of abandoned animals was largely left in the hands of animal welfare societies, said Jacobs.

MORE ANIMAL SURRENDERS

Riaan van der Merwe, Adora-Bull committee member and treasurer agreed that there has been an increase in animals being surrendered since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Van der Merwe also mentioned that many families have had to downscale due to financial cuts. Therefore, many have had to move in with family or into smaller residences, where pets were not allowed.

Increased animal abandonment has resulted in a lack of capacity for animal welfare societies.

The increase is due to the prolonged impact of lockdown regulations, which has placed financial strain on pet owners. This was according to various organisations that spoke to LIP.

Nolukhanyo Animal Relief Fund (NARF) has had an increase of around 70 dogs since Covid-19. The dogs were left abandoned in



A lot of animals were surrendered during Covid-19, because of their owners suffering financially. Photo: Supplied/NSPCA

Nolukhanyo, an informal settlement in Bathurst in the Eastern Cape, said NARF founder Elmarie Ward.

The financial impact was especially visible in informal settlements, with many people working in positions not regarded as essential services. As a result, "their income has dried up", said Ward.

Other animal welfare societies, like PetPals, Adora-Bull, Imagine Animal Dreams, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) also noted a significant increase in animals being surrendered during Covid-19.

"This morning I had a lady who contacted me wanting to surrender her five cats," said Jacobs. "We cannot take in any more animals; we are not in the position to do so at this stage," she added.

"A total of 31 dogs and 34 cats were surrendered to us during March last year up until now [April 2021]," said Yolanda Hamman from PetPals, a non-profit organisation (NPO) that focuses on improving the living conditions of animals in townships and low-income communities.

DECLINE IN DONATIONS

The National Council of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NCSPCA) has also experienced a decline in monetary and food donations, which are necessary to keep these NPOs afloat. Many people received a cut back in salaries due to lockdown; businesses closed down and people lost their jobs.

"The NSPCA and our member societies experienced a decline in



donations," said Keshvi Nair, public relations officer of the NSPCA.

The decrease in donations, along with the increase in animal abandonment, placed an immense financial burden on these animal welfare societies, according to Van der Merwe.

"Donating to charities is a luxury that not everyone can afford anymore," said Van der Merwe.

"[Before lockdown] we often held fundraisers to generate funds for our vet expenses, as well as other expenses," said Hamman.

"Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, we have not been able to have a single fundraiser," she added.

The fundraisers that kept these animal welfare societies afloat could not take place as they did before the pandemic.

"We have started fundraising again but have to be very inventive to avoid crowds and public places," said Margie Thomas, chairperson of Port Alfred and Ndlambe District SPCA. Besides relying on minimal donations, the animal welfare societies also applied for food aid for their animals.

The Cape Animal Welfare Forum was an initiative that organised the distribution of funds. Louise Spagnuolo, from Helderberg Animal Rescue Team (HART), took part in the initiative.

"The donation was a life saver for many animals. Without it, we would not have been able to feed the dogs and cats whose owners were unable to work and had no way of buying food for their animals," said Spagnuolo.

SA surfers scraping the bottom of the barrel

Alexander Brand

Covid-19 had a detrimental economic effect on various sectors of the South African economy. One of the often overlooked sectors includes the supply chain that supports the surfing community, especially surf shops, schools and tourism, according to Robin de Kock, the general manager of Surfing South Africa.

"[The economic decline has been] due mainly to the strict lockdowns which kept consumers out of the retail outlets," said De Kock. "The beach ban also curtailed trade at surf shops around the country and prevented surf schools from running their programmes."

TRAVEL BANS CURB SURFING

De Kock said that the travel bans caused less surfers to travel, which led to less income for small backpackers and guest houses that usually catered for guests.

The lockdown also added more economic strain on the general surfing community, commented De Kock.

Because most surf schools are seasonal, they are dependent on the income that they generate during the summer months, according to

Mikhail Thompson, the owner of Son Surf School in Strand.

"We have a lot of downtime in winter where we can't work, so we need to make our money in summer because we are seasonal. That very much affected us, but we were really well carried by our community, our church, our customers, and our friends," commented Thompson.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS

Three main surf tourism-related socio-economic poles in Cape Town have been identified, with the Table View, Surfer's Corner and Strand beaches leading the ranking. This was according to Roberto Martin, a researcher at the University of Malaga, in a paper on the effects of Covid-19 on surf tourism.

"[These poles] are likely to face severe economic consequences and social pressure, in terms of surfers practising sports, due to the crisis," wrote Martin in his paper.

Many in the industry understood and supported the decision to ban access to beaches, in terms of recreational surfing. Thompson said that the beach ban was hard to swallow, but if you put yourself in the shoes of leadership, it was a difficult decision to make.

"So the initial hard lockdown [was] probably the right decision to



Son Surf School in Strand suffered through lockdown, and was forced to find alternative forms of income. Photo: Alexander Brand

make. It probably went on too long, but then there are so many things to think about," Thompson added.

"I cannot say I was a huge fan of the beach ban at all. However, I do understand the purpose behind it, especially over the festive season. I feel as if it was a necessary procedure and helped prevent an increase in Covid-19 cases through and around South Africa," commented Muizenberg surfer and longboarder, Dylan Swindale.

PROFESSIONAL SURFERS UNABLE TO COMPETE

Professional surfing was a different story. Professional surfers and the sectors of the industry that supported them, as well as those who relied on surfing for economic survival, were put on hold completely.

"Professional surfers were unable to compete both locally and internationally due to travel restrictions and cancelled events.

This meant that they were unable to earn an income," said De Kock. He added that sponsorships dried up and beach bans meant that surfers were unable to do their job, which was to surf professionally.

Major local and international surfing competitions, such as the City Surf Series, SA Championships, the J-Bay Open and the Ballito Pro, were also cancelled due to the virus, which meant professional surfers lost their main source of income, according to De Kock.

Looking back at the effects of Covid-19, it is seen as a double-edged sword, because there were both positive and negative effects, according to surfers in the community. "In many parts of the world surfing boomed. It absolutely went mental. So after the lockdown, people wanted to get out there; they wanted to surf with their family and friends. Surfboards were on three-month waiting lists in places like Australia and California," said Thompson.

On the other side of the spectrum, professional surfers are still experiencing the negative effects.

"The biggest negative for me at the moment would be that we are still a bit stuck in the mud with not being able to travel and compete overseas," said Swindale.



Nkosinathi Sangweni, a dancer and activist with a passion for youth development. Photo: Keanan Hemmonsbeey

Passing the mantle to the youth

Keanan Hemmonsbeey

Everything about Nkosinathi Sangweni is bubbly – from the sparkling water he enjoys drinking, to his personality. He is keenly invested in youth development and is an advocate for social change.

Sangweni "stumbled upon dancing" after discovering he was not good at any sport that requires

hand-eye coordination. He has since ventured into dance, choreography, and teaching, but is now focused on mentoring the next generation.

A TRANSFORMATION TOOL

Sangweni currently manages the three-year training program at Jazzart Dance Theatre, a non-profit dance training organisation, in Cape Town. Dance acts as a tool for transformation to integrate social awareness, according to the Jazzart website.

Sangweni has been with Jazzart since 2007, having completed his dance training program at the organisation in 2010. In the years to follow, Sangweni worked with prominent South African artists, including Alfred Hinkel, Sibongile Khumalo, Mziyanda Mancam, Lara Foot, and Jay Pather.

Jazzart and Sangweni are synonymous, according to Nicole van Ster-Grosch, operations and finance officer at Jazzart.

"He is truly the face of Jazzart: hands-on, always helpful, and a great leader with exceptional work ethic," said Van Ster-Grosch.

When asked about his day-to-day life, Sangweni speaks passionately and without hesitation about the approaching "seasonal performances" that he is working on with the Jazzart team.

"A season is a few days of back-to-back performance, which is also meant for us artists to touch base with our audience and say, 'we're back, we're alive, we're existing,'" explained Sangweni.

SETBACKS IN THE INDUSTRY

Artists have felt on the periphery of society due to their inability to perform. They are desperate to get back on stage, according to Sangweni.

"It is not that we seek validation, but we seek inspiration and we are only inspired when we are within society," he said.

The art industry has suffered numerous setbacks besides not being able to perform because of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

The National Arts Council (NAC) has been caught up in controversy regarding the mismanagement of funds received from the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme. Sangweni believes that "the mismanagement of the funds is the straw that broke the artist's back" during lockdown.

The mismanagement of funds prompted a solidarity protest outside of the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town on 27 March 2021.

"[It was a] message to the government and the world, that we as artists have absolutely no confidence in the leaders who govern the arts and cultural sector in South Africa," said Blythe Stuart Linger, owner

and founder of artist management company BSL Management.

THE FUTURE OF YOUNG ARTISTS

Sangweni worries about how the NAC's mismanagement of funds will impact young artists' ambitions of being in the industry.

"I feel like young people are losing hope in the possibility of [being in] the arts. The government is not seeing that without young people aspiring to be in the arts, we're not going to be able to have all these amazing things that we have," said Sangweni.

Sangweni has therefore turned his attention to the youth and their future in the arts. His adoration is evident in the fervent manner in which he speaks about his students.

"I have always been somebody who's been an advocate for the one kid who wants to have a different career. I've always been the uncle who goes to the family meetings and discusses [that] it is possible to have a career in the arts," he said.

This passion is the reason Sangweni has put down his dancing shoes "for now" and focused his attention on moulding the youth through the Jazzart training program.

Sangweni acknowledges the importance of representative figures in shaping his career. Gregory Maqoma, an industry trailblazer, is an inspiration for Sangweni, and someone he hopes to emulate.

"[Maqoma] as a male dancer always made me believe that anything is possible," he said.

"He always made me feel like you can do whatever that you want to do and dream and glow."

"I think it's very important for young people to see themselves – for a young, black, gay boy to know that there is somebody out there who they can aspire to be like," he said.

Life in an era of hyper-productivity

Nicola Spingies

Hustle culture – and the so-called ‘toxic productivity’ that accompanies it – is a societal phenomenon where people are constantly working, and devote as many hours as possible towards trying to be productive.

This was according to Tamsyn Manuel, a clinical psychologist at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at Stellenbosch University (SU).

Manuel explained that hustle culture may seem like a high-energy motivational movement with high rewards. However, the culture of being “always on” can have devastating effects, according to Bryni Balt, a Cape Town business owner.

“Always being contactable has stopped people from being able to disconnect, and the endless open loops at our fingertips are a huge source of anxiety,” Balt told *LIP*.

“People feel [...] huge pressure to keep up with it all, and it’s almost normal to be on the brink of burnout these days.”

“Burnout is a result of chronic workplace stress that has not been properly managed,” said Elmarie Kruger, a CSCD psychologist. In a worst-case scenario, continuously putting your body under such mental pressure can manifest in mental health issues such as anxiety, reads an article by the African Doctoral Academy.

Mental health issues related to hustle culture could show up in people’s lives in varied ways, said Glynis Deppler, a counsellor from LifeLine Western Cape. Deppler explained that she once saw a person shouting at a cashier in the store, and that “outbursts of anger [were] indicative of how stress can manifest in [the] body”.

The problem, then, is that people could be unaware of these mental health issues that have manifested,

which would hinder them from seeking help, Deppler continued.

“Those are the things we need to be conscious of and acknowledge.



Our mental health is often under constant strain because of a hyper-productive narrative pushed by mainstream media. Illustration: Nicola Spingies

We [at LifeLine] try to encourage people to be aware of it and to say that it isn’t abnormal,” Deppler said.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE MEDIA

The media consequently has a big impact on how people perceive mental health.

“[The media] can always play an important role in raising awareness and de-stigmatising mental health issues, as well as educating readers about managing their own mental wellness,” said Kruger.

There is room for improvement in how the media encourages conversations around mental health, in a variety of formats and on different platforms, to ensure that “people are treated with respect and dignity and feel safe to share their experiences”, she said.

IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSATIONS

Conversation is the most powerful tool that the media has if it wants to curb harmful movements like hustle culture, according to Mia du Toit, mental health advocate and micro-influencer.

She said that she had seen a positive shift on social media towards normalising discussions about mental health.

“I wish to see more of the movement of authenticity on social media, where people can be vulnerable and can speak about their issues. It gives them that sense of community and comfort in knowing they are not isolated and alone in their own feelings,” Du Toit said.

It is important that the media uses its platforms responsibly and in ways that will instill confidence in a person, rather than putting additional pressure on them, said Du Toit. “If an individual is struggling with mental health issues, they should have the confidence to ask for help,” she added.

Online shift leaves lecturers ‘completely overwhelmed’

Heléne Leonard

Students all over the country had to adapt to emergency online learning when Covid-19 regulations forced everyone indoors. Many students have struggled to adapt online, for various reasons, but they were not alone, said Ilse du Plessis, lecturer in physiotherapy at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Du Plessis said that in her experience, many lecturers found it very difficult to adapt to emergency remote teaching where entire courses had to be moved online.

“There is a big group of students who do not have access to a lot of technology. You cannot expect that all students can be online at a specific time,” said Du Plessis. “You have to take into consideration that students might live in small villages with no internet. Students are scattered and you do not know their living arrangements,” she added.

Many lecturers struggled with presenting their courses on online forums, according to Lelanie Smith, professor in mechanical engineering at the University of Pretoria (UP).

Smith stated that only 4 out of about 30 lecturers in her department had used some sort of online teaching on Zoom and Microsoft Teams before lockdown, which means that there was a steep learning curve for many first-time users.

“The comfortability with the online platforms is not age-specific. Lecturers of all ages struggled with certain aspects of emergency remote online teaching,” stated Smith.

At Stellenbosch University (SU),

lecturers have experienced similar difficulties, according to Deborah Blaine, professor in mechanical engineering at SU.

“It is very difficult not to see my students. I had to have virtual practice and do most of the work over [SU’s online learning platform] SUNLearn,” stated Blaine.

Students missed out on aspects of university learning during online classes. According to Blaine, it is not only the course content that is needed for a student to obtain a degree.

“When you look at online teaching, you have to go back to the models of teaching. University is about the exposure to a social aspect, not just the theoretical work,” stated

Blaine. “It is the critical thinking through working in groups and the social interaction that will make you professional one day. We cannot teach that online.”

Karin Wolff, advisor in teaching and learning at SU, said that SU immediately prepared lecturers for emergency remote online learning when lockdown was initially announced.

“On 27 March 2020 we had an emergency meeting to show staff the basics of creating a presentation and how to summarise the basic lecture material into an online lecture, as well as place a recording on a presentation. We also gave them templates to work from,” stated Wolff.

However, Wolff noted that halfway through the 2020 academic year, many of the lecturers experienced burnout.

This was partially due to the overload of information regarding the preparation for better emergency remote online learning.

“Many staff members had to teach their own children at home and teach university students at the same time. Everyone’s home situation was challenging in its own way,” Wolff said.

The centre for teaching and learning at SU conducted a survey in the second half of 2020, exploring the challenges that lecturers experienced regarding emergency remote online learning. It was found

that staff members were “completely overwhelmed”, according to Wolff.

“Many lecturers felt as if they could not handle it. It was evident [through the survey] that lecturers were emotionally drained due to the overload of information on how to improve emergency remote online learning for their students,” explained Wolff.

Wolff concluded that SU infrastructures were accessible to staff members, but that they might have tried too much too quickly.

The information given to staff members regarding lockdown was necessary, but resulted in “overwhelming loads of information and communication,” stated Wolff.



Since the implementation of emergency online learning during lockdown, lecture halls in most university campuses nationwide have been empty. Photo: Unsplash/Nathan Dumbao



Zahlé Eloff, postgraduate in philosophy, noted that she finds it challenging to explain to a newcomer what SunLearn is. Photo: Heléne Leonard

Uncovering intimacy in isolation

Caitlin Maledo

The lockdown safety protocols which were introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, restricted couples and single individuals alike, to the confines of their homes. While ensuring that physical health was of top priority, people explored new ways of maintaining sexual health, according to Chantal Fowler, clinical psychologist and psycho-sexologist.

Now, intimacy has become an important topic, as people realise the power that it has. This is according to Dr Marlana Du Toit, gynaecologist and sexual medicine specialist.

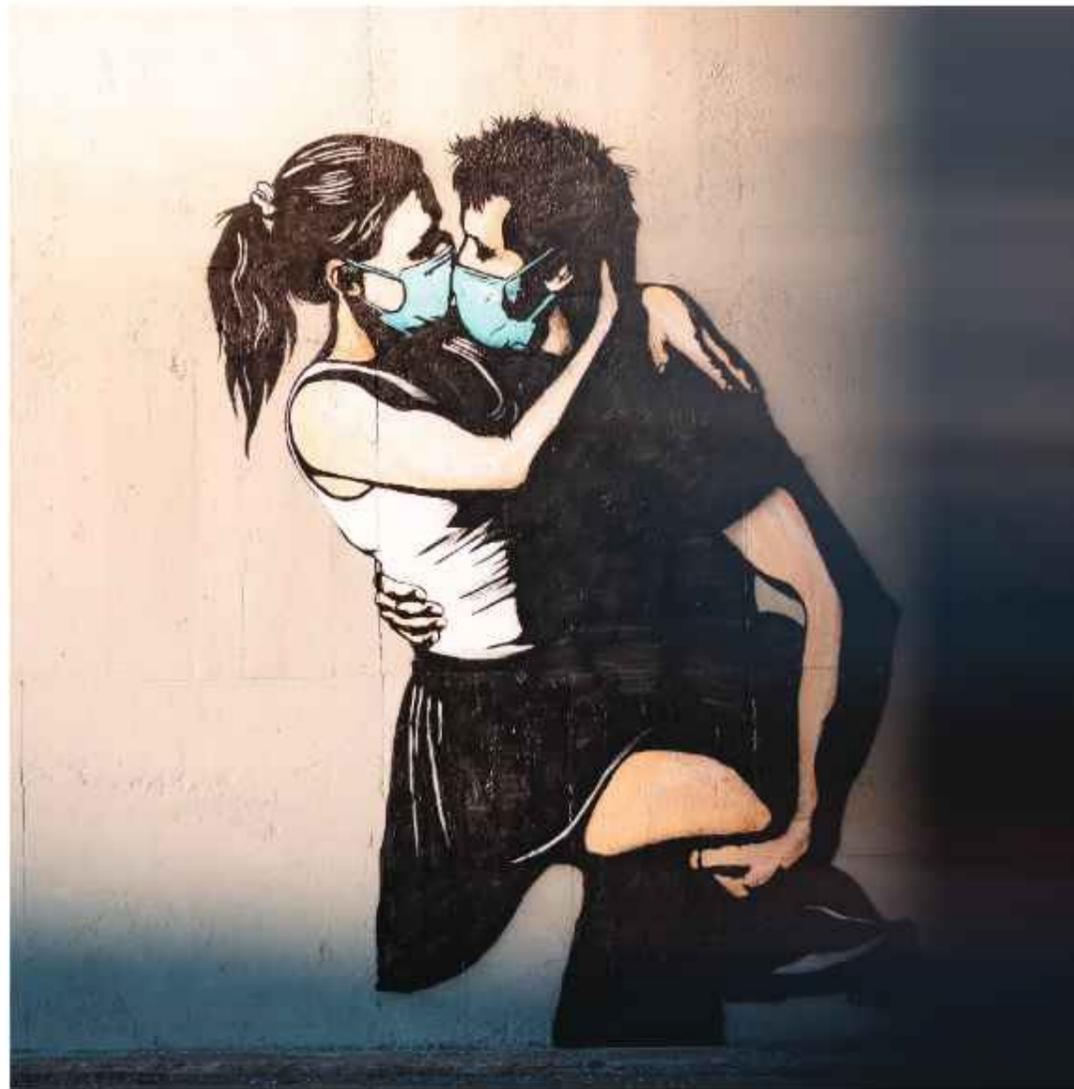
Learning to be intimate with someone without them being physically present, was a challenge people had to overcome while exploring sex during lockdown. Virtual intimacy is one of the new ways in which people could form connections and stimulate their sexual desire, according to Fowler.

SEX AND INTIMACY

The term 'sex' is a particularly complex one to understand, because sex can refer to many things, such as gender, orientation, intercourse or outercourse, explained Du Toit. Related terms, like intimacy and consent, are somewhat stuck in a grey area of understanding, which is a result of the lack of educational discourse around sexual relations, she added.

"[Intimacy] is so important. It boosts our mood, it increases our self confidence. So, it is quite a vital part of our mental health," said Du Toit. She further explained that intimacy is a connection that exists in a safe environment, where all parties are respected and valued.

Fowler stated that the way people experience intimacy is personal and specific. Each individual perceives intimacy differently, but it is important to make the distinction between the varying understandings.



Physical intimacy – sexual or nonsexual – releases chemicals such as dopamine, endorphins and oxytocin, which is also known as the bonding hormone. These chemicals foster pair bonding between loved ones, according to Chantal Fowler and Dr Marlana Du Toit. Photo: Unsplash/Daniel Tafjord

"There isn't a blanket definition and there isn't one way to define intimacy," said Fowler. Thus, communication plays an important role in the process of understanding and enjoying intercourse, but is often the most neglected aspect of sexual activity, said Du Toit.

It is also important to self-explore

in order to understand the body and what it reacts to, explained Du Toit. She elaborated by saying that for an individual to maximise the pleasure they want, and to communicate that effectively, people must have an understanding of their own bodies; thus, self-exploration is fundamental.

"We need to know what we want

from sex and how we respond, and then we need to [be] able to communicate that," she added.

SOCIAL MEDIA ON SEXUALITY

Resources for sexual health training in South Africa are limited, and training was further undermined due to the pandemic, according to Fowler.

For psychologists, doctors and social workers in South Africa wanting to specialise in sexual health, it is not currently possible to obtain certification locally, claimed Fowler.

"Healthcare workers across the board are not trained [in] sexual health. So, most of us have gone overseas to be trained," said Fowler.

The lack of discourse on the subject matter is directly related to the lack of education on it, said Patsy de Lora, chief executive officer of Partners in Sexual Health (PSH), a non-profit organisation that promotes sexual health education among youth.

"You teach these young people [about] prevention and [provide them with] information, but you realise the parents are ill-informed – that these young people cannot even openly discuss [...] things they've learned in school," she added. Due to lockdown, traditional modes of education became digitised, which caused educational institutions like PSH to adapt to online methods of teaching. According to De Lora, this was a "blessing in disguise".

As the youth consume much of their information online, it became even more pressing to make use of social media as a means of education, De Lora added.

"[Social media] opens us up to different experiences. It opens us up to people expressing themselves, particularly in sexual ways," said Kanyisa Booie, editor-in-chief of Eve's Apple, a digital sexual health magazine that focuses on sexual education.

However, social media has the power to be damaging, as it can portray an unrealistic image of sex and sexuality, warned Fowler. While social media has shown that it can be a tool for sexual liberation, and representative of the various ways, shapes and sizes in which people can exist in the world, it "also reminds us that our bodies are pliable", remarked Booie.

Let's get physical: exercising during lockdown

Lara van Zyl

The world of exercise took a hit due to the global pandemic, according to various personal trainers.

During 2020, people had to isolate in their homes which caused most of normal day-to-day routines to change, including exercise routines.

Many fitness institutions had to adapt to quarantine by providing online classes, said Kristi Goodman, a yoga instructor who teaches Bikram, Power and Sculpt classes at Yoga Life Studio in Cape Town.

People had to find a way to remain motivated and stay active. Paige Georgiades, a Stellenbosch University student, started a fitness page on Instagram to inspire and help more people exercise while at home.

"I think it is so important to keep healthy and active especially during quarantine because I think you could go crazy if you didn't," stated Georgiades.

After conducting an informal Instagram survey in April 2021, LIP discovered what some students' go-to exercises were during lockdown.

Yoga came out as the most popular, with methods varying from livestreamed classes, to apps

like Down Dog Yoga – and even winging it in your backyard with a sun salutation.

Other answers included high-intensity interval training (HIIT) and Kayla Itsines Bikini Body Guide (BBG).

Some students, like Bernice Deven, stated that they enjoyed attending online Zumba and pilates classes.

Not everyone had access to exercise equipment, so some students got creative and used textbooks, wine bottles and backpacks as weights for resistance training.

Others honestly admitted that their favourite workout was walking from the bed to the fridge.



During the pandemic, many exercise institutions adapted by providing online courses for their clients. Yoga was one of the most popular lockdown fitness regimes. Illustration: Lara van Zyl

Opinion

An ode to lockdown

LIP team

When lockdowns were imposed across the globe, society was forced to slow down and embrace stillness for the first time in a long time.

Now, more than a year later, it is safe to say that people live differently. While Covid-19 was the source of many drawbacks, LIP wanted to touch on some of the more wholesome outcomes of lockdown.

Psychologist Carlien Serfontein believes that people have become more innovative, now that they have had time to reflect on what is truly essential in their lives.

Even though we had to sacrifice some freedoms while bound to our homes, we (ironically) became more aware of the opportunities that we possess to live the way we want to, and escape those norms we don't agree with.

"We took time out of the rat race to assess, ask questions, challenge the system, and recreate ourselves to fit the new normal," said Serfontein. "People have become comfortable with uncertainty, which is a huge positive."

This "new normal" has shifted our social behavioural patterns. Lockdown has shown us that adaptability might become our most valuable asset yet.

There was also a huge move towards comfort in all aspects of our lives — most noticeably, in our fashion. As online methods of learning and working became the norm, chinos in boardrooms were replaced by pyjamas in bedrooms, while matching masks with outfits became the hype for the fashion-conscious.

This affinity for comfy living is not going anywhere, anytime soon. Crocs — a company that, according to their website, is famous for producing "the most delightfully comfortable shoes in the world" — saw "the strongest revenue in [their] history" in 2020, and are expecting this number to increase by 5% in 2021. This was according to a company press release published in January 2021.

In lockdown, many of us picked up new hobbies. With an unprecedented amount of time suddenly available to many people, these hobbies became part of their daily routines. Cleaning proved to be popular, alongside puzzle building, journaling and working on DIY projects. Strava drawings, which are created using the GPS-line that tracks movement on an exercise app, became a new form of art — although most people just ran in circles in their gardens.

"Having hobbies can be essential to maintaining mental health and wellness," said Dr Michael Kocet, department chair of the Counselor

Education Department at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, in an interview published in Convene Magazine on 20 September 2020.

A lack of access to restaurants meant that we had to get creative in the kitchen, or at least work on our cooking skills. Some families decided to make the most of their time together by dividing into teams and hosting dinner parties with fun themes.

This form of entertainment often mirrored a Come Dine With Me episode, in which family members could comment on and score a team's efforts. Menus featured home-made goods, such as whipped coffee and sourdough bread.

Although we were confined to our homes, we still found ways to stay connected with our peers, family members and loved ones. Video chat apps saw major increases in their usership.

One such app, HouseParty, gained around 17 million users in March 2020, according to a TechCrunch article published in April 2020. Its popularity, albeit short-lived, was largely due to the fact that it allowed groups of friends to hang out and partake in games like Pictionary via video chat. "[It] has been described as mirroring the, sometimes chaotic, form of a real party, with users able to simply jump into their friends' conversations," stated the article.

New ways of celebrating milestones such as anniversaries, graduations and birthdays were also established; candlelit FaceTimes dinners, make-shift paper graduation caps at Microsoft Teams ceremonies, and self-baked cakes shared over Zoom parties, became the norm. In addition to teaching us an array of skills, lockdown prompted us to realise the importance of time and "how expensive it is to waste or spend it on things that will not bring us fulfilment", according to Serfontein.

With so many big things out of our control, we developed a clearer sense of the control we do have over little things, like the ways in which we can spend the minutes and hours in our days.

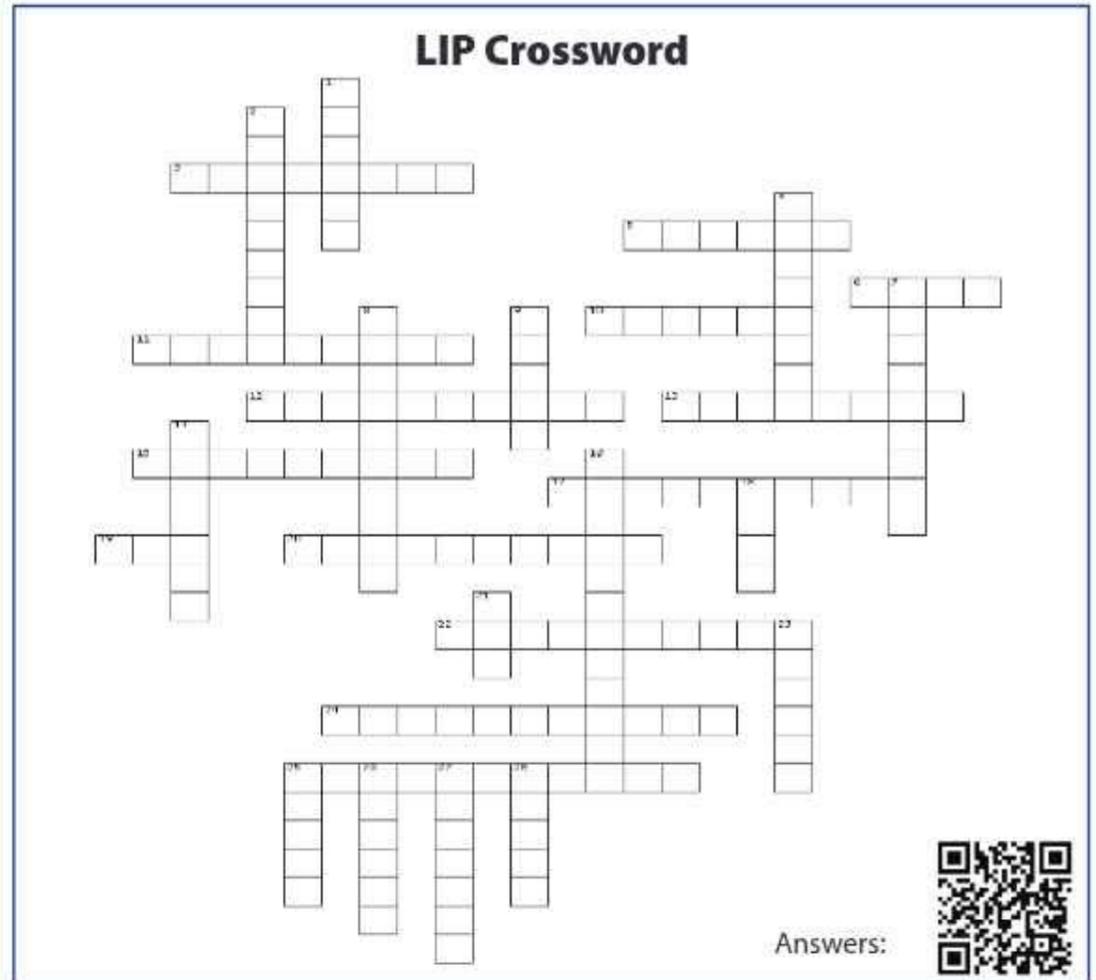
Ultimately, the change of pace offered by lockdown prompted people to "[take] stock of what is important, and how to prioritise [these] things", continued Serfontein.

Perhaps lockdown gave us the push we needed to make the big changes we were too afraid to make before — all because we were suddenly faced with an unavoidable awareness of the fragility of our lives and plans.

Going forward, we hope to take these lockdown lessons to heart.

We will surely need them in navigating the uncertain and unexplored world that lies ahead, as we emerge from our months in isolation — a little bolder and braver than we were before.

LIP Crossword



Answers:



DOWN

1. South African radio host and journalist who passed away in 2020: Bob _____
2. How many days was South Africa's initial hard lockdown?
4. What was South Africa's 2020 Word of the Year according to Collins Dictionary?
7. Planets aligned on 25 December to form the "_____ Star"
8. What mobile app was used for people to remain social during lockdown?
9. Disease that was eradicated in South Africa in 2020
14. The name of Johannesburg's first alcohol-free bar
16. The oldest pub in South Africa that closed during lockdown: _____ Tavern
18. Which South African helped save a F1 racer from a fiery wreck? _____ van der Merwe
21. "When People _____": a song by Max Hurrell
23. Which South African filmmaker won an Oscar for "My Octopus Teacher"? Craig _____
25. "_____ & Water": a South African series on Netflix
26. Which South African youth choir performed with PINK?
27. The first name of Miss Universe South Africa 2020
28. What rare leopard was spotted in South Africa? African _____ Leopard

Compiled by Alexander Brand and Carla Visagie

ACROSS

3. Which shampoo brand released a controversial advert through Clicks?
5. Where was the first Covid-19 case reported in South Africa?
6. Abbreviation for the South African Covid-19 regulatory body
10. Which Verspeelde Lente-actress passed away at 68 years old in 2020: Elize _____
11. Netflix's first African original series
12. The 65-year-old musician who topped the South African iTunes chart
13. Who is X Æ A-12's father?
15. A fruit that many South Africans used to make alcohol at home
17. A song by Master KG that started a dance trend online
19. Which company launched the first electric trucks in South Africa?
20. The first name of WHO's African regional director
22. The name of Die Antwoord's album released in 2020?
24. Which South African musician became famous for his lockdown parody videos?
25. Most popular home-made baked good during lockdown: _____ bread

