

VOICE OF THE WOMEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt throughout the world. Nations are grappling with not only the COVID-19 virus but its impact as well. While reports show the immense damage and set back caused by COVID-19 across other spheres, its impact on women has gone unnoticed for a while. IRCU engaged women during this period and these are some of the stories they shared.



Mrs. Florence Lumala

”COVID-19 has impacted me positively. I believe some urban women too.

We have accepted a shift from physical to online shopping in small and large markets for foodstuff and other essential home use. When hopping, I only need phone numbers for essential services; that is, the seller and delivery person.

I order for all the stuff I need then call the rider to deliver them home. Payment online can be made either before or after delivery depending on the r/ship and regulations of the seller or supermarket you ordered from. It saves me time that I would have spent away from home to go and do physical shopping; I’m able to use this time for productive work.

It is my best way of adhering to the Ministry of health guidelines because I’m not exposed to other people. I have come to appreciate technology and its power to keep us united with my relatives and loved ones during the lockdown.

That’s my story.”



Living with COVID -19 as a Women. Church of Uganda Women's group

Women leaders in Kampala Diocese have done great work by Listening, Observing, and Acting. The Elderly, sick, widows and women whose husbands abandoned were visited and prayed for and we're given assistance of food. We were able to give some children from the slums of Naguru, Kamwokya, and Nakawa food during the lockdown. Below is one beneficiary.

She was in Corsu hospital during the lockdown and her family could not visit her given the COVID -19 restrictions on travelling. Unfortunately, she could no longer afford the bills and checked out of the hospital to opt for local treatment. COVID-19 has affected many women financially hindering their access to social services.

Pr. Betty Odongo

What I have experienced as a woman of faith since the time of Lockdown, there is a great work outside there that we did not even know, many women are experiencing a lot of Gender Based Violence silently.

COVID-19 has unveiled this much more. There is an increase in teenage pregnancies during this lockdown. I met a family of 15 children with a number of the girls impregnated and abandoned by their partners.

It is sad interacting with women who have become sole breadwinners for their families irrespective of the presence of their husbands. Women are toiling to put food on the table. If they are not helped, this lockdown will cause more harm than good because we will see families dying of hunger than COVID-19. We as women of faith have a greater task to support fellow women. As a family, we are supporting with the little we have though we believe this should be a collective effort in support of fellow women.

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Anonymous

The other day I went to do some community charity work around our village and stretched far where I always don't reach. I found a lady seated on a shade with both her legs broken and a young baby of 3 months besides her crying. I engaged her and came to learn that her husband beat her up and used up all her hard-earned money and now surviving at the mercy of well-wishers. COVID-19 related effects are biting hard but women and children have been adversely affected. We call for Government intervention to support these women or else the future of women and children is at stake!

Ms. Florence Nassanga Chairperson ganda Women of Faith.

This year the world came to a standstill due to the corona virus pandemic and Uganda was not spared either. Due to this pandemic, the country was put on the lockdown, schools closed, shops and offices. The most affected population group were the bodaboda riders, taxi drivers and casual laborers because most of these were hand to mouth earners and so food became a problem. The government distributed some but it was not enough. So in my diocese, my Bishop requested the district task force to allow us distribute food to the vulnerable poor in the districts of Luweero, Nakasongola and Nakaseke. I head the Humanitarian, Emergency and Relief department. Through Caritas we managed to distribute 8 tons of posho.

Back home, family cooks porridge for the little ones in the age of 2-12 years. We promised to cook porridge and serve them because this was the least we could do as a family. Most children have their parents in the category of hand to mouth earning. However, I believe through collective responsibility, we can support women out there.

Concerns raised to the Government (Anonymous)

I believe Government needs taxes but people not working: Small and Medium business, largely are out of work since lock down, how can they be helped to regain momentum especially if they have loans to pay and service: Ordinary citizens that have lost their jobs in this period, how is government to absorb them especially the youth when we are already struggling with youth unemployment: Agriculture being the bedrock of our economy and considering that food will be in high demand during and post lock down, how have farmers been boosted to produce more and with quality and value addition to feed Ugandans and export: how to promote trade across East Africa and the world, how is this going to be with all the challenges of COVID and yet trade must and should continue, fighting corruption is key in building a strong and sustainable economy and this had continued to be a challenge: perhaps have subsidies but how when government seems to be forcing people to contribute to the response fund? Also, the amounts of money being borrowed for the COVID-19 response, if not well utilized, they will sink the Ugandan economy further into debt. Can stakeholders address these issues?



Many Finchworth residents turned up for the special state elections, the highest number in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Carol Idembe

I have really given up on the government aiding expecting mothers with ambulance transport. Recently, we had an incidence with a neighbor whose wife was due and there was no transport. In the spirit of the good Samaritan, my husband took her and the husband to the hospital but our car doesn't have a sticker that allows it to move during the lockdown. We took the risk nonetheless. Unfortunately, on our way back my husband was asked to explain why he was moving and yet he had no sticker. In all humility, he explained to the police officer the reason why he was out. Eventually, he was allowed to come home. Later, the neighbor was discharged from the hospital because she was not yet due but had a fibroid situation that was pushing the baby hence causing contraction like pains.

The hospital agreed to pick her up in an ambulance in case she needed to go to the hospital again but at a cost of Ugx 70,000/=. As fate would have it, the time came and they footed the bill for the ambulance to the hospital. The baby was successfully delivered by cesarean but the couple had run out of money, even to pay for the ambulance transport back home.

We are grateful to God that all went well and that we were able to help this couple. But these questions remain, what is happening to women in similar conditions who are not able to afford such transport costs? I see government vehicles moving around, some belonging to offices that were locked during this period since they are not frontline responders. Couldn't such vehicles be redeployed to assist in such situations?

Is this not taxpayers' money or money borrowed in the name of Uganda and to be paid back at the cost of the same citizens that are not being helped now

Anonymous

Religious leaders should also have a message to the people not only to the government. Including; calling to people to change behavior, to reduce spending especially on non-essential items as these are hard and unpredictable times, so people should not get stuck in the old way of doing things or in old jobs. Women should be flexible, more accommodative so that they do not miss out of job opportunities, cultivate the value of hard and honest work, being faithful with the little so that they can be trusted with much, people should stay positive, not give up, this too will pass and when it does. Women should also ensure that they remain relevant to the economy (things like training online, learning new skills), a sense of entitlement should not be promoted; where people think that government owes them or that their MPs should give them a livelihood. And lastly, women should be at the forefront of supporting Government rolls out interventions that are geared towards women's development.

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