

CIDD-UG ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF 14 DAYS LOCKDOWN IN PALLISA BY 16TH APRIL 2020



14 DAYS OF LOCKDOWN IN PALLISA



Business slump at Pallisa Main market due to lock down.

BY

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Our Vision: A Transformed, Sustainable and Self-Reliant Humanity

(1) The likely Scenarios from the COVID-19 Emergence according to CIDD-UG

1.1 Scenario 1: The National and District taskforces shall help the country gain quick recovery.

The pandemic is on relapse though case counts continue to grow given the high transmissibility of the virus. However, due to strong national, local and public response against COVID-19, it is possible that fast control desired globally shall be achieved. The only challenge is that our national and local economy (GDP) is expected to fall but the same vigilance shall be used to remobilize production so as to revamp the economy, as suggested by economic analysts.

1.2 Scenario 2: economic slump

Small and medium-size enterprises will be more acutely affected especially the less developed businesses that are largely managed by the most disadvantaged groups like women and young people who form majority of the population. This is likely not only to plunge majority of the local population back into poverty but also perpetuate economic imbalance in communities.

1.3 Scenario 3: degeneration in health service delivery.

If the case growth continues throughout the year 2020, it will have potential to overwhelm the already strained local healthcare system. In this scenario, the most affected shall be women and children who are the major beneficiaries of our health care system and may result into increased mortality and morbidity rates requiring effective mitigation measures.

(2) BACKGROUND

The impact of the deadly corona virus has taken quite a toll on the economy and humanity in the first world countries. According to the COVID-19 tracker of 20th April 2020, a whopping total of 2,453,401 cases had been confirmed with 168,784 deaths globally. The first world was in the most lamentable and terrifying situation with a total of **1,579,179** confirmed cases, **127,802** deaths and a paltry **329,830** recoveries. This is a painstaking and nerve breaking scenario. Ironically the USA which globally is perceived to be the leading economy with the most effective and efficient research and health system bore the fiercest brunt of the pandemic with **771,216** confirmed cases, **41,356** deaths and only **71,497** recoveries which is no laughing matter. Although the Holy Father (Pope) at the Vatican and the British Premier at Ten Downing Street in London are clearly free from the problem, the situation in Italy and the United Kingdom remains grim.

The Gods of sub Saharan African countries must be at home because comparatively, the confirmed cases herein are piecemeal though the threat is still apparent. With their struggling economies and limping health systems, the COVID-19 would have wrecked mass destruction of humanity here in case of breakout similar to that in the first world. In circumstances such as these, any delay in slapping total lockdown on the population can cause the virus to harvest lives in thousands. Countries like the USA, Italy and Spain that delayed to institute lockdowns have taken in the heaviest blow from the pandemic globally as compared to South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan that were quick to slap restrictions on the people's movement and have kept their cases low. It's therefore imperative that the lockdown is upheld universally so as to check spread of the pandemic especially in third world countries where the problem would cause mass destruction with devastating effects.

2.1 National Response

In Uganda, the COVID-19 has had a mild impact with 55 confirmed cases with no deaths as on 20th April 2020. Thirty-eight of the cases have been treated, fully recovered, released from the quarantine and even re-integrated into their respective communities. CIDD-UG gives the government of Uganda a standing

ovation by slapping the lockdown on the population as the most effective strategy of preventing fast spread of the deadly pandemic. The safety directives by the President and ministry of health guidelines were to be in force for fourteen days but at their expiry on 14th April 2020, an extension of 21 more days was announced by the president as it had been observed that the situation was far from satisfactory.

2.2 Local Response

In Pallisa District, lockdown is by all means the effective strategy needed to stem spread of COVID-19 and the first 14 days of the innovation were generally well implemented. We appreciate district task force, health workers and other stake holders for their immense contribution in the fight against the pandemic in the district.

While supporting the district taskforce to roll out sensitization on the key safety measures that had been instituted, CIDD-UG was also able to conduct COVID-19 rapid impact assessment on a cross section of people in the communities. It is from that basis we have generated **our second** report with focus on areas that need to be addressed as both short- and medium-term response to COVID-19 impact on the local population.

The District taskforce has demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness in implementing the President's safety directives and ministry of health guidelines and the community compliance with them was relative because an element of enforcement had to be employed by security personnel and the technical arm of the district task force. From this perspective therefore, we would like to give credit to the District taskforce for a job well done, the health workers for sacrifice to serve beyond self and amidst inadequacies, CSOs for continuous community education as well as other stake holders for heeding to the President's call for support.

(3) Table A, COVID-19 Status in Pallisa District by 20th, April, 2020

Returnees followed up	Quarantined	Completed the quarantine	Discharged	Tested	Positive	Negative	Awaiting results
58	58	18	18	07	00	07	00

Source: Pallisa District Health office.

(4) Methodology:

A qualitative approach was used for purposes of generating information for developing this report supported by primary data from health centres, local markets and police stations, the feedback reports from CIDD-UG community sensitization activities and one on one interviews all through supported the documentation process of the final report. This report has been produced to be shared with the District task force and other partners to help in implementing the right interventions during this emergence period.

(5) Recommendations

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of life should be in the heart of every duty bearer. Our commitment to improved human right must continue to serve as a beacon for how we should respond to this emergence. All stakeholders must strike a fine balance between protecting health, minimizing economic and social disruptions and respecting human rights. However, as we progress with the next

phase of the lockdown, this report provides quick insight into compliance with the presidential safety directives and ministry of health guidelines with effects and impact of the problem on the sectors of health, human rights and local economic development and then recommendations as seen below;

- The Local Government and CSOs should focus on mitigation of stigma in the community caused by speculation that Kamuge HCIII is a COVID-19 isolation unit.
- The Pallisa District task force in partnership with CSOs and donors in the area should extend community education to practices like hand shaking, social distance and observance of curfew hours.
- The Pallisa District task force in partnership with CSOs and donors should prioritize enhancing family planning services at all health facilities.
- Consider easing restrictions on the small and medium size enterprises

(6) Impact of the 14 days of lockdown

(6.1) Reduced health seeking behavior. There is reduced health seeking behaviors across all the 6 visited health facilities and this likely to draw back Pallisa District efforts to contribute to the achievement of SDG 3. According to the preliminary reports from health facilities, a big drop in the number of clients seeking health services has been reported especially, the out patients' numbers have dropped from **70 to 40/35** on average across the six health units visited. In addition, ante-natal cases from **50 to 30** on average and deliveries from **55 to 30** respectively. The reduction in the total number of women seeking maternal and other related health services especially expectant mothers and those in labour sighted hardship in access transport to the health facilities due to lockdown and transport restrictions. While the boda bodas feared to be arrested, the men with bicycles couldn't transport their wives to the health centres as they are not allowed to carry passengers. CIDD-UG learnt about four cases of women delivering on the way to Kamuge health facility and another one case of a woman who had complications in delivering twins as reported in Kapala village, Apopong Sub County.

6.2) Community fear towards seeking health services at Kamuge HCIII. The drop of clients at Kamuge HCIII was also attributed to community fear that the health Centre was made an isolation unit for COVID-19 cases. However, the in-charge of the health Centre sister Annet Sabano disclosed that the LCs, VHTs, GISOs, Religious and other local leaders were deployed to give the correct message on house to house level in order to avert the fears. It's therefore important for the Task force to establish if this intervention has had desirable impact in the community.

6.3) Increased uptake of family planning services.

Whereas there was general drop of clients in the health facilities during the 14 days of lockdown, a sharp increase in the uptake of family planning services was realized. The mid wives at all the 6 health centres visited by CIDD-UG reported that "The women voluntarily seek these services to avoid unwanted pregnancies following increased demand for sex from the men who are now confined at home. In some cases, the men escort their wives to the health facilities to seek these services especially in the evenings".

6.4) Observance of curfew hours. The curfew has brought many community members in conflict with the law especially men and youth. They complain that they have nothing to do at home. In the process of enforcement by police, some have been harassed, beaten and arrested. The officer in charge Apopong police post, SGT Alisengawa Harriet pointed out that this restriction has not gone down well with men and youth. In our view, the continuous confrontations between police and communities may brew sour relations and mistrust yet the two are supposed to exist for peace and harmony.

6.5) Rise in physical, economic, social and emotional violence. Whereas the 14 days of lockdown was meant to control the spread of the corona pandemic, it has also created anxiety, fear and uncertainty within the local population of Pallisa. It is undisputed fact that Uganda has 70% of its population in the youthful stage, the majority of who are unemployed that live hand to mouth, thus, there is need for daily survival “getting what to eat”. The 14 days of lockdown have created potential for conflict and violence not only in families but also in the communities. During this period of assessment conducted by CIDD-UG indicates that cases of gender-based and sexualized violence have increasingly been reported both at the police posts and health facilities.

Sister Sabano of Kamuge HC3 disclosed that the women have expressed increased cases of harassment from men both physically and psychologically. This is mainly arising from projected anger following failure by men to provide for their families because they are locked at home and can no longer engage in gainful work. The situation is particularly bad with boda bodas, casual laborers commonly referred to as jua-kalis and petty traders who live from hand to mouth. *“Children are the biggest victims of this anger and it extends to women when they ask for something lacking at home or intervene to save the children as they are harassed by the men”, she reported.*

The midwives at Agule, Kasodo, Kibale and Apopong HCs pointed out that the level of scarcity, has forced mothers in labour to report to the health facilities without the basic requirements because the men are seated at home without work. Mr. Timothy Mbulankende, the in charge of Apopong HC, disclosed that “in such a case, I’m compelled to provide the basic requirements for the mother in labour from my pocket”

In Kamuge and Apopong sub counties, just the way it could have been in other sub counties, increasing cases of men physically assaulting their wives arising from failure to provide for families, have been reported to both police and the health facilities.

In a peculiar incident, CIDD-UG unearthed a case from one village in Pallisa, where a house wife was harassed by the husband because she delayed to return home from where she had gone to look for some food for the family having spent the previous day without a meal. According to her, she reported the matter to the police post but the officer on duty sent her away saying that at that particular time they only dealt with COVID-19 related cases but not those of drunkards fighting at their homes. She was forced to spend the night in the cold because she could not get into the house with the husband still angry. The physical and psychological torture suffered made her consider divorce to avoid further violence but rescinded the notion for the sake of her three children. She appreciates the hardships caused by the lockdown but contends that men ought to realize need for spouses to understand each other at home and requests the authorities to help educate the men about this need. This behavior by the police officer clearly indicated his inability to relate the violence to COVID-19. Something that we would think the Task force should prioritize to ensure holist delivery of services during this period.

(7) Local Economic Development

7.1) Decline of household incomes. This scenario cuts across the spectrum. Every house hold in both formal and informal employment has felt the pinch of declined income arising from the lockdown with far reaching consequences. The men have failed to provide for families leading to increase in domestic violence where children and women have fallen victim. The dietary provisions in families have dropped as people now only eat to survive while the health facilities have borne the burden of providing basic requirements for mothers in labour that had not been planned for. The boda bodas, jua kalis and other casual laborers have risked coming into conflict with the law so as to find something for family survival. In such cases, they have ended up clashing and souring relations with members of security, yet these groups need to co-exist with or without lockdown.

7.2) Slump in business and local economic development. As we may be aware, the small and medium size businesses are critical in running the economy of country. However, the breakout of COVID-19 and subsequent slapping of the lockdown on the population has made it difficult for this cadre of the citizenry to operate. The president's safety restrictions and ministry of health guidelines include ban on public transport and control of crowding in markets and local supply chain of food stuff has drastically reduced clientele for the small and medium size business fraternity countrywide, made them count sporadic losses and is eventually weeding them out of business. There is likelihood that majority of households that were about to cross the poverty line may slide back into poverty and unprecedented levels of vulnerability.

In Pallisa town council, the women involved in informal trade like supply of fresh foods and management of eating



Alice Tereka at her food stall in Pallisa central market with barely no customer to purchase fresh food items

hubs suffered the heaviest effects of the problem during the 14 days of the first lockdown. These include among others drastic decline of customers, inability to replenish their stocks, disposal of rotting merchandise due to their perishable nature and eating into their capital base. Before COVID-19, the women in the informal business sector at Pallisa central market had reason to smile because they were doing brisk business with quick returns but the reverse became true and they have counted loses when the restrictions of the lockdown were imposed. The women vendors continue wondering how their livelihoods and families will look like after the Lockdown.

According to **Namulindi Fatuma** and **Alice Tereka** who are tomato and matooke vendors at Pallisa Town Council market had this to say “we used to register 40-80 walk through customers and 50 distant buyers from sub county outlet markets and trading centres daily. “The restrictions on movement (stay home) have affected the growth of our business as we can’t get clients. This has made us stuck with these perishable goods and reduced our

clientele to about 10-15 on daily basis”. And remember I am servicing a loan from micro finance institution that does not know COVID-19 or lockdown”. What shall I do? Namulindi asked?

Mariam Sabiti and Nabisawa Caroline also shop attendants dealing in cereals and food stuff also complained of total client reduction. Those from distant destinations like Agule and Kibale sub counties who used to do bulk purchases hardly come to shop now as it used to be. “We used to receive an average of 10 such customers daily but now we receive a much smaller number”. **Mildred Amojong food stall owner lamented that,** “As women in business and single household heads, we derive our livelihood from our businesses and enable us to provide for our families, but this slump caused by lockdown has paralyzed us so much that we are now eating into the capital and may fall out of business if the situation persists”.

(8) Conclusion

As part of the strategy to mitigate effects of the lockdown, CIDD-UG will continue to conduct community education on social safety nets among the communities in Pallisa, Kibuku and Budaka districts. Reports on community engagements shall again be shared with the task forces and technical teams of the respective local governments. Sustained cooperation with the various stake holders shall not only tone down the problem but also enhance fast recovery from it.