

Arise

A Women's Development Magazine
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WOMEN AND COVID-19: Resilience, Adaptation & Action



FACTSHEET

What you need to know about **CORONAVIRUS** (Covid-19 DISEASE)

What is Coronavirus?

This is a new virus that causes a respiratory illness in people and animals and can spread from person-to-person through sneezing and coughing droplets. This virus has signs and symptoms similar to the common cold but is dangerous and if not reported early and managed by Health Workers it can cause severe illnesses in humans and can lead to death.

Where did Coronavirus come from?

There are ongoing studies on the origins of Coronavirus. However, the current outbreak started in a large animal and seafood market in China, in a city called Wuhan.

How does Coronavirus spread?

Initially, the virus was believed to be spread to humans through contact with infected animals. Currently, transmission is human-to-human. It occurs when an infected person's sneeze or cough droplets come into contact with others.

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk. However, severe symptoms and death appear more frequently among older people. People with underlying health conditions such as lung or heart diseases, renal failure or weak immune systems are noted to be at a higher risk of infection.

Currently, there is a huge outbreak in China which is spreading globally. Travellers to and from China are potentially, the most-at-risk.

What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

The full clinical presentation of the disease is still under investigation. However, most patients who have been seen so far present with:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

How can Coronavirus be prevented?

There are simple everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of the virus:

- Avoid close contact with people who are visibly sick with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sneeze).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay home when you experience these symptoms to avoid spreading illness to others.
- The sick are encouraged to use a face-mask to cover the nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the dustbin and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as door handles and phones.

Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality



**OUR
VISION**

Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda



**OUR
MISSION**



**CORPORATE
VALUES**

Core Purpose

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

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CORONAVIRUS Factsheet

Is there a vaccine to prevent or cure a person from Coronavirus?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against Coronavirus. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus or to those infected with the virus.

Is there treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment. However, people who have been infected should immediately seek medical care to help relieve symptoms and manage complications.

How to manage someone with Coronavirus at home?

The best place to manage a sick person with Coronavirus infection is in the hospital. However, if the patient is still managed at home you should:

- Place the patient in a well-ventilated single room and provide the patient with a face-mask.
- Limit the number of caretakers of the patient to only one person who is in good health.
- Wash hands with running water and soap following all contact with sick persons or their immediate environment.
- Avoid direct contact with body fluids, particularly oral or respiratory secretions or stool of the patient.
- Avoid sharing toothbrushes, eating utensils, dishes, drinks, towels, washcloths or bed linen with the sick person.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as door knobs/handles, bedside tables, bedframes, and other bedroom furniture daily with regular household disinfectant or soap.
- Clean and disinfect bathroom and toilet surfaces at least once a day with regular household disinfectant or soap.
- Persons with symptoms should remain at home until their symptoms are resolved based on either clinical and/or laboratory findings.
- All household members should be considered contacts and their health should be monitored.
- If a household member develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection, including fever, cough, sore throat and difficulty breathing, follow the steps above.

KEY MESSAGES

- Travellers from any of the Coronavirus affected places or any person with signs symptoms should report to the nearest health facility or stay in isolation for at least 14 days.
- Be on the lookout and avoid close contact with persons who show flu-like symptoms
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing
- Regularly wash hands with soap and running water
- Thoroughly cook meat and eggs
- Avoid unprotected contact with live wild or farm animals

For more information, call the Ministry of Health toll free line on:

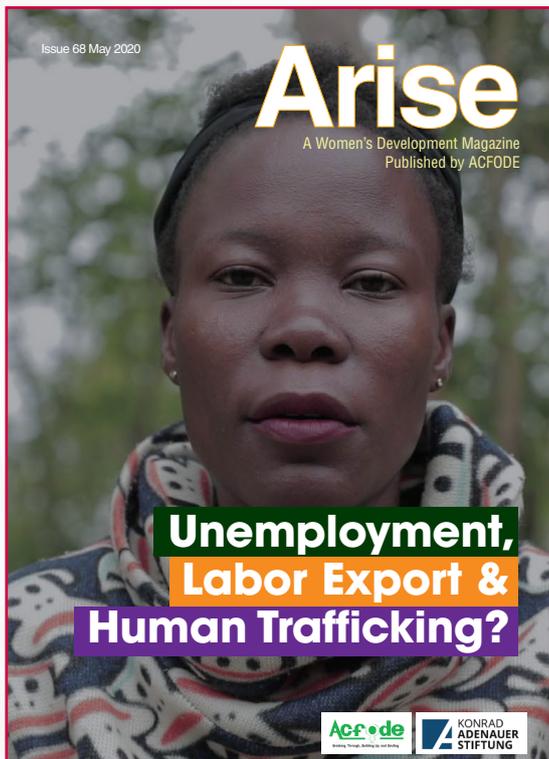
0800 100066, 0800 203033 or send a **free SMS** to Ureport on **8500**



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear editor,

I found the magazine to be very informative and educational. Many of the women and girls who go for kyeyo abroad face a lot of huddles and there isn't a system in place to protect them. I hope that this issue will enlighten others to take precaution when applying for jobs abroad.

Leticia Nansereko.

Hello editor,

Thank you for such an amazing issue that touches on issues that young girls face. With the high cases of unemployment in the country, youths especially girls have resorted to looking for jobs abroad. I too have heard several horrific stories that have destroyed the lives of young girls. The government needs to intervene and protect its citizens.

Patricia Mugume - Freelance writer

Hello Arise editor,

I am of the view that individuals especially girl's should use proper channels like registered companies when looking for jobs abroad. This is to ensure that if any trouble or challenges arise, there is someone who can be held accountable.

Sarah Akol - Illustrator

Hello editor,

It is very disheartening to hear such stories from girls who are so young. I found the articles in this edition to be very insightful and brought to light the suffering many go through but are too afraid to speak up about. I am a mother of two girls and I can't imagine them going through what I have read. I shared the magazine with them and we talked about how they can protect themselves.

Jane Namata - Business woman

FROM THE EDITOR



Vera Nshemeire

Editor In Chief
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Dear readers,

This year has been one filled with worry and anxiety that has not only taken over our nation but the entire world because of the Coronavirus. This virus that originated from China soon ravaged the world and made its way to Uganda by March.

The president of Uganda tried to mitigate the pandemic by initiating safety measures commonly known as Standard Operating Procedures (S.O.P.s) like the wearing of Masks, hand washing and sanitising and of course a nationwide lockdown. This lockdown meant that many women, men and children were confined to their homes for over four months.

Inevitably, this led to unrest in homes as schools, work places and recreation centres too were closed. Soon this unrest led to frustrations that manifested into fights where women and girls were mostly affected. By April, the number of gender based violence cases had risen to an alarming number of over 3,000 cases reported; the highest the Uganda police had ever recorded in such a short period of time.

Across the country young girls were and are still being sold into early marriage for money or livestock whereas many others were impregnated by those closest to them. This was brought about by the lockdown that restricted movement which generally affected those who live precariously. This being an election year has also brought with it its own challenges and with the requirement to observe the S.O.Ps enforced by the government, political candidates couldn't hold campaigns like they used to. Thus the term scientific election was born. Coined by the president, scientific elections meant that the candidates have to find alternative methods of reaching their electorates. The media became the solution.

However, this has put women at a disadvantage because not all women have access to televisions, radios and mobile phones, especially in the rural areas where such devices are bought and used primarily by men.

Female candidates have also suffered several setbacks such as finding airtime on tv and radio stations which are costly and some of them cannot afford. In this issue we delve into the challenges that women have faced amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The examination of these issues that are specific to women unveils their vulnerabilities and substantiates the need for interventions by all stakeholders to empower women to know and stand up for their rights.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of Arise as much as you enjoyed the past ones and get more inspiration from it.

Enjoy the read!

FEMALE LEADERS' RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:

The Silent Femininity and Masculinity Debate

By David Mugambe Mpiima

The coronavirus pandemic has ravaged the world since the first quarter of 2020. The virus, believed to have originated from Wuhan in China, has led to 1.6 million fatalities out of 37.2 million diagnosed cases.¹ The pandemic has destabilised global economies, restricted international and local movement owing to lockdown measures, stretched health services and exercised the imagination of world leaders as they attempted to keep their citizens safe.

Covid-19 deaths have had a gendered aspect, with more men dying than women for both social and biological reasons. However, gender comparisons do not stop at the deaths since the starkest gender contrast is at the political level. Studies have concluded that

female leaders have handled the pandemic far better than their male counterparts the world over.

The small number of female leaders, only 19, compared to nearly 200 male leaders, has brought about a big debate about the efficacy of female leaders in leading the fight against the coronavirus. Countries like Germany, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Denmark, Finland, Sint Maarten, Iceland, Hong Kong and Norway, among others, have experienced fewer cases and fewer deaths compared to male-led countries like the US, Pakistan, the UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, South Africa etc.

This analysis is not meant to portray that all male-led countries did badly with the coronavirus, because some, like Vietnam, the Czech Republic, Greece, Australia etc. did well. It simply sheds light on the fact that almost none of the female-

led countries did poorly.

Whereas the infection rates in the female-led countries were lower than in the male-led countries, the bigger difference was in the data for the deaths.² Current data shows that countries with women in leadership positions have suffered six times fewer confirmed deaths from COVID-19 than countries led by men.

The coronavirus results for both female and male leaders are reflected in the identity dualities of femininity and masculinity discourses. Men, the 'masculine self', are usually defined as aggressive, competitive, risk-takers and instrumentally oriented while women, the 'feminine self', are talked about as passive, nurturers, cooperative and expressive.³ These and

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/female-led-countries-handled-coronavirus-better-study-jacinda-ardern-angela-merkel> Accessed 12/10/2020.

² <https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-08-31/its-official-women-are-better-leaders-pandemic> Accessed 12/10/2020

³ Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke (2000) *Femininity/Masculinity* <http://rsp-lab11.ucr.edu/Papers/00b.pdf>



other dualities have been on full display in the coronavirus response choices.

Female leaders' response to the pandemic

Available analyses reveal that the female leaders took decisive policy positions and quickly responded to the Covid-19 outbreak in comparison to the male leaders, whose masculine penchant for taking risks could have clouded their approach to dealing with the pandemic. The female leaders adopted proactive and coordinated responses, including early lockdown measures for their countries.

Whereas lockdowns had economic implications, they quickly accepted the attendant economic risks to slow the spread of the virus and mitigate potential deaths. Unlike female leaders, studies show that male leaders are more risk-averse where financial loss is a big likelihood⁴, hence the male

leaders could have sacrificed lives in exchange for healthy economies.

In her statement to the 41,500 people of Sint Maarten, Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs, bluntly told the country: "Simply. Stop. Moving. If you don't have the bread you like in your house, eat crackers. Eat cereal. Eat oats. Eat ... sardines." She also noted that the country had only two ICU beds, which was a potential catastrophe should cases get out of hand.

In New Zealand, Jacinda Arden's government sent out clear messages, including text messages to explain the rules of engagement before the lockdown in March and ramped up testing to 8,000 tests a day. She managed to defuse panic with near motherly precision.

Policy analysts argue that female leadership may be more engaged on issues of social tranquility, sustainability and innovation, making societies more resilient to external shocks. Born out of the interpersonal

oriented-leadership style in comparison to the task-oriented male leadership style, women leaders are more hands-on, more democratic and communicate better.

The democratic nature of female leaders' approach to leadership may account for the systematic approach that was seen in the early days of the pandemic, drawing a clear difference with the botched attempts by many male presidents, some sending out confusing messages like in the UK, US and Brazil. In Norway, Prime Minister Erna Solberg would directly speak to children on several occasions about the pandemic and safety measures.⁵

Jacinta Arden, the New Zealand premier, has delivered several impassioned videos since she first announced an initial 14-day quarantine, delivering empathetic "stay home, save lives" video messages from her couch and communicating daily through non-combative press conferences or intimate

Accessed 12/10/2020

4 [https://theconversation.com/are-women-leaders-really-doing-better-on-coronavirus-the-data-backs-it-](https://theconversation.com/are-women-leaders-really-doing-better-on-coronavirus-the-data-backs-it-up-144809)

[up-144809](https://theconversation.com/are-women-leaders-really-doing-better-on-coronavirus-the-data-backs-it-up-144809) Accessed 13/10/2020

5 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51962307> Accessed 13/10/2020



Facebook Live videos, her favourite medium.

She has insisted on saving lives and taken on a kindness-first approach by urging New Zealanders to “look after their neighbours, take care of the vulnerable, and make sacrifices for the greater good of everyone.”⁶

It is also believed that women brought the feminine nurturing role to the management of the outbreak of the coronavirus. While several male leaders tried to outdo one another with hesitancy like in the US, UK, Brazil, Singapore etc. and thus lost ground to the pandemic, which led to unbridled deaths and the quick spread of the virus, others dismissed it as a hoax or a mere flu ‘that would go away’.

As for the UK, the prime minister, Boris Johnson, had to contract the virus first for him to change his tone as deaths mounted while the US president was dismissive as fatalities piled up. President Trump could not even bring himself to tell the public to wear a mask or put on one himself. He instead focused on the economic impact of the virus control measures.

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/why-do-female-leaders-seem-to-be-more-successful-at-managing-the-coronavirus-crisis#> Accessed 12/10/2020

Eventually, he, too, contracted the virus.

Comparing the approach of the male leaders and the female leaders, Dr Liji Thomas makes an interesting policy analysis. She compares the attitude of a strict parent and that of a nurturing one. She argues that both are necessary for every modern society but concludes that in the present pandemic situation, the nurturing parent has been more successful. She believes that the success of the women leaders was a function of their nurturing attitude.

Indeed, analysts like Professor Supriya argue that a greater proportion of women in leadership correlates with increased public healthcare spending which is informed by their compassion and empathy in comparison to male leaders, values that were evident at the height of the pandemic. Studies on leadership in both politics and business indicate that compassion and empathy are abundantly synonymous with women leaders, a feminine side that definitely helped the global women leaders in handling the coronavirus problem.

Iceland was able to gain control over COVID-19 because of the swiftness of the Prime Minister, Katrin Jacobsdottir. In one of

“ It is also believed that women brought the feminine nurturing role to the management of the outbreak of the coronavirus. While several male leaders tried to outdo one another with hesitancy like in the US, UK, Brazil, Singapore etc. and thus lost ground to the pandemic,

the COVID-19 interviews, Katrin explained that the country’s success was due to mass testing, contact tracing and emphasis on the importance of social distancing rules. However, political pundits like Suyin Haynes of TIME 100 insist that the Icelandic prime minister did well due to her humility and her ability to listen to science. “What we can learn from this is that it is important to put your ego as a politician aside and learn from those humble scientists who have been faced with a crisis nobody could expect,” Katrin told journalists during a TIME 100 talk show discussion.

This, yet again, manifests the motherly character of women in their bid to make the lives of citizens of their countries a priority.

In Taiwan, Tsai Ing-Wen, president of the Republic

of China, started quarantining travellers from China as early as 31 December 2019, before the world knew of coronavirus or as the world waited for guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO). She also digitised health records for ease of tracking infections, activated the Central Epidemic Command Centre and established a response team on time. This was the decisiveness the world needed.

Conclusion

All data and analysis metrics have so far concluded that female-led countries have continued to fare comparatively well when measured against the male-led countries. They not only brought their femininity to managing the crisis and were decisive in saving human lives, but also inadvertently took risks on their economies.

These could usually be masculine traits that were used to strengthen their nurturing trait to good effect. Their swift actions saved many lives by limiting infections and deaths. Several researchers have concluded that women leaders' feminine traits such as empathy, care and compassion for human lives placed them in a better position to fight the coronavirus than the male leaders.

They resisted the urge to sacrifice human lives for their countries' economies as the male leaders did. They were swift and clear in communication, and built functional health systems to deal with the outbreak. The result has been deaths that are six times fewer than those in male-led countries with comparable socio-economic conditions.

STAY SAFE FROM





UGANDA'S WOMEN POLITICIANS BRAVING 'SCIENTIFIC' ELECTIONS

By Beatrice Akite

As Uganda heads to the polls in the early months of 2021, Ugandans are watching to see how the campaign period will throw up. This is because, with the revised 2021 election road map, the Electoral Commission seems to have settled for what has been termed 'scientific' campaigns by not permitting open-air campaigns, in line with the Ministry of Health guidelines that prohibit mass gatherings in order to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The directive by the Electoral Commission regarding open-air campaigns ahead of the 2021 General Election continues to draw mixed reactions. For, while the ravaging coronavirus pandemic is something to worry about, the 'scientific' campaigns and elections are battles to take part in. While previously candidates would be battling with crowds, this time around, they will be striving to pull crowds without engaging in face-to-face encounters.

In fact, as the country embraces the virtual campaigns, rather than gatherings, this places new demands on the candidates, their parties as well as their supporters. While this mode of campaigning poses a big risk to many first-time candidates who do not have a following already, the partisan politicians are also struggling to keep abreast with the new normal. The need to change

from the famous crowd outreach campaigns to the digital ones has not only disrupted the political plans of many candidates but also caused anguish generally among the politicians.

This article explores the readiness of female political candidates to take up the 'scientific' campaigns to garner supporters.

Musiime Oliver, 58 years old, who is running for the position of woman councillor for LC III Mbuya II on the National Resistance Movement (NRM) ticket, and who has been in politics since 2006, has never before witnessed this turn of events. She explains that she is still struggling with the digital migration process, though slowly catching up, and is skeptical about the new directive to use virtual means to reach out to her voters.

She explains that with regard to mainstream media like radio and television, those contesting national positions like that of president may have access. "At district level, this is possible if a district has a radio station. But for a woman councillor like me in Mbuya, I highly doubt that I'll get any airtime," she notes. She says she will have to hire a social media handler for her campaign, but notes that it is quite costly and limiting as compared to public rallies, as only people with smart phones can be reached.

She also plans to use agents, though she acknowledges that it is very hard to control misrepresentation as compared to having a public rally where voters personally listen to and ask questions basing on one's manifesto. She asserts, "[The main thrust of] mine has and will

always be health, especially for women and children."

Another candidate, Juanita Magimbi, a candidate for the position of Nakawa East LC5 woman councillor, also acknowledges the cost implications of scientific campaigns. She notes that it is very expensive to hold scientific campaigns because of corruption. She explains that one needs money for almost everything – posters, talk shows and advertisements, among other things.

Magimbi advises female candidates to leverage their networks to get through the scientific campaigns. She notes that as much as women sometimes lack the spirit of sisterhood, they should still help one another and use their forum to reach the voters by word of mouth.

She also cited the need to have banks that help women and can bring down the cost of politics so that many women with leadership skills at the grass roots can also join politics. She called for support from other countries and more sensitisation of women by other organisations.

The expenses involved in conducting scientific campaigns this year are also decried by Jasinter Abur Ayo, woman councillor LC5 Kwera/Okwongodul sub-county, Dokolo district. Abur notes that the campaigns are extremely expensive. This she explained in connection with radio. She notes that another challenge is that old people may not understand what you are explaining on radio if they have not yet seen you physically.

"It's difficult to know one's intentions. It might most likely trigger malpractice as old people cannot see a candidate, or when they haven't seen you. How will they vote for you?" she asks. Abur suggests that for one to be victorious, one needs to conduct door-to-door campaigns.

Akello Lucy, FDC, Woman MP, Amuru district, has been a parliamentarian since 2014. She has served in the 9th and 10th Parliaments. A social worker by profession and specifically a human rights activist, Akello has previously served with the Justice and Peace Commission in the Archdiocese of Gulu. Commenting on the new form of campaign, she notes that being a leader already, she has to live by example, taking the virus seriously, listening to the experts, and encouraging others to do the same.

Unlike the other candidates, she is privileged in that she hosts a radio talk show about the pandemic twice a month. She does this on radio stations in Gulu and West Nile districts, since Amuru itself does not have any. She has taken advantage of this to tell the people about her intention to serve in the 11th Parliament.

Since over 90% of the districts are rural, with only about 5% having access to electricity, and only a small number of people having smart phones and very few able to afford solar panels for charging the phones, Akello says the directive to campaign using social media platforms is unrealistic in a district like Amuru. She notes that with a very poor road network and the connecting

bridges commonly giving way in the rainy seasons, she often uses motorcycles (*boda-bodas*) to campaign from home to home in her sparsely populated district.

The dire need for change in the political arena

Accordingly, there are various underlying reasons why there are usually very few female candidates who successfully vie for political positions. These are sometimes social, economic or political, or are family issues, among others. However, how long will the number of female candidates who win in political positions continue to be low?

Evelyn Kigongo, woman councillor aspirant, Bukesa parish, Kampala central division (DP) believes that, in political parties, the age factor is a big challenge to young female politicians. She explains that the cultural bias where people think that women should not be in leadership is still a hindrance. "People, including your family members, can easily ask you why you are joining a game for men. So unless we dismantle the patriarchal mindset, politics will continue being dominated by men. The economic disempowerment of women is a serious challenge if one is going to favourably compete in a highly monetised process," she notes. Kigongo adds that several of the women interested in politics are housewives who have to first seek consent to utilise family resources. Therefore, the only way around this is to empower women so they can have their own resources.

According to Betty Aol Ocan, FDC and Leader of Opposition (LoP),

the most challenging issue for women in politics is the structure of elective positions. She explains that a woman on affirmative action represents an entire district while the men in a largely male-dominated society only have a constituency with one sub-county or two to represent.

"If I come from Gulu, my fuel allowance is nearly the same like that of my counterpart in the municipality. But remember, I traverse the entire district, including the said municipality. Where is the fairness in that and how do you expect us to compete favourably?" Aol notes that it is high time the legal framework is reviewed to make it more accommodative. Otherwise, women in politics will continue to be marginalised.

Jessica Ababiku, Adjumani district Woman MP (NRM), concurs with Aol that the affirmative action positions don't make sense because women are given a wider constituency to cover compared to men. "I have a two-constituency district containing eleven administrative units but these are shared between two directly elected MPs, so you find that we get very strained. We don't enjoy our tenure because you are always running to cover an entire district but also torn between your Parliament work and individual initiatives," she notes.

She explains that affirmative action has to be reviewed so that it enables a woman to both perform and enjoy being a representative of the people. Noting that men in Uganda are viewed as superior to women, she suggests that women should

“ If we take the example of women leaders in local governments who are not salaried, it means they have to do an extra job to make ends meet. Juggling this means they have to sacrifice one of the duties which can be lost in the long run. Our own families sometimes don't appreciate us as leaders; they continue looking at you as a girl, which dents our self-esteem and confidence.

be perceived as human beings, too, and as people who can contribute to the development of society.

However, according to Jova Kamateeka (Independent), Mitooma district woman representative, a change in the law on change of names, especially for those vying for elective politics, is essential. She remarks, "Women are the most affected because they take on their spouses' names but then the process to change names is an uphill task. How do you expect a councillor in Mitooma to sign a deed-poll, gazette and advertise their change of names? The law should be changed so that those that want to change names under such circumstances just swear an affidavit. Otherwise several women have been locked out of politics because they adopted their husbands' names or may wish to drop them if the couples are separated."

Ritah Nakyanzi, National Youth Secretary, Democratic Party (DP),

notes that women are not the final decision-makers in political or leadership processes. She explains that women either have to depend on their spouses or the top leadership, say in a political party, to make a decision. "So if a woman wants to contest, they have to first seek consent from a husband or secretary general or district chairman, but that means if you don't agree with them on certain issues, they might not allow you take a shot at your bid," she notes.

"The electoral violence that has characterised our politics keeps most women away because they are a softer gender. They might not have the nerve to fight for elective positions but we must appreciate that electoral violence is a governance question. If we don't address ourselves to good governance, the cycle will continue being violent and locking out women," she affirms.

According to Maria Ledochowska Nnatabi, member of the National Youth Council, Jinja district and Butembe County MP aspirant (National Unity Platform), women have more responsibilities beyond politics. She explained that as women engage in leadership, when their child falls sick, they are expected to take the child to hospital, but that doesn't mean the husband will not ask for food or a financial boost to take the children back to school.

"If we take the example of women leaders in local governments who are not salaried, it means they have to do an extra job to make ends meet. Juggling this means they have to sacrifice one of the duties which can be lost

in the long run. Our own families sometimes don't appreciate us as leaders; they continue looking at you as a girl, which dents our self-esteem and confidence. Numbers of women in politics remain low due to both structural and societal reasons but I think Covid19 is just going to escalate the situation because it has had adverse effects on the economy, mostly impacting women," she remarked.

She noted that as we head into the virtual election period, gender-based violence, political finance, cultural beliefs and practices, and menstrual and maternal health remain a stark reality that touches especially young women, which diminishes their opportunities for becoming leaders. Structurally, she looks forward to that day when the country is able to achieve the 50-50 gender parity in Parliament, Cabinet, local governments and political parties.

However, according to Patricia Munabi, the Executive Director, Forum for Women in Democracy, women should stop lamenting about the challenges they face and stick up for each other. They should step away from the politics of rhetoric and focus on articulating issues of service delivery like health and education because it is women and children that are most affected by such issues.

Therefore, the women in politics should convince fellow women to vote for them. However, they should also be ready to be held accountable. Ms Munabi comments: "We all know that it's women that have the lowest levels of income, which means

they heavily depend on public services so they should be the ones to fight this and fix that. How? They need to be more creative during the Covid-19 times that have made campaigning virtual and more expensive by deploying tactics such as door-to-door campaigning and build strong agent networks that will reach where they cannot because the media is expensive and yet they don't have the money."

To Frank Rusa, Executive Secretary, Interparty Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD), women account for 58% of participants in the upcoming General Election. As a result, they should be aware that whatever challenges they face, the power to change the terrain is in their hands. "If it is monetisation that has been derailing them, then they should be confident that they can change that. Young women in political parties say it is fellow women that bring them down but if they are to favourably compete in the 2021 general elections, organisations and veteran women politicians should be at the forefront of inspiring others that women have the power to change their circumstances rather than fold their hands," he clarifies.

Your vote matters

As the political temperature rises day by day, amidst the economic hardships fuelled by the coronavirus pandemic, there are many hiccups in the campaigns and elections of 2021. However, these should not interfere with our decision to cast our votes come 2021. Remember, every vote counts, cast your vote for a woman candidate.

MOTHERLY CRISIS MANAGEMENT: REVISITING ANGELA MERKEL'S LEADERSHIP DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

By Verena Kasirye

Celebrating 15 years in office this November, Angela Merkel is the European Union's longest serving leader and the world's longest serving female head of government. Recently, Merkel not only made headlines with her tenure jubilee but even more so with her style of leadership during the coronavirus crisis. Heralded as Germany's "silver bullet" of crisis management,¹ the 66 year old has been leading by example and many leaders look to her for guidance and inspiration. Particularly for women, it is a promising quest to explore what Angela Merkel has to offer that makes her leadership during the pandemic so remarkable and exemplary.

The coronavirus pandemic hit Germany in many ways: the health and social system were strained, the economy fell into recession and social cohesion

was put to a test. Luckily, Merkel's response to this built on long-standing experiences in managing various crises where she steered Germany and the EU through intricate dilemmas. During her 15 years in office, Merkel had been titled the "chancellor of crises", precisely because of her involvement in the 2007 financial crisis and 2015 refugee crisis. Although her decisions in these were never undisputed, they still shaped a leader with stamina to fight through adversities.

Lucky coincidence, Germany faced the coronavirus not only with such an experienced crisis manager but also with a scientist in the lead. A trained quantum chemist, Merkel has been applying a strong scientific angle to her emergency response and her crisis management has been tied closely to the recommendations of notable virologists and epidemiologists. Her approach does not distinguish her leadership entirely from other nations, but

her confidence in science and facts certainly sets a precedent for other leaders to follow.

This alone does not do justice to lay out Merkel's leadership success, which has been attributed to manifold reasons. One of them is the chancellor's frank communication and mediation efforts, which have been a characteristic of her leadership all throughout the pandemic. A key moment in this must have been Merkel's televised speech in March, addressing the people of Germany over previously adopted lockdown measures. Perhaps it was the novelty of the situation – it is unheard of a German chancellor to address the nation on a political matter on TV – or perhaps it was her emphatic speech that validated her words. What stuck was that, while she presented the hard facts on the virus, she repeatedly called for compassion and made it clear that she expected no less of every citizen than to act in solidarity with all members of society.

¹ Boden, Cindy (2020). Angela Merkel: Ausland feiert Deutschlands „Wunder-Waffe“ - vier Komponenten entscheidend. In: Merkur, 23.10.2020.

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What followed were several more speeches that all similarly struck the right note: Her mixture of sobriety about the facts and empathy with her people overshadowed the tense atmosphere in the country. Unlike during the refugee crisis, her affirmative “We can do this”-mantra installed *real* confidence in the people and gained their support for the lockdown measures: Germany’s coronavirus cases dropped in the subsequent weeks and Merkel’s approval ratings soared.

Authenticity and care

During the summer months, Merkel’s style of leadership continued this course. Many times she has been heard to plead with people to show

sense and heart. Even when the coronavirus cases increased again, she did not point the finger but rather resorted to pleading and reasoning with the people of Germany, who wanted to see a return to normalcy faster than she deemed possible.

Internationally, this communicative approach has been named a key trait of her leadership although it not only bore success.

In Germany, the federal states remain with strong decision-making powers so that their recent reluctance to impose a second lockdown caused Merkel visible frustration. When the federal states refused to get on board with stricter measures, she replied in defiance: “Then we’ll sit

again in two weeks. It’s just not enough what we’re doing here. Everyone is just looking for their loopholes.”

Interestingly, the public did not rate this as a blow to her success but rather as an assertion of her authenticity and genuine care for the well-being of the country. Many were also surprised by such an offhand remark of the chancellor who had often been criticised for her neutrality and supposed lack of charisma.

While this one may have slipped, Merkel’s generally level-headed leadership is exemplary for her history of sailing the ship steadily when Germany hit stormy seas. Already before the pandemic, it was the chancellor’s rational decision-making and

modest manner that gained her government a high level of trust.² During the pandemic, her style of leadership remained pragmatic, her communication straight-forward and her appearance calm. Instead of polarising, Merkel unites. Instead of making electrifying promises, she keeps sailing the ship sturdily like an experienced captain who knows that the storm is not yet over. This persistence in Merkel's leadership has resulted in much international attention: Recently, new terms like "Merkelina" have lauded her determination to problem-solving and setting good examples.³

In fact, setting good examples is another trait that makes the list of Merkel's leadership style: When the chancellor found out she had been in contact with a doctor who tested positive for COVID-19, she immediately quarantined in her home in Berlin, where she conducted her government business for two weeks. Unlike other world leaders defying medical advice and government policies, her actions underlined her credibility and once again validated the public's approval of her. Post quarantine, little can be criticised about Merkel's setting an example. Diligently, she has been wearing a mask, sticking to the government guidelines and conducting high-level government meetings digitally.

Lessons for female leadership

All in all, Merkel's leadership during the pandemic and

during the previous years has been astounding because it does not match the classical description of "leading". Rather than standing at the front, she "leads from the centre", a former German minister had once remarked. And rather than pressing ahead and wearing blinkers for the people's needs, Angela Merkel has been a caring leader who urges for empathy and collaboration. Her leadership has been characterised by pragmatism and resilience to keep searching for the middle road and adjusting to new demands. This is also the path that she has been walking during the coronavirus pandemic and which was famously labelled the "hammer and dance" strategy.⁴

While several observers had indeed labelled her a lame duck after her resignation as party leader in 2018 and announcement not to compete in the next elections, Merkel emerged, once again, as a solid crisis manager.⁵ Retrospectively, it seems Germany's first female chancellor has been handling the crisis with the foresight of a real leader. Ironically, in her early years as a politician, Merkel was target of a lot of mockery that saw her as unable to stand up to this very task.

As a protégée of former chancellor Kohl, she was known as his "little girl" and in her first years as chancellor was sarcastically titled "mommy", expressing the disregard of

many who saw her unable to follow in the footsteps of her great - and male - predecessors. Some reduced mommy Merkel to what they deemed the only suitable "position of power" for a woman: motherhood.⁶ Merkel has meanwhile spat out an edgy re-interpretation of this motherhood. Along with her political growth, mommy Merkel now refers to a compassionate leader or, as Bernard Koucher, former Foreign Secretary of France, put it "a woman who knows how to be strong but never harsh."⁷ With her leadership style having gained approval over many years, Angela Merkel has become a mother figure for the nation of Germany and for German, maybe even European, politics.

Her care and sense of duty is what make her not only a great crisis manager but also a laudable female leader. As a mother figure in Germany's recent political history, she has shown a range of characteristics that were key in her successful crisis management and that are attributed to many female heads of state: resilience, empathy, collaboration, care, pragmatism, and courage, to name only a few.⁸ Not only Angela Merkel ticks these boxes but numerous other female leaders do.

² Fukuyama, in: Podcast "Stunde Null".

³ Roa, Ricarda (2020). Sin circo, Merkel cerca al virus. In: Clarín, 21.04.2020.

⁴ France24 (2020). Germany's 'eternal chancellor' Angela Merkel marks 15 years in office. In: France24, 22.11.2020.

⁵ Kottasová, Ivana (2020). How Angela Merkel went from lame duck to global leader on coronavirus. In: CNN World, 07.05.2020.

⁶ Raether, Till (2017). Die Mutti aller Schlachten. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, 12.03.2017.

⁷ Duffé, Julian et al. (2020). Le Maire, Raffarin, Ayrault, Kouchner... ils racontent «leur» Merkel, au pouvoir depuis 15 ans. In: Le Parisien, 21.11.2020.

⁸ Champoux-Paille, Louise; Croteau, Anne-Marie (2020). Why are women leaders excelling during coronavirus? In: Independent, 22.05.2020.

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WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS OF UGANDA

By Anisha Alinda

In the recently concluded elections in the United States of America, Ms. Kamala Harris became the first female Vice President of the world's biggest democracy. She stands as a beacon for girls across the globe, someone they can look up to as they pursue their paths in life's different spheres, whether business or politics. She has set the pace to increased political participation of women in politics at a global level and of the fight for recognising women's capacity to ably contribute to the economic, social, and political development of their respective countries.

At a local level, Uganda has witnessed a steady growth in women's participation in

politics, mainly due to policies and legal frameworks set up by the Government, especially affirmative action. This is demonstrated by a record-setting appointment of the first female Vice President in any African nation in 1994, Ms. Specioza Wandera Kazibwe, and the provision for a woman member of Parliament for each district in the country and mandatory seats for women in local government councils in the Constitution of 1995. As a result of this affirmative action, Uganda ranks 35 and 37, with the greatest number of women in ministerial and parliamentary positions at 33.3% and 34.9%, respectively (UN Women's global statistics of women in political positions, 2020).

However, despite the efforts, the numbers are low in the high echelons of power, with only 10 female ministers in Cabinet, and yet women account for 51% of the population, which as of Thursday, 12 November, 2020 stood at 46,252,544. According to UN Women's facts and figures, we see that women are less likely to participate in politics and are constrained from achieving the highest leadership positions, which pales for continued support and empowerment.

Nevertheless, the 2021 Uganda elections provide a glimmer of hope for women representation; a glance reveals that more women are running for political seats right from local councils to top positions



like the head of state due to continued empowerment, awareness, and confidence. These women have stepped up, defied the odds, not just because of the opportunities that have unfolded but because they believe that they can serve this country with dignity and honor as evidenced by Ms. Nancy Kalembe, the only female aspirant in the Uganda Presidential race, in her own words,

“I avail myself to my country Uganda, offering service and leadership at this opportune time not for the sake of diversity but I ascend to the podium because of the conviction born within my heart, the vision of what I aspire to see and the passion that inspires me.”

Whereas there have been laudable efforts to enhance women’s participation in politics, women in Uganda especially aspirants face greater challenges during the election process. They are less likely to be given significant responsibilities in their political parties, have

to work twice as hard as the men to raise finances, conduct campaigns, and get their voices heard while presenting their manifestos and delivering their agenda to voters. It is usually such toil, high levels of scrutiny on their private lives, let alone the traditional norms about women in society that discourage other women with the desire to get into politics.

Women are essential agents of positive change and tomorrow’s leaders if only they can actively participate and get involved. As rightly noted by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, women’s leadership in all spheres is critical to finding the fastest, safest route through this pandemic and building a more peaceful and stable future. We applaud all women representatives running for political office in the forthcoming elections. We call upon more women to join leadership from their various spheres of influence.



“I avail myself to my country Uganda, offering service and leadership at this opportune time not for the sake of diversity but I ascend to the podium because of the conviction born within my heart, the vision of what I aspire to see and the passion that inspires me.”

Ms. Nancy Kalembe.



THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN

By Pauline Bangirana

First identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019, coronavirus resulted in an ongoing pandemic and, the world over, more than 32 million cases have been reported with more than 900,000 deaths. Across the globe, the most effective measure for dealing with the disease has been lockdown. Unfortunately, around March 2020, the pandemic hit the Pearl of Africa and it, too, went into total lockdown following an address by His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in a bid to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

A total lockdown meant that all the various sectors of the country's economy were shut down with the exception of essential sectors. In the midst of the lockdown, various economic activities were affected; women, too, were not spared. The lockdown resulted in various occurrences such as job loss, business closures and reduced income flow, among many others. But how has this affected the economic activities undertaken by women? Pauline Bangirana shares experiences from various women on how Covid-19 has affected their economic status.

A walk to Owino Market leads to an interaction with Carol Nalumansi who shares that following Covid-19, her business was affected as the area where she operated from was closed off. She thus had to stop working. Her situation was made worse by the rise in costs. "Wholesalers increased prices of

commodities and yet customers are constantly complaining of not having money," Nalumansi says.

She adds that to access some places where commodities are available, she has had to bribe security guards to be allowed entry, a venture that has proved costly in the long run.

"My costs have doubled overnight with increased transport, plus the scarcity of products. As such, my profit are hardly there," she says.

Nalumansi notes that owing to this crisis, she exploited her networks and started operating online with the help of her daughter.

"I, however, had to send my children to the village as the cost of living was high and frustration was wearing me down as feeding them was becoming impossible," she says.

Much as she is still trying to make ends meet, she is considering venturing into something else, although she has yet to make up her mind.

She suggests that the government can reduce the taxes imposed on products in order to effectively help women in business and also offer loans or recovery capital to women who have incurred losses and have had to close down as a result of the pandemic.

On the other hand, Violet Nakasi, a salon owner, shares that following the onset of Covid-19, her customers drastically reduced.

"Most people resorted to finding alternatives for their hair and

cut down on salon visits. Money is now scarce and yet some things have been hiked in terms of prices," Nakasi says.

She asserts that the cost of hair products has been hiked because manufacturers and wholesalers use the excuse that taxes on products are high and things are no longer transported by sea but by air.

"Hair products that used to cost 5,000 shillings have been hiked by 3,000 shillings, meaning that I, too, have to increase prices but people come and tell you that they are broke. Some of the money I'm owed I have written off as bad debts because they keep telling me that they do not have money at the moment," Nakasi says.

Nakasi believes that if the government can restore transport to normalcy, this will greatly help many women running small businesses, such as herself.

Grace Nanyonga Mugisha, commonly referred to as 'Fish Girl', narrates that her experience during Covid-19 was quite painful.

"Much as I am in agriculture, transport was closed and it was difficult to get a sticker as a small entrepreneur. I tried to lobby at Uganda Manufacturers Association and I was told that stickers were finished. The only mode of transport at the time was a truck which I did not have to transport my produce. It did not make economic sense since I usually deliver fish in small quantities. I was, however, advised to print stickers for my company. Granafish Suppliers

Limited and place them on my car. I was then able to move with my fish," she shares.

Nanyonga says that she was able to make some sales because most people were home and her mode of business is door-to-door delivery. This also paved the way for acquiring new customers that she got during lockdown and to date she still supplies them with fish.

During the lockdown, in a bid to find a way to keep her business afloat, she would hire a pick-up truck to help her with delivery. However, since turn-boys were not allowed on trucks, Nanyonga became a turn-boy and in the process, she developed a back problem since she had to carry the items herself.

Like with any pandemic, the agriculturalist shares her own lessons from this period. She realised the need to work harder and acquire a pick-up for her business so that in case of another crisis like this, she can transport her produce.

She urges women entrepreneurs to make use of their networks and friends in the different offices because, through her own networks, she was able to speak to the Minister of Transport, who advised her on how best to go about her business.

She also calls upon women to be flexible: "Do not stick to something and be glued to it. Think as per the environment, conditions. I got frustrated when the police was not allowing me to deliver fish yet fish is under agriculture. I had to think outside the box and start hiring

trucks. This affected my profits but at least I did not close down my business."

Border closures affected Nanyonga's other avenue to earn extra income, which is her occupation as a motivational speaker.

Aisha Ganda, proprietor of Snacks 4 U, which processes groundnuts, hard corn, daddies, groundnut paste and simsim/ sesame paste shares that, economically, Covid-19 has posed a tough challenge to her.

"I experienced great losses when lockdown was announced. My products went bad since the supply chains and demand were affected," Ganda says.

She shares that she had not restocked yet owing to limited capital. As such, she was unable to carry on with business since most places, such as arcades, were locked up and public transportation was banned. The lockdown worsened inflation, resulting in hiked prices and the excuse sellers were giving was "Covid-19", something that was beyond her control.

Transport fares are higher now compared to before the onset of Covid-19, which affects the small profit her small enterprise should have made.

Ganda shares that she is experiencing low purchasing power owing to the closure of places like schools and the limited number of social occasions held, areas where she was able to sell her products with reasonable profit.

However, there is always light at the end of the tunnel and this

crisis is no exception for Ganda, who says that she has learnt how to appreciate technology, "especially marketing, as I can now maximise usage of social media, hence limiting the cost of movements in the field to look for market and delivery."

Owing to the crisis, Ganda borrowed money from friends and family and this has enabled her to rise up and make up for the losses due to the pandemic.

She concludes: "I have learnt that making friends is important before selling a product. The loyal customers I had are the ones that have relatively sustained me till now. It has also prompted me to do more research about better ways of keeping in business."

Phionah Komugisha, an entrepreneur and financial adviser, shares that most women are known to have endless money supply owing to their saving habits and their involvement in small saving groups famously known as 'bigombe'. Additionally, having a little money stashed away reassures a woman that on a rainy day her family will not go hungry. Covid-19 has seen women deplete most of their secret cash stash owing to expenditure outstripping income.

Komugisha notes that some women lost their jobs or the purchasing power of their business clients dropped owing to the impact of Covid-19. They have, thus, been unable to raise enough funds to keep the saving circles going or replenished.

"In contrast, many women



have stepped up their game and ventured into income-generating activities that can be run from home. We have seen more women acquiring skills in e-commerce, basic skills such as baking, farming, liquid soap-making, candle-making, backyard gardening and crafts-making, among others. These are all an additional source of income,” the financial advisor shares.

Dorcas Kyarisiima shares that prior to the pandemic, she was a sales and marketing agent with a steel and aluminium company in Mutundwe and the pay was reasonable.

She shares, “When lockdown was announced and I was terminated a few weeks later, I used the knowledge I acquired while working to start up my own freelance hustle but the difference is that this time around, I am earning more money.”

A mother of three, Kyarisiima started something extra, giving her two streams of income. She says that the pandemic was an eye-opener for her and urges women to be more enterprising and pay attention to their passion because it can be an income stream. She also sells tea leaves, a venture she says is starting to pay off.

Women are enterprising and resilient and most female-run businesses are quite successful. Women, therefore, play an important role in reviving both the informal and formal sectors of trade that have been negatively affected by the pandemic, Komugisha asserts.

In a bid to find a solution, Komugisha asserts that women are not islands unto themselves and that a little push on the back will go a long way in ensuring that the economy benefits. She remarks, “We can actually leverage these

qualities and abilities. Financial literacy is an important aspect in successful management of business. Practical financial literacy can help women manage and uphold healthy businesses. Further to the above, grants and loans advanced with minimum interest rates will be beneficial in reviving female-run enterprises.”

The economic impact of the pandemic include a slowdown in business activity, especially with regard to women-owned small-scale businesses; unemployment, maintain the widening of the poverty gap; and an increase in debts, especially for those who obtained loans for business start-ups. Thus, as the country works towards reviving its economy, women will play a vital role in its restoration and, therefore, urge the government to revise taxes on products and make loans available to women. These would be a much-needed boost to the women’s efforts.



How a Single Mother Built Her Business during Covid-19 in Kampala

By Teddy Ayo

'Aunty Cathy', as she is widely known by her peers and clients in the vicinity, operates a tiny, ramshackle tin-sheet kiosk nestled under an avocado tree. Initially, she ventured into this business with capital of less than US\$ 400,000 and with this money she rented a container that sat on a patch of land at US\$ 100,000 per month. The location was off the busy highway. With the rest of the money she stocked up the stall with goods such as sweets, toilet paper, bottled mineral water, sugar, salt and salted roast groundnuts.

However, after operating the business for five months with little success, and operating with minimal capital, she obtained a business loan of US\$ 500,000 from BRAC. Out of this loan she

bought an old, decrepit container for US\$ 400,000. She also had to pay monthly ground rent of US\$ 50,000 for the location of the container. She successfully and promptly serviced this loan within a year.

However, at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, Aunty Cathy wanted to expand her business and solve some of her personal problems, so she applied for another loan worth US\$ 2,000,000 from BRAC. She was granted the whole sum of money basing on her meticulous performance on the first loan. In the same week she obtained the BRAC loan, a close friend also introduced her to another financial institution called ASSA, and at ASSA she was lucky enough to get another loan of US\$ 500,000. Aunty

Cathy was required to pay weekly instalments on both loans. She said both financial institutions offered her a loan without much emphasis on collateral or security but rather as a way of empowering existing small women-owned enterprises.

After getting the loans, the following day, she went and paid half of her children's schools fees in the bank, as any responsible parent would do. She hoped to complete the school fees balance before the term's end. To her utter dismay, however, on Sunday of the same week, the president of Uganda addressed the nation in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic and ordered the closure of all schools as one of the measures intended to curb the spread of coronavirus.

She said that at the time the president was speaking, she had her ears glued to her radio, and when he mentioned the closure of schools, she felt as if someone had sent a flying kick straight into her front teeth.

She also said that at that moment she wished that she had been a little bit more patient and waited till Monday to pay her children's school fees. Maybe that money would have been injected into her business to expand it. She commented, however, that it's useless to cry over spilt milk.

With part of the loans, she bought a fridge-deep freezer, which, according to my estimate, could have cost about US\$ 1,000,000. She added stock worth US\$ 100,000, including packets of sweets, dozens of toilet paper, matches, salt, sugar, baking flour, salted roast groundnuts, a crate of beer and a crate of soda, among others.

She tried her hand at selling local food. She thus stocked all the basic equipment and foodstuffs she needed like a charcoal-stove (*sigiri*), saucepans, a bunch of plantain (*matoke*), maize flour (*posho*), meat, rice, groundnut paste (*binyebwa*), beans and vegetables, among others. With the requirements purchased, she opened a *kafunda* restaurant and the menu varied in cost from US\$ 2,000 to US\$ 4,000 per plate depending on which sauce one ordered.

However, the food business didn't last even a month. At that time, potential customers were hard to come by, given that everyone was in lockdown and many would-be customers had either been laid off or couldn't afford restaurant food even if she was to charge only US\$ 1,000 per plate. Therefore every day

most of the food didn't sell and it was her own family that ate the leftovers. What they couldn't eat they offered free of charge to neighbours or even to stray dogs. The *kafunda* restaurant therefore died a 'fast, painful death.'

When the restaurant business failed to make a profit she quickly hatched a new plan and set up a *chapatti* business in front of her shop. She had all the materials and recipes she needed for the chapattis in her shop. She was even lucky enough to have a female neighbour next door who taught her the best way to deep fry a chapatti in such a way that it wasn't time-consuming and, at the same time, ensured that the chapatti was tasty.

The end result was that a lot of clients loved the chapattis and bought them in bulk, with some, like South Sudanese families, buying up to 20 chapattis per day. Her sales increased so that from using one packet of baking flour per day, she went up five or more, giving her a minimum profit of US\$ 25,000 daily. With this profit, she gladly serviced her weekly loan and interest payments of US\$ 62,000 at BRAC and US\$ 32,000 at ASSA.

Aunty Cathy incorporated pineapple juice production into her business. She boiled pineapple skins with pounded ginger and tea leaves, and sometimes added sugar, depending on whether the customer preferred sweetened or sugarless juice. The pineapple juice alone fetched a profit of not less than US\$ 10,000 since she produced more than 20 litres of the juice daily and packed the juice in small polythene bags (*buveera*, singular *kaveera*), each of which she sold at US\$ 500.

She also boiled and packaged

drinking water that she sold at US\$ 200 per *kaveera*, which yielded a daily profit of US\$ 2,000.

When I asked her how she managed to juggle and multitask in her business, she replied, "As a woman, you must learn to be creative. If you fail at one thing, don't give up; try the next one."

She said that she was able to pay rent for both her business and home and that she considered this business as her "everything" and as her "husband".

She advised women to be focused and to love the work they do by giving it all their time and attention and to make their own money because men are unpredictable.

"They [men] can abandon you with children. And then what will you do if you were just relying on his daily allowance [*kameza*]?" she asked.

She also said that the sales of her beers and soda chilled in the deep freezer increased tremendously since most bars and night clubs were closed and most beer lovers resorted to buying drinks from *kafunda* such as hers. At the beginning she sold only five bottles of beer per day but now she was selling three or more crates of beer daily.

Her 16-year-old daughter, who was very passionate about climate change, collected plastic bottles and donated them to a nearby Pentecostal church. However, she now planned to open her own recycling plant and save the ocean and the planet from pollution. This daughter and her siblings also helped their mother in the shop with some errands since all schools were closed owing to Covid-19.

COVID-19 IMPACT:

EXPERTS EXPLAIN MEASURES TO HELP UGANDA RECOVER

By Brenda Asiimwe

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 found Uganda struggling with the advent of desert locusts, floods, floating islands and an unprecedented rise in the water level of Lake Victoria that displaced hundreds of people.

Although the government maintained that it had managed to contain the aforementioned plethora of natural disasters, the slowdown of Uganda's economy, occasioned by the national lockdown measures to curb the spread of Covid-19, was apparent.

In a June statement to Parliament on Uganda's economic outlook in the face of Covid-19, the Minister for Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Matia Kasajja said that the economic growth projection in 2019/20 had been revised downwards from 6.0% to between 5.2 and 5.7%, depending on how long Covid-19 and its severity would be with us.

However, according to

Moses Kabanda, the Assistant Commissioner for microeconomic policy at the Ministry of Finance, the picture is much grimmer, with economic activities slowing further to 3.1% compared to the 5% that Kasajja had earlier projected.

In the same financial year, government data indicates that the country suffered a revenue shortfall of over US\$ 3 trillion. Experts say it is unlikely that Uganda and other African governments will achieve their revenue targets.

The economic regression, according to an economic outlook and policy paper developed by a consortium of experts from UN Women, the Ministry of Finance, the Equal Opportunities Commission and civil society organisations, has had a more adverse effect on the more vulnerable groups.

"The total halt on income-generating ventures, especially for workers in the informal sector, has deepened poverty among women and placed many of them under additional

economic stress, exacerbating their vulnerability. This is coupled with the risk of facing household conflict and domestic violence," states the paper.

Besides women and girls, the report also highlights the plight of persons with disabilities (PWDs), people living with HIV, immigrants, refugees and the youth, who have been affected owing to unequal power relations and social pressures.

To contextualise the magnitude of the problem, the United Nations, in a report on the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in Uganda that was released last week, warned that the disruptions in the economy are already pushing 3.1 million Ugandans into poverty, with women, PWDs and the youth being most affected. The report shows that the lockdown and containment measures made 1.9 million non-poor individuals become insecure and another 1.9 million insecure individuals poor.

However, Kabanda says that despite many of the people being hit hard by the current



situation, all is not lost with the easing of measures in some sectors.

“Signs of economic recovery have started to take shape and with further relaxation of the measures that government rolled out to curb the spread of Covid-19, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is projected to accelerate to 4.5%,” Kabanda says.

Yet for some observers and economic experts, with the pandemic throwing 3 million Ugandans back into the poverty bracket, the key question that remains is: *Will Uganda survive the financial shocks precipitated by Covid-19 elsewhere around the world?*

“To close the economic pitfalls, government needs to readjust its administrative cost policies to ensure that there is more money to support the informal



Agnes Kirabo, the executive director, Food Rights Alliance

sector ventures. Given the disproportionate adverse social-economic impact on women and other vulnerable groups, it is imperative that gender equality concerns are embedded in national fiscal stimulus packages as well as in the design of national policy responses.” Agnes Kirabo, the Executive Director, Food Rights

Alliance (FRA), says.

She adds that alongside fiscal stimulus packages, the available data indicates that there is a gap in Uganda’s food governance systems, escalated by Covid-19 but with a direct bearing on women and other vulnerable groups.

“Household food security has been more resilient to shocks such as pandemics, but national food security suffers under such shocks, weakening household food security further to contribute to those 3 million people slipping back into poverty. Therefore, Covid-19 serves to remind government to put back food in its primary position as a national priority due to its significant role in macro-economic stability, human security, and national stability overall as well as an underlying determinant of



“**The Kampala Central MP, Muhammad Nsereko, argues that the only way to ensure business cash flow and increase consumption is for the government to intervene in checking the high-interest loans by commercial banks to enable low-income earners to access friendly financial services and to make direct cash injections into the economy.**”

other social outcomes such as health,” said Kirabo.

In their July study on livelihoods under Covid-19, FRA and Twaweza jointly state that, on average, Ugandans reported that their households were spending US\$10,800 per day, down from US\$14,100 in January of this year before Covid-19 broke out.

The drop was said to be sharper in rural areas, from US\$14,600

to US\$10,300, than in urban areas, where spending dropped from US\$13,100 to US\$12,300.

Despite this, the report says that more households find that their income does not meet their daily needs now compared to January 2020 (26% compared to 22% previously).

The Kampala Central MP, Muhammad Nsereko, argues that the only way to ensure business cash flow and increase consumption is for the government to intervene in checking the high-interest loans by commercial banks to enable low-income earners to access friendly financial services and to make direct cash injections into the economy.

“The private sector needs cash bailouts and tax exemptions for a given period but, most importantly, we should see increased and innovative financing for women- and youth-dominated enterprises because these SMEs need to recapitalise their ventures by getting easy access to cheap credit and interest-free start-up capital with a grace period of 3-6 months,” Nsereko advised.

He added that “the stimulus packages should be able to address major challenges like unemployment among vulnerable populations like refugee communities and women in marketplaces making a livelihood and providing other services in order to minimise the effects from the lockdown.”

To cushion businesses that were thrown off-balance by the effects of Covid-19, the government in the new financial

year announced postponement of the payment of some taxes by Covid-19-affected businesses. However, according to Nsereko, the stay of payment of taxes is nugatory because “this means businesses will have to pay these taxes at some point but what we are saying is that people should either be bailed out or given tax exemptions if businesses that generate revenue for economic growth are to recover.”

It should be noted that the government secured an interest-free loan from the International Monetary Fund worth \$491M (US\$1.8 trillion) to help local businesses recover. Part of this money, which was reflected in the national budget, is intended to recapitalise Uganda Development Bank (UDB) to enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to access capital to generate liquidity for the financial sector.

During his budget speech, Kasaija said that the government had earmarked a US\$138 billion package to facilitate the country’s import substitution and export promotion strategy.

However, Dr Cosmas Mwikirize, a lecturer in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Makerere University, said that although the funding to boost local production for export was a good start, it is only a drop in the ocean.

According to a May 2020 Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) report, most private sector businesses that were operating at between 50-60% capacity have now declined to about 20%, with general

business activity reducing by 50%.

Furthermore, the Economic Policy Research Centre Uganda Business Climate Index, May 2020 revealed that 65% of businesses reported a decline in their ability to repay loans as a result of the risk associated with Covid-19 and the subsequent measures taken to contain the disease.

The Executive Director, Centre for Budget and Tax Policy, Patrick Katabazi advocates for investment in skilling the population to diversify the businesses and find alternative income sources in addition to establishing common user facilities aiming at value

addition.

“The already high unemployment levels have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the economic shutdown. What we need to see now is government skilling these populations such as the youth, then investing in public infrastructure projects that can employ these young but able-bodied vibrant women and men. Women in the informal sector, who have been working and earning from hand to mouth such as hawkers, roadside sellers, market vendors of non-food items, salons, among others, have had their businesses affected, so you need to create alternatives for

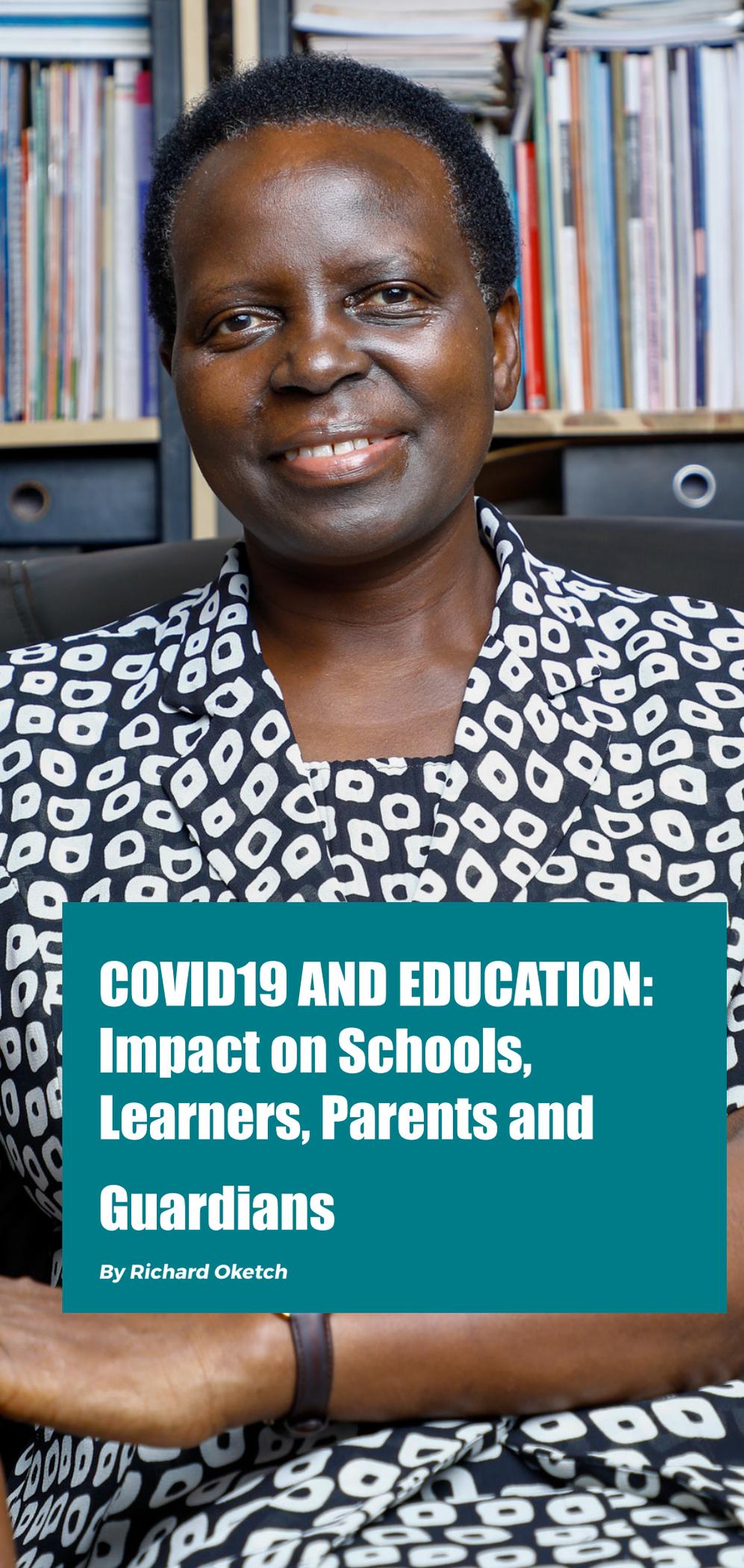
them,” said Katabazi.

Since Uganda is an agrarian economy, experts have also advised the government to pump more money into the agricultural sector in order to spur productivity and improve household income if the devastating impact of Covid-19 is to be reversed

“The economy is picking up, but clients are not coming. The question is, where do you put the stimulus? Where should we be focusing? We are an agrarian economy and that is where all effort should be put.” Dr Fred Muhumuza, an economist and lecturer at Makerere University, said.

**Wash your hands regularly
with soap and water.**





COVID19 AND EDUCATION: Impact on Schools, Learners, Parents and Guardians

By Richard Oketch

On 20 March 2020, President Yoweri K. Museveni, in an effort to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, closed schools and other educational institutions. This then left an estimated 15 million students (from pre-primary to university) and the over 300,000 teachers idle at home. After the initial reopening of schools announced by the Minister of Education and First Lady was postponed, speculation became the order of the day.

Eventually, the eagerly expected reopening of schools started in a phased manner, first in September 2020 for finalists of universities and tertiary institutions teaching health courses. In a televised broadcast, the President then announced 15 October 2020 as the date for candidate classes (P.7, S.4 and S.6) as well as for finalists in institutions of higher learning to resume school. Subsequently, the Minister of Education released the full timetable for the reopening of schools for terms two and three, including the dates for Uganda National Examinations Board



(UNEB) examinations.

The impact of Covid-19 on the education sector since the closure of schools and the announcement of the reopening on 15 October 2020 for finalists has since become a subject of heated debate amongst all stakeholders.

Impact on the curriculum

With close to three-quarters of the academic year in 2020 missed, a lot of uncertainty still hangs in the air in the face of safety concerns, and compensation for the missed curriculum coverage as well as the final exams for candidate classes and finalists in institutions.

Remote learning experiences

In the absence of the normal school learning experience since the closure of schools in March 2020, students were left to cope in the best way they could, with a semblance of

remote/distance-learning with schools' online materials and lessons, National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) home-schooling packages delivered via newspapers pull-outs, as well as pre-recorded lessons conducted by teachers over the various state and privately owned TV/radio stations.

Herein lay the woes of schools, students and parents. In Uganda, one of the least prepared countries in Africa in ICT infrastructure, penetration and usage, only a handful of schools could boast of websites and e-learning platforms in the pre-Covid-19 lockdown.

Schools such as King's College Buddo, Gayaza High School, and Standard High School, Zana, among others, were able to engage their students in remote learning programmes with integrated e-libraries and e-learning platforms, having customised self-instructional

templates, as well as notes and video lessons prepared by the teachers. Websites of schools like Standard High School, Zana had open e-learning platforms freely accessible to the public. However, these are generally teacher-centred methods.

Nascent national telecommunication and ICT infrastructure

This ICT predicament in education is exemplified by Uganda's ICT status quo. Statistics from National Information Technology Authority – Uganda (NITA-UG) 2017/2018 and Uganda Bureau of Statistics paint the following grim picture: nationally, 10.8% of households had internet; 12.1% of households used the internet; 5.9% of households had access to a computer at home; mobile phone ownership stood at 70.9% of the population; radio ownership at 65.3%; TV ownership at 21.8%; and to date, mobile users stand at 21.6%;

while internet users stand at 18.8%.

In a situation where Uganda's rural dwellers constituted 76% of the national population in 2018, implying that the majority of the 15 million learners are located in rural areas, it is not difficult to see the predicament of schools as far as equity in online/digital learning solutions is concerned.

A two-day virtual Global Peace Leadership Conference (GPLC) in East Africa on 30 April 2020-1, May 2020 grappled with this challenge. Global Peace Foundation Vice President, Dr Tony Devine, noted the two-edged digital reality amidst the Covid-19 impact on education. "Scientific knowledge is creating new opportunities and solutions that can enrich our lives, while at the same time fuelling disruptive waves of change in every sector," he said. "It is time to start mapping out a strategy of a hybrid online learning approach in concert with the in-school experience."

The conference explored several complementary approaches to addressing the Covid-19 crisis. Speakers from Oracle Academy and Google Classroom reassured the education sector of existing entirely free resources, including curricula, classroom learning resources, software, cloud technology and practice environments, available at every level of instruction.

Patrick Kogola, of the Centre for Mathematics and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE), said, "The pandemic has called us to rethink education, to realise it is not confined to four walls of the classroom. We

need to build capacity among parents and teachers to assist in learning outside of the classroom."

Psycho-social impact of Covid-19 on learners

The media was awash with reports of cries and concerns from parents, the community, civil society organisations, the Local Government and even the United Nations, regarding Covid-19's negative impact on the morals and social life of school-going children and youth.

The six months stay-at-home period since the end of March 2020, coupled with the absence of parents/guardians during working hours, has exposed the children, particularly the girl child, to risky behaviour, sexual harassment and abuse/defilement, potentially endangering the return of many students to school.

Five hundred forty-seven girls were reportedly defiled in Kampala within the first four months of the total lockdown, according to *The Independent Magazine* in its 31 August 2020 online edition. Many Local Governments reported similar worrying statistics in their areas. Boys have resorted to working for income; therefore many may not be easy to convince to return to school after developing a love for money.

Despite the continued danger of Covid-19, parents/guardians of students in candidate classes are deeply worried about the disruption of the final-year studies that they fear will diminish their children's competence in their final exams.

Economic impact on education

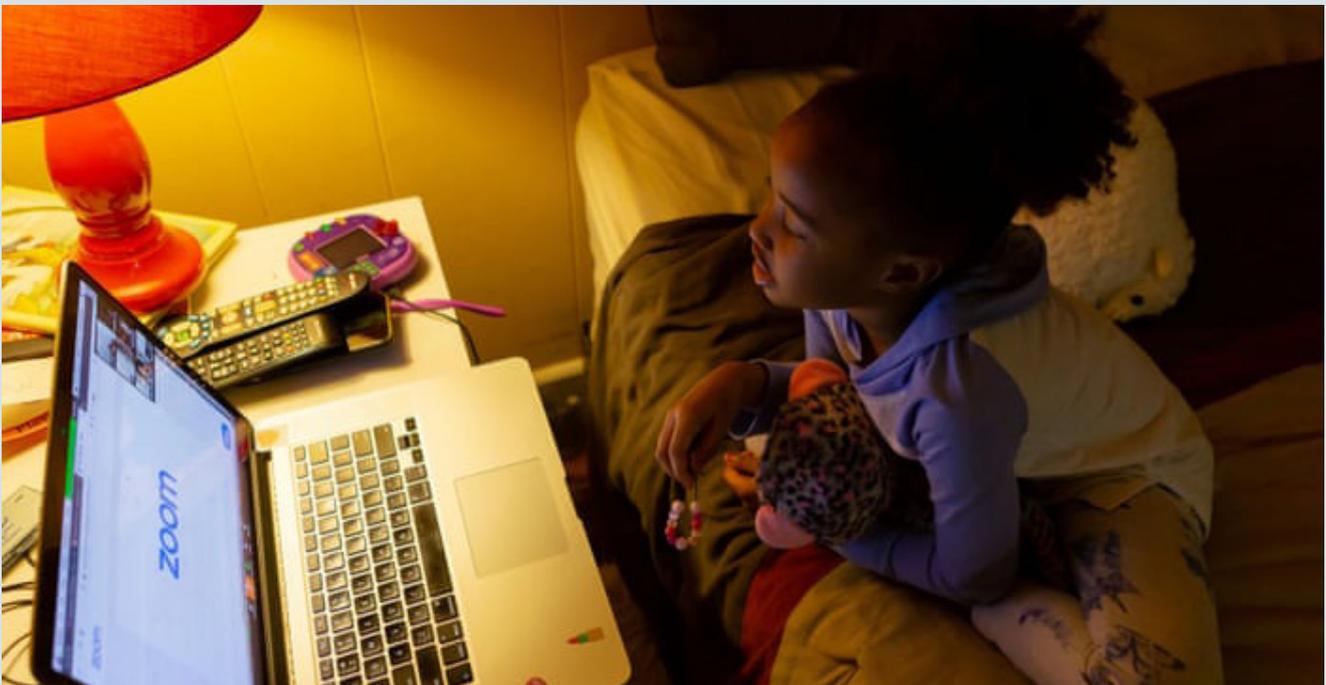
The economic effects on education are adverse. The nation was shocked with images on TV screens and the print media of professional teachers frying *chapatis* on the roadside, drenched in mud making clay bricks in swamps, and hawking a myriad of petty goods on the streets and villages.

On 14 July 2020, the *New Vision* carried the moving story of Stuart Lubwama, head teacher of Victorian High School in Entebbe, making *chapatis* by the roadside in an effort to survive the Covid-19 financial meltdown. Many teachers, especially in the private schools, have vowed never to return to the classroom to teach!

Many schools had hardly collected tuition for term one from parents/guardians before the lockdown was clamped on schools without warning, and private schools that solely rely on tuition payment were particularly hard-hit. According to the heads of schools, most of them could only pay their staff full monthly salaries up to April 2020, and thereafter suspended or discontinued any further payments indefinitely.

There were also outright layoffs in some cases. Heads of institutions were at a loss how to continue sustaining schools without tuition inflow while faced with constant overheads such as payments for utilities, especially electricity and water, facilitation of essential staff, and administrative expenses.

Government-owned and government-aided schools were stunned by the directive of the



Ministry of Finance to schools to return the capitation grants disbursed to their accounts for term two 2020, claiming that schools were closed and therefore the monies were not used!

Very many schools are servicing bank loans that are now unserviceable, or deemed to be a liability to the Directors, forcing them to either negotiate with banks for restructuring the loans, and/or place their institutions for sale, a case in point being Najjera Progressive School, a private school. This financial squeeze will likely compromise the quality of education outcomes in the short and long term.

On 26 June 2020 the *New Vision* reported that over 4,300 private primary and secondary schools across the country risked closure due to the effects of Covid-19, which would affect about 1.5 million primary school pupils and over 300,000 secondary school students! This in itself would have a huge trickle-down impact on the overall economy of the country. Such a situation should be averted through the

intervention of the Government of Uganda, which has pledged support through the Uganda Development Bank, and US\$ 25 billion to teachers' SACCOs.

Reopening of schools

According to the raft of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for schools and institutions released by the Ministry of Education and Sports, requirements include the provision of multiple hand-washing facilities, disinfection equipment, temperature-reading guns, isolation rooms, well equipped sick bays, social distancing of students and staff, the creation of Covid-19 standby task teams, and having a trained focal teacher as well as a qualified nurse or medical practitioner. Schools must operate only as day or boarding institutions, but not both. Teachers and students are not to use public means to commute to school.

Schools, parents and other stakeholders' response on strategies for safe reopening of schools

Mrs Aziida N. Nsubuga, head teacher of Kasawo Secondary

School, a USE school in Mukono district, confirmed that despite the financial challenges caused by the lockdown, management had to do its best to prepare for reopening. "We have at least bought one temperature gun, besides other requirements," she said. "Can you imagine here students pay tuition of only 150,000 shillings, which is even paid in bits?" she added, expressing the desperate situation of the majority of the schools, which she warned were in dire need of support from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) in implementing the SOPs.

Mr Okumu Jedhone, head teacher of Erussi Secondary School, a remote government-owned USE school in Nebbi, urgently called upon the MOES to intervene in such USE schools, by increasing capitation grants or providing some sort of additional financial support. He called upon the school alumni and the community to step in and assist in solving some of the teething problems the school is facing such as fencing and teacher accommodation, that are vital in implementing the

laid down SOPs.

The head of Kyambogo College School, Ms Helen Twongyeirwe, while acknowledging that the peri-urban school had the capacity to observe social distancing and to provide sanitary facilities, however expressed the challenge of recovering fees debts from term one, given the high number of students from low-income families it serves, as well as the danger of losing some students who may not manage to change to boarding status.

Mr Mugisha Justus, the FUSA Vice President, a teacher and Director of Standard High School, Zana, another prominent private secondary school located in Wakiso district, called on the MOES to be more flexible towards schools. He advised that, for example, "...schools should be allowed to innovate some programmes to sustain their learners in **non-candidate** classes, such as administering self-study materials during the lockdown, at a small cost."

He, however, cautioned schools to embrace the SOPs so as not to compromise the safety and health of the learners. In connection with private schools that are essentially in education as a business, he warned that putting students at risk in the name of business (income) may undermine the schools if they offer sub-standard service.

Mr Okiria Martin Obore, the chairperson of the Association of Secondary School Heads (ASSHU), in a telephone interview expressed the feeling of most heads of schools, who had been prepared for a long

time, but had grown weary of each postponement of the reopening of schools. He added that "in view of the phased reopening of schools starting with candidate classes, spacing will be quite adequate."

On another note, the ASSHU Chairperson thanked the Minister of Education/First Lady, Mrs Kataha Janet Museveni, for "understanding the situation of schools" as per her letter to the Ministry of Finance arguing for schools to be allowed to retain the grants for term two.

He strongly appealed to the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) to support the heads of schools with more "on spot inspections" focusing on delivery, compliance with SOPs and motivating heads of departments with their physical presence, noting that "their work as DES is now more diversified amidst the Covid-19 pandemic", and called for more resources.

Ministry of Education and Sports' responsibility

Efforts to reach the Asst. Commissioner of Secondary Education, a member of the Education Task Force on education, for more guidance for schools in implementing the SOPs, were fruitless. However, Dr Dedrace Turyagyenda, the Director of the Directorate of Education Standards (DES), spoke to the writer in a phone interview.

In response to the major challenges cited by some heads of schools and institutions after the release of the reopening calendar, Dr Turyagyenda said the overriding priority of the MOES and government is the **safety** of the learners. "The

phased reopening of schools for candidates and finalists only is a pilot whose success or failure will determine whether the rest of the classes can also safely resume next year," she emphasised.

She cautioned schools that failure to ensure the safety and health of the learners will cause loss of public confidence and ultimately loss of revenue. Regarding concerns about the SOPs on transport modalities, she added that "...it calls for joint effort with the community... Just imagine a learner daily sitting next to a stranger in a commuter taxi whose previous whereabouts are unknown."

On the other hand, she called on school heads to make arrangements with Local Governments to make available verifiable means of transport dedicated to learners and teachers of particular schools, as this will minimise the exposure of learners to Covid-19. On her part as head of DES, she pledged support by her institution that had to inspect schools and issue a certificate of compliance to each school that meets the minimum SOPs.

In conclusion, with the reopening of schools for candidates and finalists, it is evident that more needs to be done to prepare for the rest of the classes. Much stakeholder engagement is needed between the MOES, schools, management and governing bodies, parents and the public to dialogue and partner in ensuring successful resumption of studies in this initial phase while awaiting the second phase for non-candidate classes next year.

PREVENTION OF COVID-19

AT STORES

Following the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-2019) pandemic, most of the Member States have put in place a number of measures, including those affecting store, to fight the spread of the disease. Some safety measure to minimise the exposure to COVID-19 at store include:

1

Wear Mask

Every time before entering and during in the store



2

Clean Your Hands

Use handsanitizer before and after shopping



3

Temperature Check

Check the temperature before entering



4

Keep Safe Distance

Keep 2 metre of safe distance



2 metre



Be safe, for you, and others



THE RISE IN GBV: A Case of the Covid-19 Lockdown in Uganda

By Brian Mutebi

In the thick of the coronavirus-induced lockdown, Scovia Akurut, a Kumi district-based social worker, awoke to a cry at her door. Concerned, she rushed to find a woman with a blood-stained shirt and tears rolling down her face. Her story was one she had heard before: a husband had beaten a wife and sold off the only food available in the house.

"This was not the first, and neither was it the last. I saw more violence than I can fathom during the lockdown," the Atatur Hospital-based Akurut narrates. "The worst thing about that period was that everything was shut down and the survivors had nowhere to go. I felt defeated!"

Indeed, the number of abuse cases soared across the country and prompted a response from the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Frank Tumwebaze. In an opinion piece published in the *New Vision* in April, a concerned

Hon. Tumwebaze wrote: "We note with great concern the increasing cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in families throughout the country. Some of these cases have already claimed lives, even before Covid-19 does so."

The data

Even after the caution by the Minister, the numbers documented by the Uganda Police and government partners kept rising. First was a report on GBV that confirmed 3,000 cases of domestic violence and six deaths recorded across the country between 30 March and 30 April 2020, a period of just one month.

Then came a mid-year report, still by the police, that confirmed that even more abuse was happening. Sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) cases across the country added up to over 16,000 between the months of January and June 2020. This is significant. In the whole of 2019,

sex-related crimes, according to the annual police crime report, were 15,638. This means that more SGBV cases were registered in the first six months of 2020 majorly because of the Covid-19 lockdown compared to the whole of 2019! Of the 16,000 cases in the first half of 2020, the Director of Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Police, Grace Akullo, said that 6,888 involved children.

She further explained that the Elgon region had the biggest number of cases, with 489 cases of defilement alone, followed by North Kyoga with 444, East Kyoga with 425, and Kampala Metropolitan North with 293. Greater Masaka had 394, Albertine 393, Bukedi 384, Aswa 348, Busoga East 316, and Rwenzori West 311.

Mbale district topped the district list with about 200 cases of defilement. It was followed by Arua with 125, Kamuli 122, Tororo 95, Buyende 93, Bududa 88, Buikwe 87, Masaka 85, and

Kassanda 82, while Katwe Division in Kampala recorded 122 cases.

Soon, *The Daily Monitor* (July 27th) reported a total of 128 school girls married off in Kyegegwa, Rakai and Luweero districts. A closer look revealed that Kamira sub-county in Luweero district alone recorded a mammoth number of 20 underage girls married off.

The defilement cases that led to pregnancy stood at a worrisome 2,372 girls in the districts of Kitgum, Ngora, Kyegegwa, Kasese and Lyantonde during the lockdown.

It could be getting worse: A UNFPA report on teenage pregnancy in Uganda during and post the Covid-19 lockdown told of how Luuka district alone had more than 600 cases between the months of January and July 2020. Violence against children, in general, stood at over 21,000 between the months of March and July 2020.

What stuck out, though, was the fact that victims of violence were mostly women and girls. For example, of the reported 6,888 children sexually abused between the months of January and June 2020, Akullu said that 6,805 were girls, and 83 were boys.

The reasons behind high GBV cases

In some instances, timely research on child labour during the lockdown, by Somero Uganda, a child rights organisation, found that girls had been forced into prostitution by their parents and guardians. Speaking to

Capital Radio, Geoffrey Nsubuga Simbwa, the organisation's director, said that districts with the highest prevalence were Kampala, Busia, Bugiri, Tororo and Zombo. "Cases of parents taking their children to men to earn food or money have increased," he said. "This is evident in different slums like Katanga and Kisenyi in Kampala, where residents rely on daily retail trade, and border areas like Zombo, where coffee growing has been a main source of survival."

To understand why it was mainly women who were victims, a 2020 UNFPA report on the increased cases of GBV looks into the impact of the lockdown. First, the researchers reckon that where movement is restricted and people are confined at home, women and girls are at greater risk of experiencing GBV. "This is partly because, in the event where the man is the sole breadwinner, he may feel pressure in the face of economic hardship resulting from the outbreak and the inability to work, causing tensions and conflict in the household, and possibly leading to violence," UNFPA researchers noted.

Tina Musuya, a women's rights activist, also the CEDOVIP Executive Director, believes that this has a lot to do with power. By that, Musuya means the economic advantage men have over women; this means that they decide what law in their homestead is and they will do anything to ensure their word is final. "Locked together for a long period, that power was

unleashed on the women with no money of their own to flee," she explains.

Who is most at-risk?

In an article with *The Independent* (June 15th) Cyrus Samson Omara, the Regional Police Commander for North Bukedi, pointed to the notion of power: citing the examples from the region, he said that many families still believe in the conservative culture that men have greater authority than women; most men in the Bukedi districts have subjected their women to torture, claiming to be exercising said power.

Julius Kisembo, a human rights activist and LC 1 Chairperson for Kisota village, Kisaasi in Kawempe division, Kampala, concurs that power dynamics in homes played a big part in the high numbers of domestic violence cases during the lockdown. "Many men had their work frozen by the lockdown and were at home not earning. Yet some women, such as civil servants, continued to earn. But even where it was women who were earning, because of the power that men wield at home, they wanted to decide what to eat and, generally, spend on. The men would ask their spouses, 'Who are you in this home? I am the man in this home; I take the decisions.' That would sometimes degenerate into violence if the woman attempted to question that power."

Kisembo says violence was reported by both cohabiting and married couples. Most cases were reported by persons between 25-40 years, and he

explains the reasons. "This is a category of people majority of who live in rented homes, and whose work and therefore earning was affected by the lockdown. They were faced with a situation of high family demands without having income. When a wife expressed a need, the husband would think she just doesn't understand the situation. Frustrated, the man would respond with violence. It could also be because this category of people is more exposed to drugs and drug abuse than older people," Kisembo contends.

Cases of violence committed by ex-lovers were also reported. "The lockdown made people redundant and, in a bid to ward off boredom, some attempted to rekindle ex-relationships, and rejection would arouse violence from the rejected party," says Kisembo, adding that generally younger persons reported fewer cases of violence compared to older ones for fear of retaliation by their partners once summoned by the authorities.

For Musuya, the pandemic intensified the injustice so much that she worries there are far more cases than were recorded. There is reason to suggest so. In a bid to respond to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, childcare lines meant to cater for abuse cases were all turned into coronavirus hotlines. At the same time, response teams from civil society who would supplement government efforts in curbing GBV were locked up at home and not listed among the essential workers. It took some pressure from civil society for the government to return the

“To understand why it was mainly women who were victims, a 2020 UNFPA report on the increased cases of GBV looks into the impact of the lockdown. First, the researchers reckon that where movement is restricted and people are confined at home, women and girls are at greater risk of experiencing GBV. “This is partly because, in the event where the man is the sole breadwinner, he may feel pressure in the face of economic hardship resulting from the outbreak and the inability to work, causing tensions and conflict in the household, and possibly leading to violence,” UNFPA researchers noted.

lines to their intended role and to allow some social workers to provide the much-needed psychosocial support services.

Way forward

Efforts to curb GBV need government funding. A look at the case of one Patrick Akena,

who allegedly raped a teenager with nodding syndrome in Nwoya district, confirms that funding is pertinent. While speaking to NTV about the case, George Okecho, the officer in charge of Got Apwoyo police station, in Nwoya district, said that Akena was released on police bond because there wasn't enough information to charge him. A well facilitated police department could have made the difference.

Besides funding, Tina Musuya suggests long-term, multi-faceted approaches to gender transformation in our societies. "Power dynamics have to change," she says. "We should stop insinuations that normalise violence, for example, notions that make it okay for husbands to beat wives. That is how we beat GBV!"

Law enforcement should be gender-responsive, especially in the way GBV survivors are treated. "Sometimes domestic violence is reported to the authorities and it's branded bedroom or family matters that ought to be handled at home. These are not bedroom matters; we are talking about life and death," argues Kisembo. Personnel who handle GBV cases, beginning with local council leaders who often are the first line of contact in the search for justice, need training tailored to GBV.

The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Muzeeyi Sabiiti, reckons that sensitisation will deliver. "Training and awareness remains a key tool. It is through this that you create disciples for good."

Street Talk



WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA DO TO BETTER PREPARE FOR HEALTH EMERGENCIES LIKE COVID 19 AND GIVEN THAT COVID 19 LOOKS LIKE IT IS HERE TO STAY?

BY DAN KABANDA



Sematimba Peter,
Butabika

The government should try equipping health centers with all necessary medical emergency services and equipment needed such as testing and provide drugs to those who may be affected especially the elderly with chronic conditions because they are affected more in such times. Secondly, the government should increase the number of staff and medical personnel in the health centers in order to increase services to an overwhelming number of patients. Now that the virus is here, we just need to adapt to the new normal and come to terms with it. We should avoid crowds, maintain vigilance as individuals and take care of ourselves.



Mama Mirembe Kisasi Cell

Those in charge should now invest heavily in health care systems that can handle pandemics and health emergencies. We have handled serious diseases before such as Ebola and we defeated it. I also ask the government to help equip private health facilities with all necessary supplies that are required. Since covid-19 is big, behavior change is the main thing. The government should re focus and prioritize modern and mechanized agriculture because we need food all the time as the president said. - **Mama Mirembe.**

Joseph, Kulambiro, Rasta

The Ministry of Health should empower the local government hospitals at lower levels nearer communities such as HC 3 and HC 4 to be able to handle covid-19 cases and not leave this to hospitals in big towns. We have heard patients being chased away because of no space for them to be admitted. In future, they should create emergency services and units in these facilities. The government should continue sensitization of the people about corona and how to avoid it.



Kanyesigye Hannington, Kyebando

We have seen so many hospitals in poor conditions during this lock down and cannot handle such big emergencies like covid-19. Therefore, the government should create good working conditions; pay health workers well in these hospitals and in turn will help health care givers to perform in order to attend to medical emergencies or huge demands. In future, the people in charge of money should increase the health budget. The president should intervene in such other than spend money on RDCs, Advisors.



Agnes Ainomugisha, Mpererwe

African countries especially Uganda can never be prepared for emergencies. We have seen so many emergencies happening but people just 'eat' money. Some of them are even simple to avoid but corruption in many if not all government institutions is the main issue. So much money was collected and it would have been used to support or upgrade the hospitals where corona patients can be admitted but nothing was done. I think, in future, the government can think of renovating, re building and making the hospitals bigger so that they can admit more people during difficult times such as this.



Martha, Ntinda

Because testing is a key part of dealing with a pandemic or emergency, there needs to be plans for accessing additional testing services and their capacity. Authorities also need to consider whether to stock the chemicals and equipment to use, although which risks them being wasted if a pandemic doesn't occur before their use-by dates. Alternatively, they can prepare to find ways of making or buying of these items quickly when needed, which may cause a slight delay but ensures that the equipment is the most appropriate for the specific pandemic.

Mama Sara, Najeera

We all know that emergencies occur in any country and covid-19 is among them. We in Uganda thought it's for the developed countries only and therefore didn't prepare. It has shown us that we need to have an emergency fund or money to cater for such. The Ministry of Disaster Preparedness only knows about floods and sometimes fails to handle, we didn't expect it to handle covid-19. It should do more research about such a disease and not take anything for granted because as Uganda, we are poor and can't manage such. We need to give more money to Ministry of Health and Disaster Preparedness.



Frontline health workers' experience in battling COVID-19

By Tajuba Paul



Dr Muhammad Mubiru, the principal hospital administrator, was in charge of seeing that the hospital run efficiently.

In mid-March 2020, Ugandans were thrown into panic. They were facing a new, highly contagious viral disease, coronavirus (COVID-19), that had spread to the country through its airport. Health workers were stretched to the limit: offering preventive measures and treating patients without prior experience.

The coronavirus, which started in China at the end of 2019 had by mid-March, turned into a global

pandemic. In Uganda, the first case was registered at Entebbe International Airport in March from a national returning from Dubai.

Entebbe General Referral Hospital, a few kilometres from the airport, had in the previous weeks been prepared to handle such cases. Dr Muhammad Mubiru, the principal hospital administrator, was in charge of seeing that the hospital run efficiently.

"In the beginning, we requested them [health workers] to volunteer. The clinicians and nurses who volunteered were not enough, and there was fear of contracting the disease," Dr Mubiru says

The experience of handling the first case was overwhelming for Dr Mubiru and his frontline health workers.

"At first, there was a psychological breakdown among health workers and patients. COVID-19 is a new disease, and we knew little about it," he adds.

The hospital hired psychologists to provide counseling to health



workers as well as the patients.

With the hospital suffering human resources shortfalls, the central government mobilised means to incentivise frontline workers and beefed up the numbers from different hospitals to fill the gap in Entebbe.

“At one time”, Dr. Mubiru says, “the hospitals admitted more than 160 confirmed cases in and around Kampala as several others were being ferried from across the country. The facility was becoming congested, and health workers were stretched to the limit. Many were working in shifts and for very long hours.”

“We passed a policy that health workers would spend no more than 30 minutes in COVID-19 suspects’ rooms, and health workers were to go there in pairs such that work is done quickly,” he adds.

This strategy worked. With constant reminders to health professionals to follow standard operating procedures (SOPs), Dr. Mubiru says the hospital has not

had any infection of its workers.

“Fatigue remains one of the biggest challenges to our health workers, though. Many stay away from their families for a month,” he says.

And when they are allowed to go home, they first had to be tested and quarantined before they could resume work.

“COVID-19 is now in the communities, and we do not want any health worker who has been in communities to treat patients before being tested,” he adds.

Dr. Mubiru says his best experience has been being able to reduce inpatients from 160 to only three as of 20th October. The new admissions, he says, have started picking up significantly after the reopening of the airport.

Uganda has been commended for its management of COVID-19. From shutting down Entebbe International Airport in mid-March as a measure to stop visitors from high-risk countries from getting in, to contact

tracing, all these measures slowed down the spread of the virus.

Borders too were closed to travellers, at least on paper. But with porous borders and East African countries having different approaches to managing the disease, border districts became hotspots for the virus.

For instance, Rakai and Masaka districts, which are not far from Tanzania, have had a fair share of the disease burden. Tanzania declined to institute any lockdowns as a measure to control COVID-19.

Dr. Mark Jjuuko, the head of the Covid-19 Masaka Treatment Unit, has been at Masaka Regional Referral Hospital for nearly five years.

“It has been [a] scaring yet interesting experience. Every other day we develop new techniques of handling COVID-19 patients, and we add on expertise in handling them along the way,” Dr. Jjuuko says.

“Handling patients with a new

disease without a cure is itself a scare. But we are trained to treat people. I put on a mask every time and sanitise every other minute," he adds.

Dr Jjuuko appreciates government incentives to health workers, including the provision of protective gears that have proved effective in protecting them from contracting the virus. He however warns that communities are not taking the preventive messages seriously. Many members of the public, Dr Jjuuko says, think COVID-19 is a hoax.

"The population is very complacent to a very dangerous disease. Today we see the virus picking out the vulnerable members of the population, and we should protect our elderly and those with pre-existing conditions," he says.

"Why don't you want to wear a mask or sanitise? Tell our people to be serious about this disease otherwise, it may escalate and we see more deaths," he cautions.

Uganda had registered 97 COVID-19 related deaths as of October 21. As the disease spreads in communities, there are fears that more deaths could be recorded considering the fact that Uganda has many people living with HIV/AIDs, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, among others. People with such diseases, according to experts, have a high risk of dying from COVID-19.

Dr. Jjuuko says his lowest moment so far while handling Covid-19 has been when patients went on a strike citing the poor

quality of food and hygiene at quarantine centres. He says the patients forgot that health workers were sacrificing a lot to ensure they are treated very well and sent home alive.

"It was unexpected and uncalled for, especially at a time when we devoted our best to save our countrymen and women from this disease," he says.

There have been good moments as well; seeing their efforts yield results.

"The time we discharged our first patient at Masaka Regional Referral Hospital when the whole world was on its knees – because the disease had no cure – is a momentous moment to remember and celebrate," Dr. Jjuuko adds.

But he is quick to warn those who see many patients discharged and think COVID-19 is a common flu that doesn't require caution. Since the disease is new, he says, the damage to internal organs might be a catalyst for future lethal conditions.

The best option is to avoid contracting the disease by following SOPs such as wearing a mask, sanitising, and washing hands, he advises.

"My message is simple; avoid contracting COVID-19 because we are now seeing people who have developed complications after recovering. They suffer from heart complications, breathing problems, and chest pain. We do not know what they will be after five years," he says

Deus Twineomugisha, who holds a Diploma in Emergency Medicine from Jinja School of

Nursing, says that COVID-19 has taught him a lot.

"It has been protecting yourself first before you protect your patients," Twineomugisha says.

Having worked at Nyakibale Hospital in Rukungiri District in the emergency department and later Masaka Regional Referral Hospital in the same department, he says this has made him better prepared to confront the disease.

"But you need to be brave and willing to sacrifice your life for others. COVID-19 is very contagious, with no cure," he says.

Twineomugisha says the government has provided protective gear to frontline workers, and this should continue until the disease is defeated. The communities too, he adds, must play their part if COVID-19 – which has ravaged the economy – is to be defeated soon.

"We have talked enough; the government has done its part, but failure to comply with our messages remains a mystery. We beg the public to comply and stop the spread of COVID."

Twineomugisha cites July as one of his most intense moments when at the height of infections there was a shortage of quarantine facilities and many frontline workers were poorly facilitated.

COVID-19 is treatable, and no one should hide or be discriminated against for contracting the disease. However, extra care to avoid contracting it should be the ultimate goal.

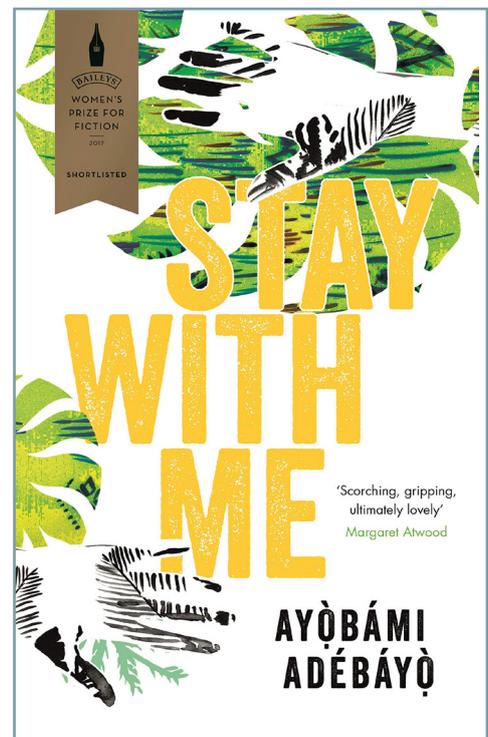
BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: STAY WITH ME

AUTHOR: AYOBAMI ADEBAYO

PUBLISHER: KNOPF PUBLISHING GROUP

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO



Typically, many African communities do not openly discuss infertility. When the issue is addressed, it is only in hushed tones and even then, it's almost always to mock or blame the woman. The women at the center of these unfortunate situations are often subjected to verbal torment and are even targeted with degrading songs sung about childless women. The man in this scenario is always protected, with his infertility concealed at all costs, even by his wife.

Women's Prize for Fiction Nominee (2017), "Stay with Me" is a beautiful debut novel by 29-year-old Nigerian author Ayobami Adebayo. The book gives audiences an inside look at how other cultures address infertility. The book is narrated by a young, beautiful, intelligent, educated businesswoman named Yejide, and her husband Akin, who is a successful banker. Although it was love at first sight for Akin, who has provided Yejide with her hearts' desires, he has yet to give her the one

thing she wants the most -- motherhood.

When the guilt, and trips to doctors and healers don't work, Akin's female relatives convince Akin to take another wife, a younger woman named Funmi. Yejide is horrified; Akin is ashamed. Both thought they were modern Nigerians and didn't believe in polygamy.

"This life is not difficult, Yejide. If you cannot have children, allow my son to have some with Funmi. See, we are not asking you to stand up from your place in his life, we are just saying you should shift so someone else can sit down."-Moomi (Mother-In-Law)

Such dialogue and vivid characters bring this novel to life. There is the rival hairdresser, Iya Bolu; Akin's womanizing brother, Dotun; and Yejide's cruel stepmothers, who were also extra wives to her father, her own mother having died in childbirth. Yejide's worsening nightmare of mistaken pregnancies and childlessness becoming child

loss takes center stage. In one comic scene, she treks up the "Mountain of Jaw-Dropping Miracles" to visit a healer named Prophet Josiah, who has her dance with a white goat she's dragged to the summit as his chanting followers swarm her. She soon believes she's pregnant, despite doctors' insistence that there is no baby.

When Yejide eventually does bear fruit, she discovers that at least two of her three children suffer from sickle cell disease. They are thus relegated to a life of pain, of waiting for the next "crisis". Akin's role in all this is unhelpful. It is the women who are strong and the men who mess things up, yet the patriarchal tradition is stringently held to. Stay With Me is an emotional roller coaster with many twists and turns. Ayobami Adebayo forces the readers to question traditional attitudes toward women, the importance of motherhood and deference toward their husbands. This debut novel is absolutely one of the best books of the year.

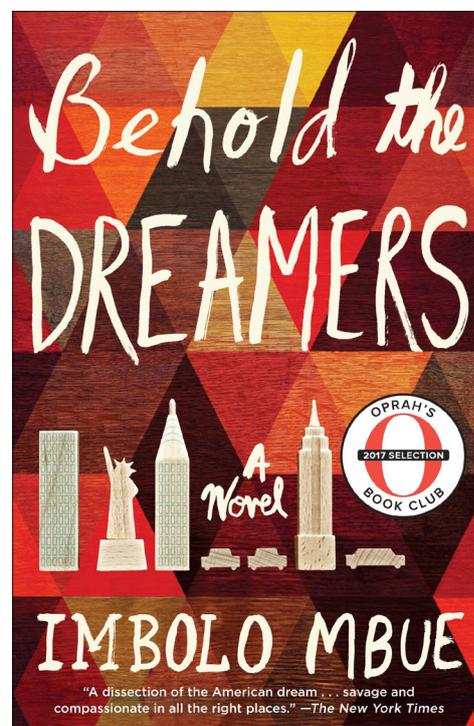
BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: BEHOLD THE DREAMERS

AUTHOR: IMBOLO MBUE

PUBLISHER: BY RANDOM HOUSE

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO



“Bad news has a way of slithering into good days and making a mockery of complacent joys”

From 2017 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction comes a debut novel about an immigrant couple striving to get ahead as the Great Recession hits home. With empathy, insight, and wit, Imbolo Mbue has written a compulsively readable story about marriage, class, race, and the American Dream.

Jende Jonga and his wife, Neni, are two of the main characters in Imbolo Mbue’s excellent debut novel, *Behold the Dreamers*. Jende and Neni have recently immigrated to America from the city of Limbe in Cameroon, hoping to build a better life for their young son, Liomi.

They’re barely able to make ends meet. Neni works as a home health aide while attending college — she dreams of one-day enrolling in pharmacy school — while Jende drives a cab. Their luck changes when Jende finds work as a personal chauffeur for a Lehman Brothers executive named Clark Edwards and his family. The hours are long, but the salary is a massive improvement over

his previous job.

Clark grows to trust Jende, and Neni eventually takes a temporary job cleaning and cooking at the Edwards’ second home. It doesn’t take long before Jende and Neni both learn that the Edwards’ marriage isn’t as perfect as it might seem. This becomes painfully apparent after Lehman Brothers declares bankruptcy just weeks before what would become a historic presidential election.

Meanwhile, Jende is forced to confront problems of his own. While his wife is in America on a student visa, he’s in the country waiting for his asylum application to be approved. But he’s not really facing persecution in his home country, and he’s hoping the smooth-talking immigration lawyer he’s hired can persuade a judge otherwise.

He can’t bear the thought of returning to Cameroon. When he talks about America, it’s with joy, and an unwavering belief in the promise of his adopted country. “America has something for everyone, sir,” he enthuses to Clark. “Look at Obama, sir. Who is his mother? Who is his father? They are not big people in the government. The man

is a black man with no father or mother, trying to be president over a country!”

Underneath all this are also questions of love and marriage. The trials and tribulations that Jende and Neni encounter in their relationship, the challenges in the Edwards’ marriage and the comparable but understated patriarchal domination of male partners of their female counterparts in both relationships stand too tall to ignore.

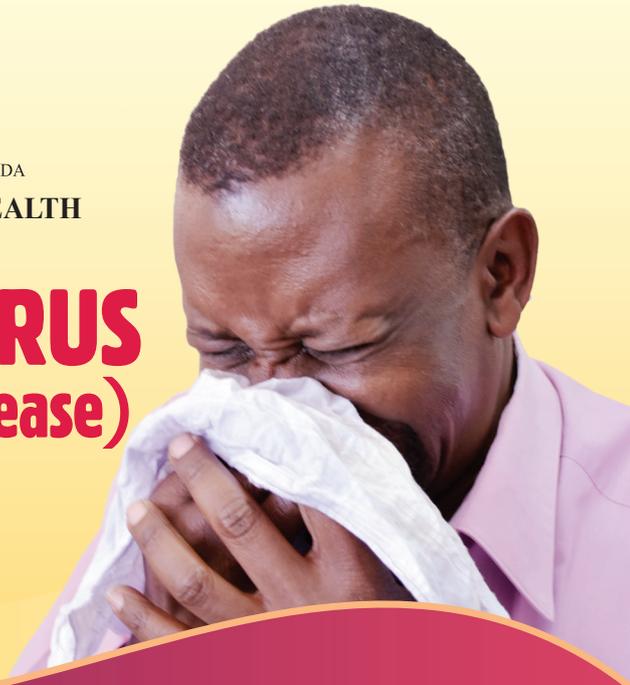
Mbue does not pull punches. *Behold the Dreamers* is, at times, hard to read — not because of her writing, which is excellent, but because the characters keep getting hit, over and over again, by horrible circumstances beyond their control. Jende is reminded that “bad news has a way of slithering into good days and making a mockery of complacent joys;” Neni feels “crushed” by her own feelings of helplessness, “the fact that she had traveled to America only to be reminded of how powerless she was, how unfair life could be.”



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19 Disease)



HOW CORONAVIRUS IS SPREAD:

You can get infected with Coronavirus if you get in contact with an infected person's sneeze or cough droplets

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

YOU CAN PREVENT GETTING INFECTED BY:

- Regularly washing your hands with water and soap
- Avoiding contact with anyone with a cold or flu-like symptoms
- Covering the nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing with a tissue or flexed elbow
- Thoroughly cooking meat and eggs
- Avoiding unprotected contact with live wild or farm animals

For more information, call the Ministry of Health toll free line on:
0800 100066, 0800 203033 or send a **free SMS** to Ureport on **8500**

The opinions articulated in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.



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