



Civil Society Contributions to the Uganda Covid-19 Response

Submitted to the

Office of the Prime Minister's Inter-Ministerial Technical Taskforce on Covid-19

3rd April 2020

On the 2nd April 2020 the larger civil society fraternity represented by 55 organizations in Uganda held a virtual meeting to reflect on the Covid-19 pandemic and the role that NGOs and the larger CSO fraternity will be playing in this emergency response. The following are some of the key highlights from the meeting:

1. Meeting recognized that the Covid-19 pandemic is a very serious national issue that requires all actors to work together to support efforts by Government to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on Ugandans.
2. The CSOs stand ready to work closely with Government in the response by joining the district and national level response efforts to Covid-19 upon request
3. The CSOs (including NGOs, and CBOs and other associational groups) will make their expertise and other resources available to augment and contribute to the Government efforts.
4. The CSO noted that the current pandemic will require an action plan that focus on three distinct phases as follows:
 - a. **Emergency Response Phase:** (3 to 4 months) with prevention mobilization through traditional media, social media, loud speakers focusing on supporting the - trace, test, treat – strategies and deal with the negative impacts of lockdown.
 - i. CSOs are ready to contribute expertise to this phase through organizations that have expertise in emergency response
 - ii. CSOs are also ready to contribute expertise through organizations with expertise in community mobilization and sensitization, psychosocial support, child friendly approaches in emergency, gender and disability approaches to emergency response and several other social dimensions
 - iii. CSOs will also be ready to bring their expertise in areas like food distribution and work to establish of a voucher system that is the most effective system in emergency
 - iv. CSOs will also monitor and document the lessons emerging from the emergency period for purposes of learning and building strong response practices for the future including the post-Covid-19 period
 - v. CSOs will not need resources or funding from Government in the emergency phase but will be willing to work with their donors to consider allowing for the diversion of approved funds to emergency response where possible as their contribution to the emergency response in the Covid-19 fight
 - b. **Phase 2: Return to Normality and Impact Mitigation Phase:**

- i. As we focus on emergency response, we also note that planning for community rehabilitation and return to normalcy will be critical. We shall therefore invest time in assessment of the effects of Covid-19 on various segments of society in Uganda, including; livelihood impacts at community level, redeploying income regeneration strategies for vulnerable people who have lost jobs, petty traders, small and medium enterprises who may have lost livelihood supporting systems
- ii. We shall also work closely with government to support to revamping community based saving cultures and entrepreneurship which will be critical in the phase of reconstruction.
- iii. We shall also continue to support the establishment of long term public health (hygiene) in the daily lives of our society to mitigate any long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
- iv. We shall also work to revamp food production in particular and agribusiness
- c. **Phase 3: Post Covid-19 Development Challenge:**
 - i. We shall conduct studies now to determine the likely economic and social changes that the country will face and make specific recommendation on way forward
 - ii. We shall convene experts and generate think-pieces and policy options on the impact and future actions that Uganda will be undertaking in the context of a post-Covid-19 society

5. Resources on Offer:

- a. NGOs have got over 200,000 staff, volunteers and interns available to support the above mentioned interventions. We are therefore making these persons available as a national resource in the emergency period for deployments in areas of critical need. NGOs have got a presence across the country in most of the districts and have a network of Community Based Organizations as partners that can augment efforts of Government
- b. NGO offices at the national and district level can also be used to offer space for coordination of the various efforts that are being spearheaded by government. In case there is need especially in remote locations for facilities like these, our partners across the country stand ready to support government efforts
- c. NGO have also other support infrastructure that includes cars, phones, TVs, public address systems, bicycles, motorcycles that can be made available upon request to support the emergency period. These facilities are in various parts of the country and can therefore be useful in those parts.

6. Areas of concern: There are some areas of critical concern in the protection of rights of citizens that need to be addressed in the emergence phase as we build a resilient country.

- a. There incidences of brutal enforcement of the Presidential Directives is an issue of concern that we think needs to be addressed immediately. It is gratifying that the President in his Covid-19 address on the 3rd April has addressed this matter
- b. The price fluctuations that have been noticed for essential drugs by various pharmacies in an issue the National Drug Authority
- c. Supporting person in quarantine with psychosocial support will be critical. Many people are being exposed to situations that have underwent – away from family. It may be useful

to find ways of supporting them with psychosocial support that will allow them to cope better the quarantine experience.

- d. Supporting parents with children at home during this pandemic is critical. Exploring ways in which learning can be delivered at home for children will be important. Many parent also need support to know how to talk about Covid-19 to their children in a manner that is not scary. NGOs will specialty in children sensitive programming would be helpful in this area.
- e. We also need to pay close attention to the issues related to gender disparities and disability disparities during the emergency period. Women are the ones who undertake the care burden at home and when all members of the household stay at home the burden of care for women may increase disproportionately. Further, in some communities, gender based violence can increase because of heightened level of anxiety among community members. These are social issues that require attention and CSOs stand ready to offer this kind of support.

For an on Behalf of Participating CSOs (list to be attached)
Uganda National NGO Forum
3rd April 2020