

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF UGANDA'S FOOD SYSTEMS

Over 10 million Ugandans were suffering severe food insecurity before COVID-19. The pandemic has threatened food systems further by posing challenges such as limited farmers' access to inputs, financing, labour, technologies, water, extension services, as well as the absence of data and statistics.

There is a need to understand the present situation of the food systems in the face of COVID-19 and to predict the ongoing and future impact of the pandemic on food systems in the country.

In partnership with The Food Rights Alliance (FRA) Oxfam in Uganda organized a media dialogue on the impacts of COVID-19 on the future of food systems in Uganda, and potential mitigation measures to safeguard food systems. The dialogue was broadcast live on NTV on 24th May 2020.

Oxfam's Interim Country Director, Jane Ocaya- Irama said that we need critical remedial measures to support food security needs for the entire population; people who have no access to their gardens and people who have run out of resources to buy food. Antonio Querido, Country Representative Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Uganda, also said that Uganda is struggling and coping with a number of agricultural shocks therefore there it is important to cater for the needs of different actors along the food chain.

While representing smallholder farmers, Margaret Masudio from Adjumani district said that they have limited access to extension services because of COVID-19 and the social distancing guidelines.

She urged government to budget for these services during the COVID-19 crisis because small scale farmers rely heavily on the skills of extension workers. Margaret also said that there is a need for government to establish a community managed seed system/ seed bank to enable small scale farmers produce enough food for their communities.

FRA's Executive Director, Agnes Kirabo noted that Uganda's food system is stuck in the absence of a governance system and called for significant investment in food safety.



FRA's Executive Director, Agness Kirabo (L) FAO Uganda's Country Representative, Antonio Querido (Top Right) and Henry Richard Kimera, a consumer rights activist during the discussion. Photo by NTV



Oxfam's Interim Country Director, Jane Ocaya- Irama. Photo by NTV



Margaret Masudio, a smallholder farmer from Adjumani district. Photo by NTV

A CALL FOR A PEOPLE'S VACCINE AGAINST CORONA VIRUS

Ahead of the World Health Assembly (WHA) which was attended by Health Ministers from 194 countries, Oxfam published a [press release](#) stating that vaccinating the poorest half of humanity – 3.7 billion people - against coronavirus could cost less than the profits 10 biggest pharmaceutical companies make in four months.

Oxfam warned that rich countries and huge pharmaceutical companies – driven by national or private interests – could prevent or delay the vaccine from reaching vulnerable people, especially those living in developing countries.

Oxfam urged governments and pharmaceutical companies to guarantee that vaccines, tests, and treatments will be patent-free and equitably distributed to all nations and people.

“Vaccines, tests, and treatments should be distributed according to need, not auctioned off to the highest bidder. We need safe, patent-free vaccines, treatments, and tests that can be mass produced worldwide, and a clear and fair plan for how they will be distributed,” said Chema Vera, Oxfam’s Interim Executive Director.



IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON UGANDA'S OIL AND GAS SECTOR

Globally, the oil and gas industry has been severely affected by COVID-19, with crude oil prices plummeting to historical lows in great part due to economic lockdowns in response to the pandemic.

The pandemic comes at a time when Uganda is aspiring to become an oil-producing country, with key decisions expected to take the budding sector towards production.

Similarly, Uganda is yet to secure financing for key pieces of infrastructure to take the sector to the next level while local communities are being prepared to relocate to pave way for oil and gas projects. Uganda is also seeking to enhance transparency and accountability by joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Yet key decisions continue to be made, such as Total's recent announcement of the purchase of Tullow's interests in Uganda.

Are Uganda's oil and gas projects still viable with the current low crude oil prices on the international market? Can Uganda stay on course and join EITI? What are the key oil and gas governance issues we need to look out for in the current situation?

On 1st May 2020, Oxfam in Uganda in partnership with Publish What You Pay hosted a webinar on the implications of COVID-19 on Uganda's oil and gas sector.

For insights, listen to our Extractive Industries Coordinator, Gerald Byarugaba, and other panelists using [this link](#). Access Password: 1V+9g7!1



Oil production in Uganda. Courtesy Photo

A MOTHER'S DAY TRIBUTE TO WOMEN BEATING ODDS TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES

Many women who work in the informal sector are bread winners. Although COVID-19 lockdown measures stretched them beyond their limits, that did not stop them from supporting their families.

On Mother's Day 2020, Oxfam in Uganda joined the HECA region to celebrate mothers in the informal sector who are being hit hard by COVID-19 and some Government measures put in place to curb down its spread.

Because informal workers require social interaction, measures such as lock-down make their work impossible. They are therefore forced to stay at home which cuts off their only means of earning income. Some mothers in Uganda had to take risks and sleep in the markets in adherence with the President's directives - all so that they can earn an income.



"I might not even survive this pandemic but right now, the most important thing for me is my children. I cannot see them go hungry," says Atsede Getaneth from Ethiopia. Photos by Tigist Gebru/Oxfam.

CSOS URGE EAC MEMBER STATES TO COLLECTIVELY ADDRESS ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19

East Africa Community (EAC) member states have in less than three months borrowed nearly \$2.3 billion in a bid to fight the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. On 17th May 2020, civil society organizations led by Oxfam and the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) discussed fiscal measures that EAC member states have in their FY2020/21 budgets to address COVID-19 impacts.

CSBAG's Program Advisor, Rama Omonya, noted that any policy measures put in place by one country will affect the other, hence affecting the much-desired East African integration. He noted that the challenge is with the Customs Protocol and the East African Monetary Union saying that if for example, Kenya eases taxation in some sectors, many companies may move to Kenya and leave other East African countries leading to loss of jobs.

Oxfam in Uganda's Governance and Accountability Manager, Sophie Kyagulanyi, said that the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has substantial implications for gender equality, both during the downturn and subsequent recovery. She said that the pandemic has unearthed the issues of urban poverty and inequality and reversed civil society's efforts in

fighting many gender related problems.

Sophie also added that many countries have rushed to combat COVID-19 and its effects forgetting other health challenges that could actually turn out to be bigger than the pandemic.

Sophie advised that there is a need for more investment in social protection to be able to recover from the effects of COVID-19.

For more insights on online budget discussions, follow [#UGBudget20](#).



Oxfam in Uganda's Governance and Accountability Manager, Sophie Kyagulanyi during the discussion. Photo by NTV

OXFAM SUPPORTING FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 IN KYEGEGWA DISTRICT

As part of the district COVID-19 Task Force [Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Pillar], Oxfam in Uganda, Peacewinds Japan, and the Kyegegwa District Health Inspector carried out a COVID-19 Infection Prevention Control Rapid Assessment in 16 health centres in Kyegegwa district in May 2020.

The team also distributed a set of IEC materials, over 120 cartons of soap and 87 hand-washing facilities in Kyaka II refugee settlement, health centres, police stations, prisons, markets, and the district headquarters.

Oxfam remains committed to supporting the national and the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



Oxfam staff led by Public Health Promotion Team Leader, Rashid Mawejeje (R) distributing materials in Kyegegwa district.

FLOODING AND COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS CREATE PERFECT CONDITIONS FOR LOCUSTS TO MULTIPLY- OXFAM

In a [press statement](#) released on 27th May 2020, Oxfam warned that millions of people in East and Central Africa, already suffering due to flooding and the impact of coronavirus, are at risk of increased hunger and poverty as the region braces for the latest generation of locusts which are due to hatch in June – just when crops are to be harvested.

The statement reveals that heavy rains, exacerbated by climate change, have also created the perfect conditions for the breeding of locusts, raising fears that the swarms could be 400 times larger than the original swarms. Additionally, restrictions imposed by governments to contain coronavirus are hampering efforts to stop the spread of locusts. Stocks of pesticides are dwindling as border closures have strangled the supply chain and overnight curfews restrict the ability of pilots to spray insecticide in key breeding areas.

“Flooding, COVID-19, and the locust infestation altogether form a destructive combination that is threatening to increase hunger, poverty, and suffering for millions of the most vulnerable people in the region,” said Jane Ocaya- Irama, Oxfam in Uganda’s Interim Country Director, in an [interview with NTV](#).

Oxfam is working closely with local partners in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia, to provide cash assistance to more than 6000 households to buy food. Oxfam is also distributing soap, hygiene kits and clean water to hospitals and communities.

“To mitigate the challenge of food insecurity, Oxfam plans to support livelihoods and provide cash transfers to vulnerable communities so that people are able to purchase food,” said Jane.



A swarm of locusts in Amudat district, Karamoja Sub Region. Courtesy Photo

OXFAM IN THE NEWS

- CSO statement on IMF support to fight Covid19 in Uganda, KFM News 8th May 2020
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<https://oxfam.box.com/s/yw6zj4m0powd9h6r4wtybgwbrku9gf2u>
- OXFAM/ FRA TALK SHOW: Impacts of COVID-19 on Uganda's food systems, NTV 25th May 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9z9xbB1L64&t=1s>
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- Oxfam drums up support for communities affected by locust swarms, NTV 27th May 2020
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https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=188209455718899&ref=watch_permalink

Weekly Covid-19 updates are available [here](#).