



Key Lessons for the Grassroots Communities

SEPTEMBER, 2020



The new corona virus (COVID-19) became a national crisis in March, 2020 after the government imposed a countrywide lockdown banning all public gatherings, public transport, institutions of learning, places of worship, markets among others.

As cases of Ugandans catching the virus increased from just one in March to over 1,000 in July, the threats to the citizens also increased and took different forms. Some homes experienced acute food shortages, access to hospitals became a problem as public transport was banned and purchasing essential items to use at home became a problem for many Ugandans as many were out of job during the lockdown.

The government has now started easing the lockdown in phases but the effects of COVID-19 are still being experienced and will affect the lives of many Ugandans for the periods to come. Numerous lessons have been learnt out of this pandemic and below we have captured just few of them that relate to the grassroots communities that NAPE works with mostly.

The Land Question

With the government imposing a countrywide lockdown, everyone had to go back home. There was much suffering for those who lost their jobs in town and couldn't afford rent yet have no land of their own in the countryside. The right to land has more than ever become so relevant.



Key Lessons from COVID-19 for the Grassroots Communities

The Food Question

The COVID-19 Lockdown saw all family members staying at home all the time. Pressure on food reserves was so high. It should be noted that good and balanced feeding leads to strong body immunity which is essential in fighting COVID-19.

For families that were engaged in producing their own food and had food stores (granaries) there was never any crisis at home. These include the NAPE community partners that have been engaged in the food sovereignty campaign.



[ABOVE] Some food varieties on display at NAPE partner community of Kigaaga, Buseruka Sub-county, Hoima District.



For the families that never took food production at the household level seriously, the situation was bad and family members were making frantic appeals to the government for relief food which was also not forthcoming.

Most cases of gender based violence during this COVID period have been having roots in the inability of household heads to provide enough food for their families.

The key lesson here is that food production and food sovereignty should be a top priority for every Ugandan home.

[LEFT] A woman from the NAPE partner community of Rwamutonga in Kikuube District carries vegetables she had just collected from her garden. The impacts of COVID-19 have been less severe among communities with abundant food supplies.

Key Lessons from COVID-19 for the Grassroots Communities

Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Cases of gender based violence increased during the COVID-19 lockdown. This was mostly because it was the only time when husbands, wives and children were all forced to stay at home day and night.

GBV was mostly caused by conflicts on who was supposed to provide essential services for the homes. Women that had long been denied the right to use the land gainfully used this opportunity to remind their husbands about the consequences of being denied that essential right. This usually led to fights.

Civil society organisations, the government and other actors should therefore use this opportunity to do more sensitization on the rights of all family members to utilise family property and the importance of family and community cohesion.



Ms. Lucy Ongiera from Kakopo village, Kikuube District



Ms. Lucy Mbuubi from NAPE partner community of Butimba in Hoima District

Key Lessons from COVID-19 for the Grassroots Communities

Need for Strong Social Networks at the Grassroots

COVID -19 did not only limit supplies at household level but also caused a lot of fear in the population. The fear of catching the virus and whether it was possible to prevent it was rife amongst the majority.

While the government did a lot to sensitise the masses on the dangers of COVID-19 and how to prevent it, the role played by community groups to interpret these messages and customize them to the needs of the grassroots communities cannot be downplayed.

On the part of NAPE, Sustainability villages under the sustainability School network and the listeners clubs of the Community Green Radio have done a great job in practically interpreting the COVID-19 messages through amplifying the hand wash campaign, the food sovereignty campaign and making face masks using hand.



Women in Buliisa District, belonging to NAPE's Sustainability School network having a discussion on building pillars of community resilience