



To what extent are countries prepared to minimise the impacts of Covid-19 on the poorest and to prevent impoverishment?¹

Human Development

3

MPI = 0.18

Social protection coverage

1

Minimum measures

Economic growth

1

Limited pro-poor support

Progressive social change

1

Minimum measures

● Inadequate policy preparedness

● Satisfactory policy preparedness

● Strong policy preparedness

Areas of concern for the poorest and potential impoverishment

Health

Access to health services: Multiple respondents reported challenges in accessing public health services for non-Covid-19 related health issues, requiring them to attend private health clinics which incurred significant costs. Fear of contracting the virus or being subjected to quarantine by attending hospitals is still deterring some people from accessing health services.

Disruptions to health services: The health workers' strike, which saw more than 36,000 clinicians and nurses walk out over poor working conditions and pay, was reported by many respondents as disrupting access to medical treatment and medicines for non-Covid-19 related health issues.

“The prescribed medicines for my back and leg problems were not available at the hospital so I was told to buy them from a chemist, but I didn't have any money to buy them.” Older female respondent, Nairobi

“Accessing public maternity services during the nurses' strike became very difficult when my daughter needed it, so I took her to a private hospital which cost a lot of money.” Female respondent, Vihiga



Food Security

Food security is a critical issue for many households, with impacts ranging from not being able to afford costlier foods (e.g. vegetables) to only eating two, sometimes one, meal a day.

Increased costs of staple goods: Respondents in rural and urban areas continue to report increased costs of food and other staple goods. Many respondents say this is their household's leading challenge.

Direct and indirect impacts on farm yields: Most rural households in Vihiga report lower agricultural yields and need to purchase food beyond their typical requirements due to lost income and disruptions to agricultural input markets, particularly for fertiliser.

Groups at risk of impoverishment due to Covid-19



Women

One report of a sexual assault was identified in the sample and several studies have reported increases in gender-based violence.²



Children and youth

Despite schools reopening in early January, many children have not returned to school. Inability to pay fees and children's loss of interest in school were some of the reasons reported.



Older people

Social isolation continues to be a challenge among older respondents. This is attributed to the loss of community groups, social events, and avoidance by others for fear of infecting older people.

Areas of concern for the poorest and potential impoverishment

\$ Economic

Lost income from small businesses: The easing of lockdown restrictions has allowed most small businesses to return to work, but all respondents reliant on small businesses for their income report a decline in business and lack of capital.

Unemployment: Most respondents report a loss in household income due to at least one earner losing their job as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and remaining unemployed.

“Our income went down since some of my sons who support the household financially lost their employment. As a result, we only spend the little we get from other sources.” Older male respondent, Vihiga

Reduced discretionary spending: All respondents noted some change in expenditure patterns as a result of livelihoods disruptions caused by Covid-19. The most commonly reported expenditure reductions were on food, mobile phone credit and transportation.

“To ensure the household doesn’t miss a meal a day we have reduced spending on food by buying basic food items like sugar and maize, reduced buying new clothes for some time and only purchase mobile top-up when it is necessary to make a phone call.” Female respondent, Vihiga

Case Study: Terry

When we spoke to Terry in September while the country was still in lockdown, she was only able to afford one meal per day and her children were visiting neighbours to share meals. Lockdown measures abruptly halted her street food business as she was left without a supply of her main ingredient, potatoes. She was unable to travel around the city

while maintaining social distancing in her wheelchair to sell food. Without an income, her family has been pushed further into poverty.

In January, Terry noted her situation had improved somewhat because most restrictions had been eased. She hopes to start a business of selling sweets in February 2021. She has no additional income as yet and depends on her sister for all her immediate needs. She explained that this situation has caused her to a great deal of stress. “[This situation has] caused my blood pressure to go up again. I feel like a burden. My sister is literally struggling to take care of me and my daughter but really there is nothing much I can do.”

Although schools reopened, her daughter had not yet returned to school. “I got a message from the school principal and she said that students should pay at least some cash before the students are allowed in. I feel I should not go and plead for my child to go back until I get some cash.” These demands are placing undue pressure on families such as Terry’s and are seriously undermining her children’s right to education.



Government containment measures



Schools open with health protocols in place



Night curfew from 10pm to 10am



Borders open

Methodology

CPAN country bulletins are compiled using a combination of original qualitative data collected from a small number of affected people in each country, interviews with local leaders and community development actors, and secondary data from a range of available published sources. Interviews for this bulletin were conducted in Banke, Nukawot and Kathmandu between November 23rd and December 1st 2020. More information on our methodology can be found [on our website](#).

Coping strategies being employed by poor and non-poor households

Casual day labour: Multiple respondents report they or others in their households have taken up day labour to supplement their household income in rural and urban areas. In some cases, this work was deemed to be unsafe, with one respondent baking bricks in an unsafe environment.

Sale of small assets: A number of respondents in both rural and urban areas reported selling small assets – e.g. books, utensils, trees and chickens – to meet subsistence costs, such as food and rent. One respondent in Vihiga sold their only cow.

Loans and credit: Some respondents report taking out new loans from money lenders for daily expenditures or being unable to pay loans taken before the pandemic. Several respondents report buying essential goods on credit at local shops.

Informal support through networks: Informal savings groups or ‘chamas’ have been a source of support for two respondents. Others rely on support from friends and family in the form of food, shelter and financial support.

Combining coping strategies: Most households facing short-term distress report using multiple coping strategies to maintain household needs. One respondent, for example, has reduced their food intake to two meals a day, sold small assets (trees and a chicken), purchased food on credit at the local shop, and picks tea leaves to make money.

Programmes in place to mitigate impoverishment due to Covid-19

Cash transfers: Government, multilateral, NGO and research-based cash transfer programmes have been introduced in various forms since the beginning of the outbreak. While no respondents reported receiving cash transfers, the following initiatives were identified through a targeted search:

- [Emergency Cash Transfer programme](#)
- [Urban digital cash transfer](#) implemented by Give Direct
- [World Food Programme Cash Transfer and Nutritional Support Programme](#), Nairobi
- Government of Kenya, [World Food Programme cash transfer programme](#), Mombasa
- [IPA cash transfer trial](#), Nairobi
- [Informal community initiatives](#)
- [Inua Jamii Programme](#) (ongoing social protection programme targeting orphans and vulnerable children, older persons and people with disabilities.)

Food distribution: In the first round of interviews ([September 2020](#)) respondents reported that food support was being distributed in their communities but expressed concerns it was not effectively allocated to those most in need. In this round (January 2021), no respondent identified receiving any support.

100,052 Number of reported COVID-19 cases¹

787 Number of reported COVID-19 deaths¹

To find out more about the impacts of Covid-19 on poverty in Kenya, please explore the following sources that were reviewed for this bulletin:

- [Future Agricultures Consortium \(APRA\): Synthesis Report 1 on the impact of Covid-19 on Food Systems and Rural Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa](#)
- [International Growth Centre. Covid-19 country dashboards](#)
- [IMF Policy Responses to Covid-19](#)
- [ILO Social Protection Responses to Covid-19 Crisis Around the World](#)

Footnotes

1. Johns Hopkins (2021). Coronavirus Resource Center. coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html. Data as of January 26th 2021.
2. See: reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-kenya-social-protection-101120-en.pdf, psyarxiv.com/eafwu, www.shofco.org/covid-19.

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Find out more at www.chronicpovertynetwork.org/covid-19



Chronic Poverty
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