

Poverty Monitoring in the Context of Covid-19

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Project overview

- From existing research we know the risk of impoverishment and further destitution from social & economic disruptions of Covid-19 is high.
- Sought to complement ongoing surveys with qualitative research to highlight peoples' lived experiences of Covid-19.
- Building on life history research on poverty dynamics from 2019, returned to households to discuss socio economic changes since March 2020:

Kabwe (urban): 10 households

Chipata (rural): 12 households

Lusaka (urban): 6 households

Areas of concern for the poorest and potential impoverishment

- Subsidized input delay
- Cost of farm inputs
- Cost of food



- Loss of income from businesses
- Lost livelihoods
- Increased costs basic items
- Loss of remittances
- Capital depletion

I stopped gardening because people were not buying, I was making losses because people were getting on credit and were not paying – Female rural respondent

- Support network breakdown
 - Social cohesion
 - Misinformation

- School closures
- School dropouts
- Remote learning access constraints
- Child labour, pregnancy, early marriage

- Access to health services, treatment
- Lack trust in vaccines

I am getting poorer every day because the cost of commodities keeps increasing without a corresponding increase in my income - Female urban respondent.

Government containment measures

- No trading or vending in unsanitary conditions
- Sanitation and hygiene in public premises
- Mandatory masking in all public places
- Hand hygiene
- Social distancing,
- No crowding
- Reporting immediately to the health authorities at the insurgence of symptoms

Sectors affected by containment measures

Micro/small businesses: Reports of failure to resume operations after ease of lockdown measures due to consumption of capital during partial lockdown, increased cost of doing business, reduced volume of customers due to fears of COVID-19

Remittances: Some chronically poor people who survived on remittances from family members before the outbreak report either decline or no remittances since

Agriculture: Despite favourable rains, yield losses expected from increased cost of inputs and delays in delivery of subsidised fertiliser and inputs.

Groups at risk of impoverishment

Our way of living completely changed because we had to adjust for us to survive. Social distance also impacted our business negatively the number of customers reduced – Female urban respondent

I have been sick for a long time such that I can't work or do some piece works. My sister lost her job and she stopped helping me with my monthly allowances – Female urban respondent



Unprotected workers

Informal and formal workers report loss of employment and unpaid wages due to lack of labour protections.



Children and youth

Children's learning has been disrupted, some reportedly not returning to school, idleness being linked to increased protection risks (e.g. pregnancy).



Older people

Movement restrictions have limited contact with relatives, church communities and support networks.

Women
Limited resources and livelihood options

At some point children stopped going to school because of Covid19. They were just staying in the village and some of them became pregnant while some of the boys started engaging in bad activities – Male rural respondent

Coping strategies

Food rationing and cheaper sources:

Reducing quality, quantity, frequency of meals as well as identifying cheaper sources

Diversification of livelihoods:

Increase acreage, expand into gardening; non-farmers adopting gardening for food security; venturing into multiple enterprises

Borrowing and drawing from savings:

For subsistence, medical bills and school fees

Adherence to Covid19 guidelines:

Avoidance of income loss and medical bills, more customers

Government support>

COVID-19 emergency cash transfers, pensions, subsidised fertiliser, school bursary



REUTERS/ Derick Snyder

Future challenges for poor- and near-poor households

- Livelihoods have not returned to pre-Covid levels for many. Will these disruptions continue until the vaccination programme is fully operational?
- Disruptions to education may lead some children to drop-out due to costs, lost motivation, pregnancy or child marriage. How to prevent a ‘lost generation’?
- Reliance on social networks for support was widely recognised, though social distancing measures disrupted normal activities. Will these return to pre-Covid strength?
- Social assistance has been inadequate in supporting vulnerable households to cope. Will there be a reimaging of social protection in Zambia?

Thank you