

The effects of Covid-19 on the informal workforce in Uganda

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Abstract

The SARS-CoV-2 crisis has affected many countries and communities all around the globe. Amongst the most affected were the ones already disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms, informal workers. Informal workers are very susceptible, not only to contracting the disease, but also to indirect consequences of this crisis. The following interview was conducted with a female informal worker in Kampala, Uganda. A country, where informality dominates the economy, and a country, which implemented a particularly strong lockdown, where the impacts of this crisis are far reaching, especially for workers engaged in informal productive activities. This interview is an example of how this demographic was affected by this multifaceted crisis and what workers in such precarious conditions did in response to it -or put differently- what livelihood strategies they devised to front this crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19, Informal workers, Informal economy, urban poor, Uganda

Los efectos del Covid-19 sobre el trabajo informal en Uganda

Resumen

La crisis producida por el virus SARS-CoV-2 ha afectado a muchos países y comunidades de todo el mundo. Entre los más afectados se encuentran los ya desfavorecidos en términos socioeconómicos, los trabajadores informales. Los trabajadores informales son muy susceptibles, no sólo de contraer la enfermedad, sino también de sufrir las consecuencias indirectas de esta crisis. La siguiente entrevista se realizó a una trabajadora informal en Kampala, Uganda. Un país donde la informalidad domina la economía y un país que implementó un cierre particularmente fuerte, donde los impactos de esta crisis son de gran alcance, especialmente para los trabajadores dedicados a actividades productivas informales.

Esta entrevista es un ejemplo de cómo este grupo demográfico se vio afectado por esta crisis multifacética y qué hicieron los trabajadores en condiciones tan precarias en respuesta a ella - o dicho de otra manera- qué estrategias de subsistencia idearon para hacer frente a esta crisis.

Palabras clave: Covid-19, Trabajadores Informales, Economía Informal, Pobreza Urbana, Uganda

1. Introduction

For approximately 2 years now the Covid-19 crisis has been in focus of attention, affecting numerous countries and communities all over the world. After the first cases were confirmed in Wuhan in late 2019, the virus spread rapidly and forced governments to devise measures to contain the spread of the virus and minimize its negative impact. While containment efforts usually included travel bans, mobility restrictions, countrywide lockdowns, or social distancing, to name a few, the impact -of the virus itself, as well as its socioeconomic consequences- varied according to geographical, cultural, demographic and socio economic features of the affected country or community (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Hence, it is safe to say that amongst the most affected by this crisis, are the ones already suffering and dealing with socioeconomic disadvantages, such as informal workers (ILO, 2020). As stated in the Sustainable Development Goal Report (2020), the global pandemic and its impacts will on the one side, be felt more drastically by those depending on informal livelihoods and on the other, aggravate their vulnerabilities; difficult social and economic circumstances make this demographic especially vulnerable not just to contracting the infection, but to indirect consequences of the novel virus (Corburn, et al., 2020; Haddout, Priya, Hogue, & Ljubenkov, 2020; Islam, 2020; Pereira & Gratao, 2020; Patel, 2020). These workers rely on a daily income and will -when forced to stay home and not move freely- “suffer the twin debacle of the Covid-19 pandemic and excruciating hunger” (Iwuohaa & Aniche, 2020, p. 631).

The following interview was conducted in May 2021 for a research that took place from January to August 2021 in the context of a master’s degree in International Development Studies. It is one of 29 semi-structured interviews that were seen through with informal workers in Uganda, to assess the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on informal livelihoods in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. Furthermore, these interviews helped to shed light on the livelihood

strategies employed by said demographic to face this crisis, as well as evaluate if, and to what extent the informal sector and the behavior of its workforce has transformed in the face of this crisis. Due to the difficult situation regarding traveling during the time of the field work, this research was seen through virtually and interviews were conducted through softwares, such as *Zoom* and *MsTeams*. Local contacts, such as NGO representatives for instance, supported the entire process and were physically present during the interviews, providing their phones or laptops, in this way making it possible to efficiently conduct the interviews. Regarding the sampling method, we first identified the most relevant sectors of the informal economy in Uganda and selected 1-3 workers within each of these sectors, interviewing at least one female and one male representative. The sectors identified are wholesale and retail activities, service and support activities, accommodation, and food service activities, manufacturing, agricultural activities and lastly activities associated with the repair of vehicles, computers, and other household goods. The interview outlined below, was conducted with a female informal worker, engaged in cooking and food selling activities.

2. Covid-19 context in Uganda

To begin with, it is important to mention that Uganda accounts for a large informal sector, which estimably employs 80% of the workforce (Young, 2019). In addition, the government, led by president Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement party (NRM) implemented a particularly strict lockdown, where restrictions started around mid-February 2020 and included the suspension of mass gatherings, closing of schools, mobility and public transport restrictions, the shutdown on most income generating activities and eventually the installment of a curfew, which persists up to the time of writing. The strictness mainly refers to the complete closing of all nonessential businesses and suspension of all public transport between March and May 2020. Movements in this period were mostly limited to walking and cycling and within the immediate surrounding, and only people selling food related items, were allowed to operate. At the end of May restrictions were somewhat eased, and businesses resumed their activity, as well as public transport, though only at 50% capacity. The curfew was first established between 7pm and 5am and then readjusted between 9pm to 6am. These measures, especially the prohibition of most productive activities, prevented the majority of informal employees and employers from working and from making an income. Furthermore, the Ugandan government did hardly provide any social benefits. This meant that many informal livelihoods in Uganda were substantially endangered and most informal workers were, and are

still, struggling to provide for themselves and their families. Their livelihood security was severely compromised, as it prevented them from paying rent, from buying food, from sending their children to school, from engaging in social activities, or paying for medical expenses.

3. Livelihood strategies in the eye of the Covid-19 crisis

Inevitably these informal workers had to come up with livelihood strategies to front this crisis and avert negative externalities. Livelihood strategies are employed to improve the general wellbeing, as well as respond to worsening economic circumstances (Rakodi, 1999) and cope and recover from stresses and shocks (Chambers & Conway, 1991). In case of informal workers in Kampala, livelihood strategies show two different characteristics: on the one side, strategies have been employed to avert negative effects of immediate character and help alleviate the pressure on existential needs, caused by income insecurity and on the other, strategies have been devised to make a more permanent change and possibly develop into habitual changes within general behavior and employment. The former include measures such as stinting, eating less or less quality food or selling personal belongings, while the latter include actions such as income diversification, innovation and newly acquired saving practices and household budget planning. Moreover, a recurring livelihood strategy employed by informal workers in Kampala, has been the migration from town back to rural origins. We refer to this phenomenon as return-migration, and many informal workers opted for this strategy out of pure desperation and existential need. Furthermore, the economic context in the city requires cash payments to obtain essential goods, such as food, water and rent for instance (Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002; Wratten, 1995). However, due to the crisis people lost their incomes and hence were not able to purchase essential utilities any longer. In addition, most utilities rose in price, making it even more difficult for people to secure their livelihood. In response, many people in such situations migrated back to their families in rural areas. Areas, they once left behind in search for better employment opportunities. From the results of our research, we can assert that some of these migrants have stayed in the villages, in few cases seeking new business opportunities. Most workers though have since returned to Kampala, with the situation slowly relaxing. These people are facing employment conditions, which are described as more challenging and difficult than before, due to increasing competition and decreasing demand and income.

The following interview was selected, as it shows how severely this crisis impacted Uganda on a household level. The informal worker interviewed, who used to be a cook in a kindergarten facility, describes how the measures implemented in response to Covid-19, prevented her from working and hence, from making an income. She saw no other possibility than to leave the city of Kampala and migrate to her village of origin in hope of better livelihood security. This discussion shows the hardship informal workers suffered due to this crisis, but also displays subtle changes within the informal sector and the behavior of the people involved that seem to emerge in response to this crisis. The following conversation is merely one example of how this situation affected informal workers in Kampala.

4. Conversation

Kampala, May 22nd, 2021, 12:33PM

L

Maybe start by you telling me a little bit about yourself, about who you are, about your family and about your work?

Informant

Okay, I am called [name]. I've been a single mother for 25 years. The work I'm doing, I'm doing so many jobs. At first, I got a kindergarten job, before Corona started. Before we got that lockdown of Coronavirus, I would go to the kindergarten as a cook. From there, I leave that place at 3pm in the evening and I go to the main road. There I sell avocados and bananas until the evening, up to 10:30pm. That's when I go back home. But when Corona came, our country got a lockdown. That lockdown stopped us from working, school was closed. We stopped from going to the markets, all the places were locked up. So, I decided to go to the village. I went with my son, he is 25 years I had one son, but unfortunately now he has gone, he passed away during this period.

L

I'm so sorry to hear that. That's awful.

Informant

When we reached the village in March -the disease came to this country in March- and then the lockdown started in March. That's when I went to the village because I was doing nothing in the city. I had a sister in the village there. We decided to go with my son, so that we can get something to eat when we are there. Because in the city, if we don't work, we don't eat. We have to get a daily income, so if you are not working daily, you don't eat. We decided that with the little money we had, we had to go to the village so that we can get something to do there, to dig, farming such things. But we stayed there for two months, March and April. In May I came back, when my son was sick. He got the sickness from there I don't know what he was suffering from, it started like a fever, something like malaria. I took him to the clinic there, there was a main hospital, a government hospital in that village, but they forbid people from going there, because they had specialized that place for those people, who have Coronavirus. So other people, with other diseases, they could not go there. When I saw that the situation was worsening for him, I decided to get a vehicle and we came back to town, so that we can get more treatment from the main hospitals, which were here in Kampala. When we reached Kampala, his sickness continued. We went to a certain hospital, Mulago. They checked him. I think it was the posho¹, which the government was given out to people, which was not too good. That food I think, caused more sickness, because before he was sick, but it was not so serious. But when we started eating that posho and beans, which was served by our government, his illness got so much worse. They gave us good treatment. Really, they treated us for one month. But in June. Yeah, it was June 4th, that's when the boy passed away.

L

I am so sorry to hear that.

Informant

It was a very bad situation to me. But after three months, I started struggling again to work, because during that period around September, the government allowed some people to go into work again, especially those ones selling fruits, food, working in the markets, shops like that. So, I started working because I was among those, who sell the fruits, so I started going to work. Each day until evening, actually up to now I'm still selling fruits. At home I started another smaller project of cooking and selling pancakes. I put them out on the table at my house and

¹ Maize flour

customers, passing nearby our home can buy them, I stay now with my mom and she takes care of the pancake business. That is what I do these days.

L

This is all very interesting. I have some questions if that is ok. So, you were telling me about the situation before Covid that you had two jobs basically. With that money, were you able to buy all the necessary things, to pay rent, to provide for you and for your son? Was that enough?

Informant

Yeah. Before Corona when I had those two jobs, I could manage to do everything I wanted, but when that Kindergarten was closed, up to now the kindergartens in our country are not yet open. They are still closed. So now I'm remaining on the one job just working for money for eating only. But before, the kindergarten was giving me some good money, with this I could pay rent, buy some necessities at home. Selling avocados and bananas was just an addition.

L

I understand. During that time, how did you feel in the city? Did you feel safe did you feel happy? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Informant

Okay, yes, we were somehow happy, but just as you know, in our country things are expensive, money is scarce, but what you get, you go with that, you just have to make sure that the money you have will fit in your budget. You go on like that and try and be happy. Sometimes you be more happy, sometimes less, you praise god for what you have.

L

I see. Thank you. Let's change the topic a little bit, you were telling me that that you have relatives in the village, right? So, before COVID, how was your relationship with them?

Informant

It was very good. Especially on big days like Christmas and Easter we could go on, to stay with them there, as those days are public holyday. Our relationship has been good up to now, with my sister. We would go celebrate those days together in the village.

L

So, we have this lockdown that comes to Uganda and all these restrictions are put in place, you're not able to work anymore, as a cook and selling food also becomes difficult...

Informant

Yes. It is very difficult, I only continued with the food selling.

L

And that was not enough to pay rent to feed yourself, to put food on the table?

Informant

Yeah, it was not possible to survive. People are suffering, people are starving, no food. So, the little money I'd get, I would use to just eat with my mom. Because she's not working, she is old. With the rent, the landlord is still demanding me. I'm just trying to figure out how to pay that rent.

L

So that's when you left Kampala, right? Can you tell me about that time? Why exactly did you leave?

Informant

What made me leave during that time, we had stopped working completely, seated at home, so we decided to go to the village. There, you can get food, though it's not much but at least you can get something to eat, but here in Kampala, you cannot eat when you are not working. If your daily income is stopped you cannot eat, you cannot survive. So, we had to go to the village, we stayed together with my sister, so we could get something to eat.

L

So, you left right when the lockdown started, in March?

Informant

Yes, because the schools were closed, markets were closed, everything was closed. So, we had to sit at home, sleep, no food to eat, because the lockdown came without warning us, so we

could not stock food. That lockdown just came abruptly to our country, we didn't know it was coming, or when it would be over. So, we had to go to the village.

L

And did you go with your son and with your mum? And how did you get there?

Informant

Yes, I went with them. We were so lucky my dear. The very day we left Kampala to go to the village, when we had just reached the village, that was the day, they closed all the means of transport. We went with the public transport, but at the moment we just landed in the compound of my sister, they made the announcement on TV's that no more movement of any vehicle, or any means of transport. I think that is how god helped us. We got very lucky. Like there is my cousin, who stayed behind to keep the house. He had to come footing for days.

L

Good to hear. So, when you left Kampala and went to the village, what were you plans for your time in the village, how did you imagine your stay?

Informant

What I was planning those days, because there is some land that is big enough. I told my son, that we go there, and we use this time of lockdown, we start cultivating and by the time we shall come back this way, we shall have food to sell to these people, who doesn't have food. That was my plan. And he agreed also that we should dig. And that's also why we went to the village.

L

I understand and how long did you think you would stay initially?

Informant

We thought like for four months, according to what was happening during that time, they said that lockdowns can last from 6 months to one year. So, we said let us grow some food and by the time they will open up schools, we shall be with beans and maize and we can sell to the schools. That's was our plan with my son. We wanted to plant beans and rice and maize, so that

we can sell to the schools, but in the end, it was not possible because the son got sick, and we had to come back to be near the hospitals.

L

When you arrive to the village, how did the people in the village -the village community- how did they react to you arriving to the village?

Informant

Those days when we reached the village, people were not coming so close to us, because they were thinking that people who come from town to the village, they are the people, who bring Corona from town to the village. So, they would not even visit us, everyone was keeping to themselves.

L

And after some time in the village, did that change, did the relationship with your friends in the community, did that change?

Informant

After like one month, they changed, they started talking, we were talking about the situation. Because for one month they didn't see us dying [laughing], so we couldn't have corona [laughing again], they didn't see us dying and probably thought these ones are ok [laughing].

L

I see. So, were you able to make any new friends in that time in the village?

Informant

We had new friends. We had new friends, but they were just the neighbors, those nearby neighbors. We had like two. The others, you just wave, when you are passing, but with not much talking.

L

Do you think that people in the village took COVID seriously, took the disease seriously, the measures, the restrictions?

Informant

At least for us, who were coming from town, we were putting on masks, but those ones there, they say that us, who were putting on masks, we were the people, who were having corona, and they were not interested in putting on masks..

L

How did you adapt to the village life?

Informant

Since I was used to go there, like two times a year, and I also grew up there, I saw it as a normal situation. It was just it like a change of home.

L

That's good to know. Thank you. And during that time, did you stay in contact with anyone from the city?

Informant

Yes. We had our Auntie who remained with her family. So, she was contacting us, and we were contacting her. Most of the time she was the one contacting us, because she could afford the airtime, but for us in the village we could not afford the airtime. So mostly it was her contacting us.

L

She would keep you updated on the situation in Kampala?

Informant

Yes. Because us, we are using only the radio, but them in Kampala they also had a TV, we have no TV.

L

You were telling me that you were digging? Right? So, was that how you were sustaining yourself? Or did you have any other source of income?

Informant

Only digging. At the time we reached, we had sent some small money we had to my sister, she added on what she had; she bought some beans, posho and also the charcoal. So, we ate on that, until the government gave us some supply of posho and beans. But we could eat only one meal, we would eat at 3 in the evening, one meal a day. You cannot eat 3 meals, if you would eat 3 times, where would you get the food from? [laughing]

L

And your sister, what was she doing in the village? Did she have a business? How would she sustain herself before?

Informant

Before she used to dig, she sells some tomatoes and onions

L

Can you think of any negative effects the return to the village has had for you and your family?

Informant

That negative situation is that in the village there were some people who had fled from town to the village, because they lost their jobs, some of them, when they arrived to their families, they were denied the food because they were looking healthy and the family new that they were working in Kampala, so they denied them the food. They said, "you look healthy, you can feed yourself".

L

Did that happen in your village?

Informant

Yeah, it happened. And what we had to do is to get some beans we had, and you would share with them they would eat maybe some porridge.

L

People wouldn't get accepted by the families, is that what you mean?

Informant

Yes, most of them were not accepted by families but even the government said also do not give them food, we don't know why. People looked healthy because they had a good life in Kampala, but now they were really poor and would not get any help.

L

During that time, what happened to your house in the city? You said that you'd left it with a relative?

Informant

Yeah, we had left it with a cousin. But after 2 weeks he footed and also he came to the village.

L

And what happened to your house after that?

Informant

Yeah, he left the place closed, but was talking to the [pauses to think about the name] defense officers, those who keep law and order in the community. So, we had one which was near us, who would check sometimes.

L

And that worked out, everything was safe?

Informant

Yeah, we came back, and everything was safe. During that lockdown, in the first three months, everyone was in the house, so thieves could not move. Once they find you moving, when you are not allowed to move, they just take you to prison. So even the thieves were fearing to move around and steal other people's things [laughter].

L

I understand. Did your journey to the village affect your capital and your finances?

Informant

Yes, very well. Because I used all the money I had for the transport. But even the transport itself, they increased the price for transport. So, you had to pay double, where you were

supposed to pay UGX 10 000 now you had to pay UGX 20 000. We had to go with some things, some luggage and we also had to pay for the luggage. Before, it was not like that. But this time we had to pay for everything. So, it affected me so much.

L

That must have been very difficult. And you were telling me that besides you, also other people returned to the village. Do you think it is a good thing for the villagers that so many people came from Kampala?

Informant

Well, it became a solution: When they reached the village, food became difficult, because they were now staying for a long time. So, the food was not enough for them. Then they had to start digging and cultivate a lot of food. As I'm talking now, there is a lot of food in the villages, because these people, who went to the village, they cultivated a lot, they learned a lesson through that. So now, some people have gone back to town, but these days, after two months or a month, they go to the village again to cultivate, if they don't go, at least they send in money to their relatives to help them cultivate. And once another situation like that turns up, they will get something to eat, not like this past time. Now people are more prepared

L

So, if it's okay with you, I would like to ask you about a time where you had to go back to Kampala, where your son was getting really sick. Why exactly did you decide to leave the village and go back to the city?

Informant

The problem, which forced me to go back to town, it was the sickness of my son. There in the village we had a big government hospital a big one, but only for Covid patients. So, I had to go to a clinic, which is so expensive, also they did not have the medical facilities, where they can check a person to see what exactly is inside and causing this sickness to him. So, I had to come back to Kampala, where we have other big hospitals, and we are allowed to go there. So, I said to my son not to worry, let us go back to Kampala so that you can go to the hospitals. That's why I came back.

L

And the treatment that your son needed, that was expensive as well I imagine, right?

Informant

In the village it was a very expensive and they were treating what I could not understand, because it was not a fair checkup. They just look at a patient. They tell you this formula. I wanted the boy to go through that scan, to see what is disturbing him inside in the stomach, that's what I got in Kampala, when I came back.

L

And in Kampala, you also had to pay for his medical treatment?

Informant

Of course, because there is the government hospital, there are two, at those you don't have to pay, but those were saved for corona people. And only those where you must pay, were allowing us. So, I had to go to that one, I didn't have any money, but the relatives, when they heard that the boy is sick, gave us some money. Also, other friends helped me and gave me some money. I collected that money, and I went to the hospital, but unfortunately the boy passed, 25 years...

L

I'm very sorry to hear that happened, but a good thing is that you have good friends that helped you in times of need.

Informant

Yeah, I appreciated that. They did a very good job. Even when the boy passed away, they helped me to transport him to the village. With an ambulance, we took the body to the village, the village of the boy's father. We took him there to burry.

L

And then you stayed in Kampala after that?

Informant

Yeah, I've never gone back to the village. I'm still in Kampala now, selling my fruits bananas and avocados. Because I must take care of my mother. She's old.

L

So your life in the city, is that easier than in the village?

Informant

It is easier in the city than in the village. In the village you know, you have to dig. In the village the main issue there is digging, you have to dig. At least in the town I can get some money, and my sister, who is there in the village can send me bananas or avocados, I send the money to her and I get some produce from the village, which is not expensive, and I sell it here in town

L

And in your business, the vegetable selling business, what has changed from before COVID, what is now different?

Informant

The difference is very big, because before you could make UGX 20 000 a day but now, there's people they don't have money, COVID affected them so much. COVID affected their businesses, and their income went down. So, you cannot raise UGX 20 000 a day. First, because they are so many now selling the same thing as you, and also, I can only sell in certain hours because there is still curfew at night, I just go there for five hours, but before you can even reach midnight, people can enjoy moving the whole day, you get money from those people, which is not there today. If they find you moving after nine o'clock, they put you in prison. You have to be careful.

L

And how much money can you make now more or less on a day?

Informant

At best UGX 10 000, because most of the people especially teachers are selling now too, those ones, who were in schools which have not yet opened. They are now also selling tomatoes, bananas, there are now so, so many are on the street, just like me [sad laughter].

L

So, there's a lot of competition?

Informant

Yes, Competition is high, and demand is very little. Before Covid, we could make enough money because the teachers were in their schools. They are now selling and interfering in my business, now they are also on the street.

L

And why do you think that teachers engaged into these kinds of business, into vegetable selling and not any other business?

Informant

Well, these teachers are not government teachers, they are teachers for these private schools. Private schools they cannot sponsor their teachers during holidays, or during this covid time, so they could not support them. No salary, no work. So, they have to come out and start doing that business, so that they can sustain themselves.

L

I see, but why do you think they chose vegetable selling and not any other job?

Informant

Well, it takes time to get money, when you're doing other jobs. You don't really need much capital for this business, you can just start. Because for them, they want daily income, you sell something on the street, you buy food at home. You sell something, you buy sugar for the kids. That's why they are doing that.

L

You said, you're also doing a little pancake business near your house?

Informant

Yeah, yeah, I'm doing that. The money I am getting from the main road is not enough. So, I decided to start this pancake cooking at home, I cook it very early in the morning and my mama is able to sell it when she is sitting there, and like this she also has something to do and does not get bored [laughter]. I help her, I cook it and then I leave her to look for my bananas.

L

And in that vegetable selling business, do you get the bananas and avocados from a wholesale?

Informant

Yeah, we get them from wholesale. There are some people they go to other villages, they are very far and they bring vehicles big, big vehicles. You can find so many people at those vehicles trying to buy for sale. If you don't get your products from nearby villages, you wait for those vehicles.

L

Where do you normally get your goods from? From vehicles?

Informant

Where we stay there is a small town. So, vehicles come to town and I know the days, where they come: Monday, Wednesday and Saturdays. At these days I have to be here. On those days I go there very early in the morning to get my bananas. I went today very early, after that I made the pancakes. Then, the people with the vehicles told me that they are bringing of avocados tomorrow, on Sunday, ashe has failed to come today. So tomorrow, Sunday, very early in the morning, I have to be there. Yes [laughing] I have even their phone numbers.

L

Would you say that you are taking any precautions to be prepared for similar things such as this COVID crisis in the future?

Informant

I want to do something more, I can't right now, because I have no capital, but when I get capital, I will do something more to sustain myself and my mother. She needs the money for her medicine every day.

L

And you were also telling me that you are sending money to your sister, so she can invest in the garden and in the digging? Is that also something that you started doing because of COVID?

Informant

Yeah, I started during COVID, because before I was not caring that much. All I was getting, I was spending on the city life here, I was not even thinking about it so much. But when we went there, to the village you know, when you get a problem, that's when you get a plan [laughter]. Yes, that's when you get a plan. I have joint hands with her, we started growing beans, because when you get good beans, you bring them from village to Kampala, and these people from the shops they can buy from you. If you have those good beans, they will buy them from you.

L

From your point of view, what are good things about the village and good things about the city?

Informant

The good thing in the village is, that when you grow your food, it is in plenty. You don't get so much money for the products because they buy it cheaper, those who bring it to town buy it cheaper, but you can survive and eat. Here in town, if you don't have money, you will not eat. You have to work hard in town to get money, for buying what to eat. But what is good in town, is that you get ideas and experience. If you are planning something in a village and you want to bring it in town, you will have the experience, you will have enough ideas how to sell it, how to contact customers because you know the life there, but you also know the life in the town. When you are only in the village you won't know all the tricks [laughter].

L

So, it's important to know both lives in some way. Right? Do you think that COVID and the lockdown have changed these good things about the village and these good things about the city?

Informant

It has changed a lot, people there in the village, people have learned to work hard, more than they used to before. And those in Kampala they learnt to get a side job, when you are a teacher, you need to get a side job always; you can open a shop, or you can learn how to do tailoring. In Kampala, now, you have to have at least two jobs. In the village, you have to make sure to have plenty of food in your home, for eating and for selling also.

L

And do you feel that the connections between the city and the village are different now after this crisis?

Informant

They are so much different. Because we are now connected to those village people. They are also connected to us, in most parts of the country. People are connected to town people, those ones in town to the village people, because we learnt a lesson [laughter] we learnt a lesson, a very big one. We have suffered so much pain, but at least we have learnt something [more laughter]. It is really important to be in connection with your family in the village for support, if we suffer again, we know we can help each other.

L

So, apart from what you just said, can you think of other positive things that came out of this crisis?

Informant

Other positive things... What we have learned not to stay with just one job, this has really opened our eyes don't stay on one job, you have to be with the two. And if you don't have two, don't settle, at least try to get other ideas. Once this one job is blocked, you open up another, you start with the other and hope you will be having that knowledge. So many people now are going to groups and trying and learning things, people can go and learn how to bake, tailoring, how to take care of the hair, such things. Even if you don't work in the new job right now, at least you are prepared. You could get your customers even at home if you wanted.

L

And the last question, what are your hopes and dreams for the for the future?

Informant

My hopes and dreams. All along, I have been dreaming that if I get some more money, or capital to do a better business, I want to buy a plot for myself. I put there some houses for rent, and I can get a little profit. When you get old, and you don't have energy to work, those renters can help you, and you can get your income from there.

[ENDINGS]

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