



THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE UGANDA (HRCU)

WEEKLY UPDATE ON THE CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF HRDS AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN UGANDA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Issue No. 10 [1st – 7th June 2020]

Introduction

In the week of 1st - 7th June 2020, following the easing of the lockdown, public transport fares shot up with the explanation that public transport vehicles were directed to carry half of their capacity of passengers as they resumed operations on 4th June.

The rate of COVID-19 infections increased alarmingly with truck drivers still registering the highest number of infections. A total of 17 other persons including health workers around the country, some individuals from the Office of the Prime Minister and KCCA were also reported to have tested positive of corona virus.

<https://www.independent.co.ug/uganda-seven-frontline-health-workers-test-positive-for-covid-19/>

<https://www.independent.co.ug/opm-staff-testing-for-covid-19/>

It appears therefore that as the lockdown is being eased, the situation, on the other hand, is dispiriting as more infections are registered in the communities. It is therefore important that HRDs and all people continue to abide by the Presidential directives and guidelines issued out by the Ministry of Health.

COVID-19 status:

As per the Ministry of Health report on Sunday 7th June, 23 new cases were registered to bring the total number of infections to 616. Out of the 616 COVID-

19 cases, 96 patients recovered, and there were no deaths registered.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) situation report-139:

Continent	Total no. of infections	Total no. of deaths
AFRICA	131,324	3,148
GLOBALLY	6,799,713	397,388

For more information:

<https://newsaf.cgtn.com/news/2020-06-07/Uganda-records-23-new-COVID-19-cases-total-reaches-616-R8xPQpFo6A/index.html>

<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/COVID-19-Panic-four-KCCA-staff-are-evacuated/688334-5571718-pvulwv/index.html>

<https://observer.ug/news/headlines/65149-9-more-ugandan-health-workers-test-positive-for-covid-19>

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AMIDST THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

1. Safety of Health workers (Frontline)

With the new stream of infections arising from health workers, there is great concern that the medical protection equipment is not enough and that many workers are working without PPE. On 7th June during the 9 pm news on NTV Uganda, the Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary who said that infections among health workers are worrying as it may demoralise the other health workers. The government must greatly prioritise the safety of health workers.



Photo: Courtesy of The Observer

For more information:

<https://whtc.com/news/articles/2020/jun/03/uganda-health-workers-say-they-lack-vital-equipment-to-fight-covid-19/1025180/>

2. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

It was reported by NBS Television during the lunchtime news on 5th June 2020 that women had asked for a special stimulus package in the fight against Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) amidst the surging COVID-19, locusts and floods that were being faced in the country. Two serious cases of aggravated defilement were reported in Lira district on 5th June 2020. Two girls, one aged 14 years and the other 9 had conceived as a result of defilement. The suspects had been identified as male adult cousins of the victims. The case of the 14-year-old was being followed up by Mr Francis Okullo (HRD Lira district).

Information courtesy of:

[National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders' WhatsApp group.](#)

3. Use of excessive force by security officials

The use of excessive force by security forces remains an issue as several Ugandans continue to be subjected to inhumane treatment. On 3rd June, it was reported that a group of security men enforcing a curfew in Kinuubi Hoima beat up a motorcycle rider to death.

Information courtesy of:

[National Coalition of HRDs in Uganda WhatsApp group](#)

4. Natural disaster

Uganda continues to face increased flooding and landslides, especially near large water bodies in the different parts of Uganda. Thousands have been displaced with no shelter, and general life necessities. A recent example; [NBS Television Lunchtime News reported](#) on 5th June that hundreds in Serere District,

Pingire Sub County were displaced by the Lake Kyoga floods. Tons of maize plantations and other food crops were all destroyed by the water.



Amidst the challenges, Uganda joined the rest of the world on 5th June 2020 to commemorate World Environment Day under the national theme, "*Nature is Speaking, Listen!*" This theme was chosen following the increased water volumes causing floods and landslides in various parts of Uganda. Ugandans were therefore called upon to take action and protect the environment by restoring degraded areas, planting trees and stop encroachment.

.For more information:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/floods-devastate-dokolo-district>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/kase-se-leaders-petition-parliament-over-disasters>

<https://www.nema.go.ug/media/world-environment-day-2020-nature-speaking-listen>

Conclusion

The working environment of HRDs is still challenged by some concerns and human rights challenges such as rising costs of handling the increasing COVID-19 infections, rising water levels and floods and cases of mistreatment of the public by security agencies enforcing guidelines and regulations. HRCU continues to collaborate with other human rights organisations and government sectors to ensure that human rights defenders have

protective wear at their disposal as they continue to defend vulnerable victims of human rights violations in their communities.