

OXFAM ASKS G20 TO CANCEL THE DEBT PAYMENTS IN 2020 SO THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CAN RESPOND TO COVID-19

In 2020 alone, developing countries are set to spend up to \$40 billion dollars in debt payments, yet they could utilize these resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last month, Oxfam launched a call to cancel all debt payments in 2020 so that developing countries like Uganda can bolster public expenditure targeted at protecting the rights and needs of populations, especially to maintain and increase social protection and health spending in response to COVID-19 and ensure relief goes directly to benefit those in need.

Oxfam utilized a critical moment to influence during the spring meetings when the G20 Finance Ministers, IMF Governors and the World Bank Governors were meeting to make decisions on coronavirus' global response.

Oxfam's Interim Executive Director, Chema Vera noted that the organization's response to COVID-19 from an influencing perspective has been fast-paced and multifaceted, with incredible efforts across multiple teams to ensure that its analysis, expertise and leadership are seen and heard.

The face of the campaign were front-line health workers from across the globe. Through an open letter, they demanded for debt cancellation so that Governments can ensure that hospitals are properly resourced.

Following efforts by Oxfam and over 200 networks and organizations across the world, the IMF announced a debt relief plan for 25 countries.



G20 Leaders,
#CancelTheDebt so
developing countries
can fight coronavirus

Some of the digital materials shared asking rich countries to cancel the debt and save lives of people in developing countries.



Some of the front-line health workers from different countries that came out to give face to the campaign. Photos by Oxfam International.

EARTH DAY 2020 AND THE GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE

The COVID-19 crisis reminds us that we are powerful when we act together, with compassion and solidarity. But as we fight the pandemic, the climate crisis is waiting for our attention too. Earth Day 2020 (22nd April) was an opportunity for people across the world to become part of the change for a fairer, safer world.

We asked our supporters in many countries to make a commitment to climate action by signing up to be a climate changer. Join the community of climate changers [here](#).

In Uganda, young climate activists also joined the digital strike for climate. Our followers joined the #climatestrikeonline to demand for a better future for people and the planet.



COVID-19 MIGHT SHRINK UGANDA'S CIVIC SPACE FURTHER, BUT NOT ALL HOPE IS LOST

Oxfam in Uganda together with the Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG), convened a 2-day Virtual Dialogue with 22 organisations, partners and allies to explore narratives and civic space. The Virtual Dialogue involved inputs from Oxfam's allies: JASS – Just Associates; Thomas Coombes – Hope-based Communications and Patricia Melendez from Article 19.

Led by Oxfam's Governance and Accountability Manager, Sophie Kyagulanyi and CCG's Executive Director, Sarah Bireete, the group explored concepts of civic space and narratives based on their own knowledge combined with inputs from different actors working in other contexts.

Sarah expects that the COVID-19 pandemic will shrink civic space even further but hopes that out of this, actors will come out stronger. Sophie also noted that negative narratives can have a high impact and that there is a need to start developing strategies on how to deal with this situation.

She added that having better collaboration amongst civil society actors is critical and will help them to move forward.

There is an idea to explore developing a small campaign strategy with the group based on the insights gained and applying them to the COVID-19 Civic Space situation. Find reading materials from the dialogue [here](#).



An illustration of narratives and civic space in the Ugandan context.

UGANDANS PETITION PARLIAMENT TO PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO SAFE BLOOD DURING THE BUDGETING PROCESS

As a continuation of the Access to Blood campaign, Oxfam working with the Center for Health, Human Rights, and Development (CEHURD) along with other partners presented an [online petition](#) to the Rt.Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, signed by more than 888 Ugandan citizens, appealing to her and the Government of Uganda to increase the budget allocation of funds to the Uganda Blood Transfusion Services (UBTS) during this era of COVID-19 and beyond.

This would ensure sustainability of daily collections and supply of safe and adequate quantities of blood and blood products.

Through a joint letter to the Rt. Hon Speaker, Civil society said; "While flattening the curve for the COVID-19 pandemic is everyone's current priority, blood is a lifesaving commodity with no substitute especially for women and girls giving birth and suffering haemorrhage that must be available at all times. In the face of the current lockdown, we foresee a national blood shortage as a result of the ban on transport and public gatherings as well as closure of schools since students are the highest blood donors."

INFLUENCING FOR A GENDER-SENSITIVE NATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE.

Given the [increased cases of domestic violence during the lock-down period](#), the Domestic Violence Act Coalition put out a statement calling upon different Government Ministries and other actors to ensure a gender-sensitive response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the concerns were limited prevention and response measures to violence against women and girls. There were also concerns for women in the informal sector. The [statement](#) provided recommendations towards this and other areas of concern.

They therefore urged the Government to increase health spending with a focus on Maternal Health to ensure that UBTS is well equipped to continue collecting blood during and after the pandemic.

**WE NEED BLOOD
TO SAVE OUR
WOMEN & GIRLS
ACT NOW**

**FUND THE HEALTH SECTOR
FUND THE BLOOD BANK
SIGN THE PETITION**



Through an online petition that was set up, 888 petitions were collected adding a voice to the call for increased domestic funding to the Health Sector

COVID-19 AFFECTING SMALL- SCALE FARMING ACROSS EAST AFRICA

Oxfam's partner Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) produced a podcast on the impact of COVID-19 on small-scale farming, food security, and sovereignty in the East African Community (EAC).

The podcast was moderated by ESAFF's Programs Manager, Adem Andrew. One of the participants, Hakim Baliraine, urged EAC member states to make deliberate efforts to domesticate the 2011 African Union decision on the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative passed by Heads of State. Listen to the podcast here <https://bit.ly/2VfyO42>.

CSOS INFLUENCE TAX AND FINANCE DECISIONS AROUND

COVID-19

Oxfam worked closely with the Tax Justice Alliance and Civil Society Advocacy Group (CSBAG) to influence domestic revenue mobilization as well as public expenditure.

The two coalitions were pro-active and issued statements seeking the attention and focus of the

government in response to COVID-19 calling for tax breaks, halts on utility payment, and redirection of resources to the Ministry of health to adequately respond to the pandemic. They also responded to the Ministry of Finance's request for a UGX 304bn supplementary budget to fight COVID-19. Their statements can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

USING ENERGY SAVING STOVES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Meet Louise, a 30 year old refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) living in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. Before she moved to Uganda, Louise was a peasant farmer who was depending on agriculture to feed her family. When they settled in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, Louise and her family began to rebuild their lives, and resumed farming.

However, they were challenged by limited firewood and charcoal to prepare food. With funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation, Oxfam identified 20 refugees from DRC, including Louise, and trained them in making energy saving stoves. Using soil, couch grass and water, Louise constructed an energy saving stove near her house.

"I love this stove because even without firewood or charcoal, I can use plant husks and have my food ready in time," said Louise. She is also teaching other refugees about the advantages of using energy saving stoves and training them on how they can be constructed.

So far, over 480 households out of the targeted 1,400 households have been trained in making and using the energy saving stoves. With more funding, the training can be scaled up to reach more refugees in Kyaka II Settlement.



Louise using her energy saving stove to prepare a meal in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement.

OXFAM IN THE NEWS

Catch up on a special report on how Covid-19 exposes Uganda's poverty and inequality published by Daily Monitor on 28th April 2020. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/Covid19-lockdown-exposes-Uganda-poverty-inequality/688342-5536434-13fcsje/index.html>

To keep yourself regularly updated with the COVID-19 context and program work, please read the weekly Covid-19 updates accessible [here](#).