

Gender Equality Webinar

23th July 2020

Topic: Implications of Covid-19 Impacts on Gender Equality within the Cooperative Movement

Background

COVID-19 was first detected in China in December 2019 and since declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January 2020 by the World Health Organization. Ever since, the pandemic has spread far and wide covering as at 25th June 2020, 213 countries and territories around the world with reported cases of over 9.5 million and a death toll of over 480,000. The pandemic has posed serious threats to human life and economies with a very severe projected economic recession. The marginalized groups have been hit hard and for instance, Women's employment and livelihoods has deepened pre-existing inequalities and exposed cracks in social, political and economic systems.

The year 2020, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality but this now seems like a dream.¹ According to the UN Women press release of 12th May 2020; Globally, women represent 55.8 per cent of employees in service industries, while in the G7, women make up around 88 per cent of the service industry workforce. Nearly 60 per cent of women around the world work in the informal economy, earning less, saving less, and at greater risk of falling into poverty. Most are unable to work remotely and may require additional care support for children or older family members as they leave their homes to work. The situation is far much worse in Africa continent considering its vulnerability to such crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic impacts have created a global crisis unparalleled in the history of the United Nations—and one which requires a whole-of-society response to match its sheer scale and complexity. But this response, whether at the national or international level, will be significantly weakened if it does not factor in the ways in which inequalities have made all of us more vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis more so, in our business models such as the Cooperative movement.

¹ UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women; <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

Impacts of COVID-19 on Gender Equality within Cooperatives

Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex. In Africa, according to WHO June press release; Africa women account for around 40% of the Covid-19 cases, this ranges from 35% in some countries to over 55% in South Africa. The press further asserts that the existing gender inequalities in economic opportunities may worsen as was seen in previous large-scale health shocks such as the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic. For example, in Liberia, women experienced worse job losses and remained out of work longer than men, since women worked disproportionately in the hardest-hit sectors such as agriculture and health. The Cooperative movement, by its nature focuses majorly on the lowly in society. Being, people centered businesses, Cooperatives, play a meaningful role in ensuring inclusion, representation, rights, social and economic outcomes, equality and protection of women and girls among their members and their local communities at all times are adhered to even in times of crises.

UN Women press release of 12th May 2020; asserts that compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty. Early reports reveal more men are dying as a result of COVID-19, the health of women generally is adversely impacted through the reallocation of resources and priorities, including sexual and reproductive health services. Unpaid care work has increased, with children out-of-school, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services. As the COVID-19 pandemic deepens economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, gender-based violence is increasing exponentially. Many women are being forced to 'lockdown' at home with their abusers at the same time that services to support survivors are being disrupted or made inaccessible. All of these impacts are further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies where social cohesion is already undermined and institutional capacity and services are limited.¹ Being a common society, the effects have thus impacted too the cooperative movement. Agriculture cooperatives cannot meet the demands of the families because of decreased farming activities, the demand for housing is increasing and saving and credit cooperatives cannot equally meet the credit demands of their members because of the volatility of the economy.

However, all is not lost and for every rain always there comes sunshine. The Cooperative community is always inspired by its principles and values and is therefore obligated to join efforts with other key stakeholders to first help with mitigating the spread of this disruptive Covid-19 outbreak

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and the implementation of recovery strategies to sustain livelihoods as well as aid in gender equality.

Over the years, cooperatives have shown resilience during periods of war, financial and other crises. For instance, the financial crisis that was characterized by public bail out of private, investor-owned banks, underlined the virtues of a customer-owned cooperative banking system. It was also recorded that cooperative banks and savings and credit cooperatives are better able to withstand the banking crisis and economic recession than the investor-owned banks. Other cooperatives like those in the agricultural and marketing cooperatives continue to show resilience in the fight against food insecurity, poverty reduction, employment creation and safety net provision hence lessening the gender inequalities.

General Objective

The general objective of this webinar is to bring government officials, cooperative leaders and other stakeholders in the forum to deliberate on how best cooperatives can mitigate the impact of Covid-19 pandemic through gender equality. The webinar will bring in regional perspectives by the ICA-Africa gender committee and the We-effect - on key cooperative sectors and practical cases.

Specific Objectives

- To recap the role of gender equality in cooperative development; the works of *ICA Africa gender committee and We Effect on gender equality as well as their thinking going forward.*
- **To highlight gender dimensions in the cooperative movement during this pandemic.** *In times of pandemic, women and men are affected differently. Failing to take on board gendered dimensions response in cooperatives will exacerbate existing and persisting inequalities and create new ones. Cooperatives can be very instrumental in advancing gender equality by offering better solutions to address the gender aspects of the pandemic. By addressing gender equality in today's response, we limit the impact of the pandemic and pave the way for a smoother recovery and a better future.*
- **To understand the importance of use of data to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on women and girls** *Data is useful as it can be used to analyze the impact as well as inform policies and decisions in response to COVID-19 impacts. However, there is limited availability of sex- and age disaggregated data, thus hampering analysis of the gendered implications of Covid-19 and the development of appropriate responses especially in cooperatives. The need to have data driven approaches is more critical than ever particularly, for women and girls to inform interventions during this pandemic*
- **To expound on how self-branding/imaging in the context of gender can help respond**

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and mitigate the impact of crises such as Covid-19

Self-branding/Imaging is critical during this period of the pandemic, developing personal brand is very valuable as it puts young girls and women on exciting opportunities. Not to ruin the gains made, in regard to gender equality; branding/imaging in the new norm of online platforms is pivotal in promoting gender equality. The idea will be to understand how self-branding/imaging can be used as a tool in response to Covid-19.

- **To share knowledge/cases on possible strategies and policy recommendations to protect the most vulnerable during times of crises**

To understand the practicalities of the above gender dimensions, cases will answer how the individual organizations are responding to Covid-19 challenges, what strategies they are applying and recommendations going forward.

Expected Outcomes

- Gain better understanding of gender dimensions in this period of Covid-19 Pandemic discussed
- Importance of data to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on women and girls understood
- Acquire new knowledge on self-branding/imaging as a response to combating the Covid-19 Pandemic and other crises
- Gain understanding on possible strategies to mitigate and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by the cooperators with recommendations for action

Webinar Programmed

23/07/2020: AFTERNOON:

MODERATOR: Prof. Esther Gicheru

Date & Time	Sessions	Facilitator/Speaker
1345-1400hrs	Participants arrival & Zoom orientation	Host - ICA Staff/We Effect – IT Staff
1400-1420hrs	Introductions	☐ ICAAfrica Regional Director- Dr. Chiyoge B. Sifa (Mrs)
	Opening Remarks	
1420-1440hrs	General outlook of the Pandemic in the African Continent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by ICA-Africa Gender Committee- Prof. Esther Gicheru • Presentation by We-Effect, Programs Director- Mr. Jonathan Kioko 	
1440-1530hrs	Gender dimensions to be addressed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The COVID 19 Response: Getting Gender Equality Right for a better future for women. 	

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1530-1600hrs	<p>Uganda Women Rights Organization- Name tbc</p> <p>SANACO- Ms. Tepsy Ntseoane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To understand the importance of use data to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. <p>Groots Kenya- Name tbc</p> <p>Gender Equality committee global- Name tbc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To expound on how self-branding/imaging using online platforms i.e. Facebook, twitter in the context of gender, can help respond and mitigate the impact of crises such as Covid-19 <p>Expert on social media- name tbc</p> <p>Case Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Two cases <p>We-Effect- Housing- Name tbc</p> <p>ICA-Africa- Agricultural Cooperatives- Name tbc</p>
1600-1620hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q& A and Recommendations for action - Cooperatives in response during & post COVID 19