

MEASURES TAKEN BY UGANDA COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE (UCA) DURING THE CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

Introduction

Current Status of the Corona Virus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Currently, Uganda has registered 45 cases of Corona Virus (Covid-19) and because of the pandemic, the Government has come up with measures. The number of Covid-19 cases is expected to increase drastically if the citizens do not follow precautionary measures as stipulated by the Ministry of Health.

On 30th March 2020 the president of the republic of Uganda through the press conference sent out more restrictive measures including declaring total lockdown of the entire economy to curb the spread of Corona Virus. The lockdown of the economy has adversely affected over 21,346 registered cooperatives in Uganda including UCA (**Refer to the table attached**)

The Impact Corona Virus (Covid-19) Pandemic on Cooperatives:

Case scenario

Financial Cooperatives

Over 9431 registered Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies have been affected in terms of reduced savings, increased loan default and increased withdraws for people to buy food and other basics. However, during this time of COVID-19, SACCOs continue to serve their members though with some strict hygiene measures like disinfectants and hand sanitizers in areas of their work.

Speaking to a staff from Rukiga Sacco in Rukiga District, he reports decline in Savings and withdraws have increased and majority of loan holders are not paying back loans due uncertainties.

Transport Cooperatives

The Transport Cooperatives have been heavily affected by the COVID19, since all public transport and private transport have been banned from moving and ferrying passengers.

Some of the Cooperatives in Transport have halted collection of members' contribution. Richard Kibuuka, the General Secretary of Kigege Taxi Drivers and Operators Cooperative Society says that following the presidential directive (14-day suspension on public transport), they forthwith halted their members' payment of contribution fees to the SACCO. According to the Cooperative's bylaws, each 14-seater taxi (owned by a member) is required to contribute shillings 10,000 to the SACCO every time it leaves Masaka with passengers, while a 26-seater coaster pays 20,000.

Agricultural Cooperatives

With the new directives, the agricultural cooperatives are to continue producing food to ensure that markets are fully stocked with food and avoid price fluctuations and shortages. The president of the Republic of Uganda requested all farmers to continue with production of food to avoid food shortages. He also warned traders against increasing food prices.

Cooperatives in coffee production for example are reporting difficulties in Transportation of coffee across the boarders due to the restrictive measures by our neighbors. Some of their containers are stuck at the port in Mombasa. The manager Kibinge Farmers' Coffee Cooperatives says that they are continuing to aggregate Coffee from their members in order to encourage them to prepare for the harvest season in May though marketing remain a biggest challenge.

Sales of Honey have drastically fallen. The General Manager, Bunyangabu Bee Keepers Cooperative Society Ltd, Mr. Eliezer Magezi explained that prior to the ban, they received significant market orders from Kampala and other bigger towns which they would send by public means, an option that has been suspended. "Since the president banned public Transport, our sales have reduced between 10 to 20 percent. This is because many of our customers who buy in large quantities are from outside Kabarole and Bunyangabu Districts and we have been sending their orders by bus," Mr. Magezi said.

He also revealed that, in the days leading up to the directive, Honey sales had spiked by about 30% since the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus because many people believed that honey, which is used as a common home remedy for coughs and sore throats, would be helpful in warding off the disease.

Energy Cooperatives

Energy Cooperatives that are more than twenty in the Country also continue to register losses because their customers do not have money to pay Electricity bills.

Measures taken by Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA)

As an Umbrella organization for all registered Cooperatives in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Uganda and other stakeholders, the following measures have been put in place to address the Covid-19 pandemic:

- **Health Cooperative**

UCA in partnership with the Health Cooperatives: Kampala Medical and Allied Health Workers Cooperative Society; a Cooperative Society for the Medical Doctors in Uganda, are working on some modalities to support the Health sector. Speaking to the Chairman of the Health Cooperative Mr. Dan Kagaha, he stated that most of their Members (Doctors and Nurses) are already working in government hospitals to provide health care services to the patients of COVID19.

- Mobilization and sensitization programs: Through usage of the Media, churches and other public gatherings, UCA team has reached out to many Cooperatives and educated them on Covid-19 and the precautionary measures. The UCA General Secretary and the Chairman Board of the Health Cooperatives have held TV talk shows to educate the masses.
- Sending out messages to the Cooperators and the general Public; This has been done and has helped UCA to reach out to many people
- In collaboration with Bank of Uganda, SACCOs have been given operational guidelines (Refer to attached document).
- More support programs are still ongoing.

Number of Registered Cooperatives in Uganda by Sector

COOPRATIVE REGISTRATION BY TYPE AS AT FEBUARY 24, 2020	
TYPE	FIGURE
SACCOs	9,431
Agricultural Marketing	9,567
Transport	417
Dairy	332
Housing	81
Energy	26
Fishing	88
Area Cooperative Enterprises	134
Unions	134
Multipurpose	1006
Others	130
Total	21,346

Probation	10,219
Permanent	11,127