

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WHAT IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS MINORITY GROUPS (IMGs) IN UGANDA?

Commemorating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

As we commemorate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on the theme 'COVID 19 and Indigenous Peoples' Resilience', it is important that we safeguard their rights (including cultural rights) and facilitate their access to essential social services and livelihoods.

In April 2020, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) supported representatives from 18 Uganda indigenous minority groups (IMGs) - the Ik, Mening, Nyangia, Napore, Ngokutio and Tepeth in Karamoja; the Lendu and Kebu in West Nile; and the Bagungu, Batuku, Bamba, Babwisi, Bavanoma, Batwa, Basongora, Banyabindi, Bagabo and Bacingwe in Western Uganda - to conduct a study to ascertain the impact of COVID 19 on their health, cultural rights, livelihood and education.

This was meant to help advocate for support from the relevant COVID 19 District Task Forces and other development partners, who are responsible for providing material support to communities and for monitoring their use.

The impact of COVID 19 on Indigenous Minority Groups in Uganda

As Uganda responds to this rapidly evolving pandemic, and in view of the pre-existing living conditions of IMGs, these groups now face the consequences of double



Paul Anyakun administering a questionnaire on the impact of COVID-19 on the Tepeth woman. The Tepeth are an Indigenous Minority Group in Moroto District.

discrimination – arising from these pre-existing conditions, and now aggravated by poor access to COVID-19-related services.

For example, the government has undertaken a relief programme that involves the distribution of food items, starting with vulnerable people in the urban centres and subsequent roll-out to other districts. By the end of July 2020, the State had not distributed food to IMGs. Yet several IMGs already face food insecurity, as a result of the loss of their traditional land, occupations and ways of life.

Recommendations

IMGs stress the importance of providing them with adequate, accessible, and culturally appropriate information on the pandemic, including through the use of indigenous languages. They demand to be included in the design and implementation of response measures; and to be given better access to medicines, vaccines, medical equipment, and other healthcare services. They also point out their need for better access to education, food, clean water and improved livelihoods generally.

Specifically on health related matters, IMGs recommend that the policy on mask distribution is promptly implemented; and they should be provided with clean water and disinfectants given their vulnerability in terms of living at border points.

They demand that the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as well as affirmative action, therefore guide Government and NGOs intervention in the prevention, management and possible cure of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, representatives of IMGs, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda and other members of the National coalition for the protection of the rights of Indigenous Minority Groups will hold a press conference in Kampala to highlight these issues.

For more information, please contact



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