

GENEROSITY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

A 42-Day Curation of Ugandan Giving.

Period Covered | June - July 2021



ABOUT CIVSOURCE AFRICA

CivSource Africa is a philanthropy support and advisory organization committed to nurturing a more sustainable, effective and connected civil society that advances the dignity and voices of all people. We do this by promoting reflective, responsive, and accountable philanthropic practice.

CivSource Africa is also passionate about promoting African philanthropy and telling the stories of African giving and generosity.

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WHERE PHILANTHROPY MEETS CIVIL SOCIETY

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Foreword

This is a compilation of stories of generosity that took place during the Covid-19 lockdown in Uganda in July 2021. Just like in 2020, it is our utmost honor to share a glimpse of the giving heart of Ugandans, as part of our contribution to building a body of knowledge on African Philanthropy.

Community is at the heart of our giving as displayed in these stories.

The stories shared here will open your eyes to recognize the strength in giving and how lives can be touched and changed. I recommend this report for everyone that is searching for deeper meaning at a time when all hope seems lost. We are a community of givers.

Karibu Sana
CivSource Africa Team.

Acknowledgements

I
are Grateful for your **Omutima Omugabi.**

WE

owe a debt of thanks to
all Ugandans who give.

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I

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDC	Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSR	Community Social Responsibility
DHO	District Health Officer
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICU	Intensive Care Unit ICU
KCCA	Kampala City Council Authority
MP	Member of Parliament
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PPE	Protective Personal Equipment
PSFU	Private Sector Foundation Uganda
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UBTS	Uganda Blood Transfusion Services
Ugx	Uganda Shillings
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VHTs	Village Health Teams

Background

When the Ugandan Health Ministry warned of coronavirus infections reaching over 1,500 in 24 hours within the month of June-2021, our team predicted an imminent lockdown. Indeed, though initially lax, a stricter 42-day lockdown was announced by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni on June-18-2021.

While this was necessary to curb the spread of the virus a lockdown in a nation whose workforce is mainly in the informal sector with a hand-to-mouth income meant many would struggle.

Even worse, the disease was ravaging the population. Overwhelming medical bills and frequent burials became the norm. We immediately noticed philanthropy take shape. Unlike last year's giving which was acknowledged publically during the president's addresses to the nation, this year's giving was quieter and yet just as profound.

Giving, we reckon, is not generic; it comes in different forms, and each is pertinent. For example, at the onset of the 2020 lockdown, we saw Uganda's corporate entities giving mostly relief food items and vehicles to the government; this year, their response

was tweaked a bit to include the health situation.

What we share in here is a documentation of the many ways Ugandans gave. The heart of this report will be tales of a community rallying together in what can only be described as a spirit of community; Ubuntu!

There is no doubt that Ugandans are givers; never shying away from helping each other through the tides that life with all its crises presents. We have seen philanthropy in its most humbling form. It has been raw and simply enchanting. In some cases, the vulnerable have given to the less vulnerable; something that sparked conversation around such generosity.

With all of this in mind, we appreciated that capturing tales of Ugandan generosity through our hashtag [#OmutimaOmugabi](#) (a heart that gives) would not be enough. This then informed our decision to compile tales of generosity into another report exploring the time Uganda went into its first coronavirus-induced lockdown in the year 2021.

Ugandan Health Ministry warned of coronavirus infections reaching over

1,500

Per day.



Chapter one
**GIVING BY
THE BUSINESS
COMMUNITY**

On the surface, it might have looked like the private sector had been hesitant at giving this year however, that could not be further away from the truth. Granted, the trust may have been broken when the authorities allegedly mismanaged over US\$7Million collected during last year's lockdown.

It is no wonder that unlike last year, when the government asked citizens to help out, the reactions were not assenting. It also did not help that news of what many argue was poor prioritization by the government broke.

“Government is telling people to donate yet it has money to buy cars for MPs. If you are buying non-priority things right now, how do you expect the public to come out and give you money?” Cissy Kagaba, the executive director of Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda, said.

However, Emmanuel Katongole, the Covid-19 Response Fund chair, told the Daily Monitor (<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/why-ugandans-snubbed-govt-donation-appeal-3490866>) that it had nothing to do with Kagaba's sentiments and more about a financially strained economy.

“People are overstretched. They have not been working for one and a half years. Companies are not in full operation. It is a challenge, but people are coming up,” Mr. Katongole said.

Unlike last year's lockdown, which barely had deaths from the coronavirus, many Ugandans lost their lives this year.

What has since become apparent is that a large section of Uganda's business community is giving in reaction to the current need. While addressing the nation on 30th-July-2021, the President confirmed this observation.

For example, though known for its hardware merchandise, Roofings Limited, also a manufacturer of oxygen, helped many

people in dire need of oxygen refilling.

Indeed, when the death toll reached nearly 600, it became evident that a shortage of oxygen was looming. In response to this need, the Jinja-based Nile Breweries Limited donated oxygen cylinders worth Ugx330 million (about US\$100,000). These were handed over to the OPM to be distributed to every referral hospital in the country.

Speaking further to the Independent Magazine (<https://www.independent.co.ug/nile-breweries-donates-300-oxygen-cylinders-to-referral-hospitals/>), Onapito Ekolomoit, the Director of Corporate and Legal Affairs at Nile Breweries, said their target was 17 districts across the country.

Like Nile Breweries, Absa Bank- Uganda donated oxygen cylinders to the Health Ministry. **“Thank you, Absa Bank-Uganda, for the donation of 160 oxygen cylinders complete with their accessories in response to the Covid-19 pandemic,”** Uganda's Health Minister Ruth Achieng tweeted. “The cylinders will be distributed to Gulu, Soroti, Lira and Jinja Regional Referral Hospitals. Each hospital will receive 40 cylinders.”

Not Forgetting the Vendors

Some banks took to the prevention of Malaria that could have surged in certain groups as a result of the lockdown. For example, upon learning that market vendors would be spending nights in their market stalls, Equity Bank Uganda Limited donated 2,000 mosquito nets worth Ugx40 million (about US\$11,000) to prevent Malaria.

The act of giving, which happened on June-24th-2021, came after the President's directive that permitted market vendors all over the country to remain at their places of work during the 42 day lockdown.

The bank's communication team said they chose to give to vendors because they played a pivotal role in ensuring a steady

food supply during the lockdown.

“This contribution is in addition to what the bank had previously donated to the Covid-19 task force that comprised 2 brand-new Toyota double cabin pickup trucks and PPE worth Ugx100 million (about US\$30,000),” said Equity Bank Uganda Executive Director Mr. Anthony Kituuka.

Painkillers for Patients

On July-22nd- 2021, NTV Uganda told of a CiplaQuality Chemicals’ donation to faith-based organizations through the Joint Medical Stores. The pharmaceutical manufacturer gave over 25,000 doses of its new painkiller CiplaDon.

CiplaQuality Chemicals said the drug is twice as fast as paracetamol and can act as a pain reliever for Covid-19 patients. This act of generosity saw hospitals like Rubaga, Mengo, and Nagalama receiving a donation worth Ugx 10Million each (about US\$3000).

“We are cognizant of the fact that Covid-19 cases have increased tremendously, impacted negatively on the health of Ugandans and the economy at large, that is why we are providing the necessary medication to Ugandans,” CEO of CiplaQuality Chemicals, Nevin Bradford, said.

Bradford emphasized that the company’s goal during the pandemic was to help make a difference; for now, they would start by relieving pain among those battling Covid-19.

Getting More People Vaccinated

Century Bottling Company- Uganda, the makers of Coca-Cola, helped prevent severe infections by preaching the need for vaccines. The company mobilized vaccines for its employees and the community in Kiwanga in Mukono District.

Asked what informed their decision to give back in this way, Melkamu Abebe, the General Manager at Coca-Cola Beverages Africa in Uganda, said it was to fight anti-

vaccine sentiments.

“It’s in your hands’ to avoid Covid-19. We pledge every day to be our sister’s, brother’s and family’s keepers; this is one way of doing so. Getting the Covid-19 vaccine protects you and also protects your families,” he said.

He implored the community to continue protecting themselves against the virus, even after getting vaccinated.

Tweeting to their fourteen thousand (14,000) followers, the company also encouraged single-use of disposable masks. **“Re-use will expose you to infection, make a pledge today to always wear your mask. Covid-19 has changed the way we interact, and it’s our duty to adapt to it for the better part of humanity,”** they wrote.

A vaccine for staff and family

While the Coca-Cola team rallied the Mukono area, Housing Finance Bank sought partnerships with KCCA to see more people vaccinated. The bank organized a two-day vaccination exercise for its employees and their families at its headquarters in Kololo and has continued to rally upcountry staff to receive the vaccine.

The bank also used the drive to burst myths around vaccines, print pro-vaccine messages and lead by example. Customers who walked into the bank were encouraged to visit a government health centre and get vaccinated.

“These are turbulent times. The safety of our employees, their families and customers is of utmost importance to us. The rising number of cases are overwhelming, and we believe as a bank, our first responsibility is to our people,” Marietta Mwesigwa, Housing Finance Bank, Chief Risk Officer, said.

A Thoughtful Gift

Telecom giant MTN-Uganda, in partnership with United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), handed over ten (10) solar fridges worth Ugx600 million (about US\$170,000) to Odupi Health Centre III, Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Swinga Health Centre II, and Bidibidi Refugee Settlement. This was after Bidibidi Health Centre III told of troubles with keeping the vaccines refrigerated. According to the MTN press team, the health centre only had gas-powered fridges with multiple mechanical faults causing breakdowns every so often, putting the vaccines at risk of getting destroyed. In addition, refilling the gas in the refrigerator was strenuous since they did it from a distant area.

“It had frequent breakdowns and when it went off, the faster you acted, the better; within an average of four hours, a non-refrigerated vaccine becomes ineffective,”

Amos Asiku, the facility in charge at Bidibidi Health Centre III, said.

In the event of a breakdown, the health centre would move all the vaccines to a nearby government hospital for refrigeration which affected operations. Asiku is now optimistic that access to the Covid-19 vaccination will be uninterrupted unless there is simply a stockout.

“MTN gave us a solar powered vaccine fridge that is able to run for 24 hours. It makes the antigens available for patients meaning they are able to access them at any time,” he said.

Note that the health centre has provided Covid-19 treatment for the host community, South Sudanese and Congolese refugees.

“We are glad to have played a critical role in strengthening the fight against Covid-19. MTN through its operations also ensures to contribute to the fight against the virus through streamlining communication and financial services through mobile money,” Conrad Olowo, Project Manager, MTN Foundation, said.

This is one of the many acts of giving MTN has been involved in; the other one would be a campaign dubbed **‘One More Push’** to strengthen masses in the fight against the deadly Covid-19. It is spearheaded by The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and MTN Group.

The joint campaign is meant to encourage people across the continent to not give up in the fight against Covid-19, continue wearing their masks, wash their hands, practice social distancing, and get vaccinated.

The Pertinent Role of Sensitization

Africell’s dedication to battling Covid-19 can be seen on all their platforms. For example, a tab on their website dubbed ‘Awareness’ explores the prevention of the virus in detail.

Complete with illustrative artwork, the tab shows how to boost one’s immunity, sanitize even phones, among other things. The company has continued giving data-free access to health, education, business and media sites during the lockdown. To this day, Makerere University learners can access their website without data.

Besides the sensitization campaigns on its platforms, Africell has taken to blood donation drives across major towns in the country. Interestingly, so has Airtel Uganda. In fact, the telecom company was recently recognized by the Uganda Blood Transfusion Society (UBTS) for its role in donating blood when the country is struggling to maintain stock.

More Blood for the People

At the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak, blood donation drives were cancelled due to the closure of what used to be their gathering points among which were schools. Airtel Uganda rallied customers and well-wishers to donate blood across the country under their Red Campaign, which raised nearly 2000 litres of blood.

Speaking on behalf of Airtel Uganda, Sumin Namaganda Musinguzi, the head of

Corporate Communications at Airtel Uganda, said, “I commend the team for working through the tough unprecedented times while observing the SOPs to maintain safe, sufficient and accessible blood supply in spite of the widespread effects of the coronavirus pandemic.”

UBTS’s Donation Coordinator, Mr. William Mugisha, thanked Airtel Uganda for coming out every year to sponsor blood donation drives and show Ugandans across the country to the locations at which they could donate blood.

With restrictions on social gatherings, acts like those from Airtel became the most viable way of blood collection. She said that we each must become a mouthpiece for the cause of blood donation and also thanked Airtel for using their communications avenue to encourage eligible donors to donate blood.

“Airtel’s decision to create avenues for blood donors from all backgrounds to take part in the cause gives an assurance of having the right blood available for patients who need it,” Mr. Mugisha remarked.

As part of the business’ CSR initiatives, Airtel Uganda has been conducting blood donation drives for seven years. Since then, blood donation has been a major activity at the different Airtel Uganda health camps across the country. And at the same time, the company continues to create a wave of loyal blood donors who donate up to 3 times a year.

Food for the Vulnerable

We noticed that as the lockdown advanced, the business community gave to partners and employees with lesser income. For example, the Vision Group boss Don Innocent Wanyama told of its relief package to their

newspaper vendors.

“This morning, I have flagged off an exercise that will see Vision Group give food relief items to over 1,000 newspaper vendors spread across the country,” he wrote. **“It’s our modest intervention to support them in these obviously tough times and appreciate them for the great work they do for our industry.”**

Like Vision Group, motorcycle taxi company Safe Boda announced an initiative to provide food supplies to over 3,000 drivers. According to [The Independent Magazine \(https://www.independent.co.ug/safeboda-donates-food-to-3000-drivers-as-Covid-19-lockdown-continues-to-bite/\)](https://www.independent.co.ug/safeboda-donates-food-to-3000-drivers-as-Covid-19-lockdown-continues-to-bite/), this generosity was done in partnership with Yuvraj TVS, which contributed around 500 bags of 5kg maize flour to this cause.

The beneficiaries picked the food on 12th July from the SafeBoda Academy in Kyebando, located about 6km out of Kampala city centre. **“The COVID-19 pandemic has left so many in our community struggling; when our people are affected, we also need to come in and help,”** said Ricky Thomson Rapa, SafeBoda’s Co-Founder and Director.

Feeding Busega’s Vulnerable

Mesha Steel Limited sought out the vulnerable groups in Kampala’s Busega zone and donated food items worth Ugx20 million (over US\$5000).

One of the 5,000 recipients of the food aid, Mercy Nalugya, said that the lockdown had cost her a job at the local primary school where she was a cleaner. **“I don’t know how I would have managed without this food; this can push us to the end of the lockdown,”** she said.

Mesha Steel Limited sought out the vulnerable groups in Kampala’s Busega zone and donated food items worth

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Speaking to the Nile Post (<https://nilepost.co.ug/2021/07/16/mesha-steel-donates-food-aid-worth-shs-20-m-to-busega-residents/>), Lydia Mwesigwa, the Managing Director of Mesha Steel Limited, said helping the vulnerable communities in times like these is necessary.

Remembering the Orphans

Online journal PML Daily's (<https://www.pmldaily.com/features/celebrity/2021/07/movit-donates-Covid-19-relief-worth-ugx-75m-to-babies-children-homes-across-uganda.html>) 29th-July article told how Movit Products reached out to orphanages and babies' homes across the country with relief food items. The philanthropic activities pegged under its Baby Junior brand were in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The site reported that the company had extended items to 10 homes across the country, including; foodstuffs and an assortment of Baby Junior products.

Robert Kitende, Head of Marketing at Movit Products, said their goal was to reach out to over 1,200 children living in babies and children's homes.

Some of these included Agape House Babies Home, SOS Children's Village in Entebbe and Wakiso, Home of Hope and

Sun Rise Baby's Home– Jinja, Open Heart Orphanage Ministry – Mityana, Wakisa ministries – Wakiso, Heart of the Child Mukono, One for Another Charity – Mpigi, Kamengo, Purpose Uganda Babies Home – Katabi among others.

Robert Kitende reported that many babies' homes across the country had been challenged as a result of the pandemic, hence extending support in whichever form, both tangible and intangible, would greatly support their daily operations. Kitende said.

Agape House Babies Home's Administrator Mawa Christine, said that Movit's donation could not have come at a better time.

"Most of our donors are individuals who in one way or another were affected by the pandemic since 2020; we have just been surviving one day at a time," Mawa said.

Note that Movit also extended help through KCCA to the vulnerable groups in the city, including vendors. Movit donated an assortment of items, Ugx170 million (about US\$50,000) to city vendors and another Ugx75 million (over US\$20,000) to help children during the lockdown.

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Chapter Two

GIVING BY LIONS AND ROTARY



The Lions Club in Uganda has a series of mantras that inform their acts of philanthropy. We sought out quotes and thought to share snippets to understand what informs their giving.

“As they say, when you steer someone across the river, you will have crossed the river yourself, and happier you will be that you helped someone else to cross,” former District 411B Uganda Governor Dr. Eng. Dans Naturinda said.

They believe that they can only make a lasting sustainable difference in the lives of our people by empowering them. Their collective, grassroots approach has seen the Lions of Uganda grow their clubs and impact the communities in which they live.

According to Israel Ahimbisibwe Manzi, Lions Club Uganda Cabinet Secretary, they have in collaboration with Lions International Foundation supported the government in the effective immunization programs for Measles and Rubella, investing up to US\$ 2 million over the last five years. He said that moving forward, their support will be targeting the protection of Covid-19 frontline health workers.

“However, clubs have also extended various forms of support to the district task forces to help their local communities. The support has been in the form of money, transport vehicles, human resources and physical items, including food, protective materials and other consumables”, he added.

Interestingly, the club has taken various forms of giving to ensure they play their part in these challenging times. For example, in the thick of the lockdown, the Lions Club of Makerere held a zoom conversation dubbed, Parenting Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic. Across the country, they have stood with families during hospitalization and death.

The Uganda Rotary Club Spreads Thin to Give

In curating stories of how the Uganda Rotary Club has given during these challenging times, one thing stood out: Even the smallest of clubs are active!

Recently for example, the Rotary Club of Ibanda District mobilized personal resources, then also sought the financial support of the Greater Van Nuys Rotary Club and Foundation, distributed lifesaving PPE that included thousands of masks and gloves, sanitizing gel to four (4) clinics in Ibanda and surrounding areas.

According to The Daily Monitor of July-26th, (<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/health-workers-shun-Covid-patients-as-ppe-shortage-hits-ibanda-3487112>) the elated Ibanda District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Julius Bamwiine said the help had come at a perfect time. He revealed that health workers in his district feared managing Covid-19 patients due to a lack of PPE.

“Lack of proper masks, gowns and eye gear is imperiling the ability of medical workers to fight coronavirus. We are glad for the timely intervention,” Dr Bamwiine said.

The President of the Rotary Club of Ibanda, Mr. Lawrence Mucunguzi said the donation raised from membership funds and friends in America would boost Covid-19 mitigation interventions in the area.

“We understand that health workers are at a high risk of contracting the virus and that is why we thought of supporting them with the necessary essential components,” he said.

Note also, in the Central part of the country, Rotary Clubs also continued their acts of philanthropy any chance they got. The Rotary Club of Acacia Sunset for instance donated food relief and other household items to Wakisa Ministries- Crisis Pregnancy Centre located in Wakiso District.

Speaking to PML Daily (<https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2021/07/rotary-acacia-sunset-donates-Covid-19-food-relief-to-teenage-mothers.html>), David Sempala- the President of Rotary Club of Acacia Sunset said the donation from club members was a vital cover to the limited supply of food and other materials created by the Covid-19 crisis at the centre.

Chapter Three

GATHERING GIVERS ON THE SOCIALS



Take a stroll through the country's virtual streets, and there you will find a host of givers. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, among many others, have fast-become fundraising grounds for many a philanthropist.

Take the post by Daily Monitor about Christine Arach for example. It had many wondering how to help minutes after it went up. **"Is it possible to get her number?"** Abdi Shafi asked. **"Try to pin a number that support can reach her,"** Acayo Scovia suggested. **"Her number please, I want to send her some money,"** Shami Tah begged.

Within hours, Arach, a physically impaired street vendor who was seen begging the police to let her work despite the lockdown, had received help.

Besides tales like these, it was common to see philanthropists imploring their followers to reach out to the needy. Once Pastor Balizindwire Gerald pleaded with his followers on Facebook to help the vulnerable children in his care.

"We are in total lockdown, and we have children that we help as a ministry, we don't have food to feed our children, if there are any opportunities for donations, contact me +256783512034, or +256754906880," he beseeched.

Like Pastor Balizindwire, the Salesian missionaries working with Don Bosco in Namugongo turned to the socials to help feed the vulnerable. According to their director Father Elie Nyandwi, they started a WhatsApp group so people could contribute to the cause.

"People are giving the little they have or are helping to distribute the food items, including maize flour, beans and cooking oil," he said before going on to explain why more people needed to help.

"As of now, the situation has gone beyond our capacity. For instance, on 1st-July, we identified 50 of the most vulnerable

families from our neighborhood to be assisted. These families couldn't reach the Salesian community due to the restrictions imposed by the lockdown."

They managed to deliver 2kgs of beans and maize flour and cut about 30 bunches of bananas from their garden with some vegetables and shared with them. **"We thank and appeal to all generous people who can participate and join us to help the needy in this period of lockdown,"** they asked.

Besides food, the Salesian Missionaries offered access to the sought-after eucalyptus tree whose leaves when used to steam were thought to relieve the symptoms of Covid-19. **"The medical bill for patients remains exorbitant whereby some private hospitals do not fear charging up to Ugx 5 million per day (about US\$1,500). Only a few rich people are able to raise such a big amount,"** they explained. **"Don Bosco Namugongo has a eucalyptus plantation that is visited frequently by both Salesians and neighbors searching for leaves."**

It was hard to miss posts like these; Ugandans were helping strangers, contributing toward funeral arrangements and standing together with those that needed help.

A Fund for the Health Workers

When Rocket Health-Uganda Co-founder Dr. John Mark Bwanika and philanthropist Esther Kalenzi of the 40 Days Over 40 Smiles fame announced a drive, it played out well on the virtual streets of Twitter.

"What if we crowdsourced some 'shopping vouchers' for some healthcare workers (Nurses, Midwives, Janitors) in Uganda," Dr. Bwanika wondered out loud. **"It won't solve our country's healthcare problems but with their meager pay, perhaps they can get some supplies for their homes after a hard day's work. Who's in?"**

The fundraising drive that started from the end of June to the second week of July was well received and took off in just a day. The hashtag #HealthFundUg featured on various posts and accounts, and soon it was a raving

conversation on Ugandan Twitter.

“Because we can’t give everyone, 2-3 low-level health facility staff will be selected in different districts,” Dr. Bwanika explained. **“In kind donations can be made in form of shopping vouchers for supermarkets across the country, masks, gloves and sanitizers.”**

Uganda Unites, a national youth-led movement that fosters peace joined the cause with a 30% pledge from a fundraising they were holding. When they raised over US\$700, they gave 30% of it to the Dr. Bwanika and Kalenzi health worker fund.

“9th July, 8am; total to date 2,415,000. We made a pledge to support health workers at the frontline through Dr. John Mark and Esther Kalenzi, this morning we honored this with 30% (720,000 UGX) of the total, the rest will this weekend go towards supporting families of daily wage earners,” the organization tweeted.

Every step of the way, the passionate Esther Kalenzi updated the public every single day and implored more people to join the cause. At nearly US\$4000, the euphoric Kalenzi could not hide her excitement.

“When good tidings don’t sleep,” Kalenzi started. **“We have raised 14,934,715! Major thanks to Ugandan support from the diaspora who came through with a donation of 2,192,220. So grateful to individuals and groups who’ve made this happen.”**

On 9th-July, the fundraising drive ended with a promise from Kalenzi to reach out to the medical fraternity with a way forward for distributing the donations. **“We have raised a grand total of 15,034,715,”** she announced. **“We’re working on a distribution plan with the Uganda Medical Association.”**

Balamaga’s Lockdown Relief Basket

Rogers Balamaga might be known for his grilled and steamed foods, but he took on a philanthropy cap during the lockdown. **“Good morning beautiful people. I am here to seek your help,”** he wrote on his wall sometime in July.

“We (my family and network of Rogers’ Bites Barbeque and Keto customers on WhatsApp) came up with an idea yesterday to reach out with a helping hand to friends whom this

Covid-19 situation and lockdown has dealt a heavy blow.”

Their Ugx10 million goal (about US\$2,800) would buy food items like rice, posho, sugar, cooking oil, beans, groundnuts, salt and maybe soap. These items would be packaged into what they called ‘Lockdown Relief Baskets’, each valued at one hundred thousand shillings.

“The intended recipients are mothers struggling to feed their families. We say mothers because the community has mostly mothers, and usually when push comes to shove, it’s the mothers left to figure out these things,” Balamaga explained.

He implored those who could not help financially but might have access to good quality food items to reach out and donate. **“Ladies and gentlemen, please join hands with us and let’s help a mother out there who is not sure what her children will eat next week,”** he beseeched his followers. **“Some reach out to me on a daily basis, but there is only so many I can help as an individual.”**

He noted that though many in dire need of help would not come out to say it, they continue to struggle silently and would be delighted to get this kind of relief. After this explanation, he called out on those in need to reach out for help. **“Also, if you believe your situation deserves this form of relief, please inbox me your story for vetting,”** he proposed.

Looking out for the Teenagers

When philanthropist Sandra Karungi saw a problem brewing, she took to the internet to voice her concerns. She recalled that the last lockdown had caused an increase in teenage pregnancies and mental health problems in the country. Her biggest worry was the young girls at home who were now vulnerable to their tormentors.

“According to a police report, 4,442 cases of defilement were reported between January and April 2020 alone. The Sauti emergency line reported 800 cases of sexual abuse between January and May 2020, including increased cases of teenage pregnancy,” she explained.

Karungi, a philanthropist and child rights

advocate, blamed this on the closing down of schools. Even worse was the restriction on movement that exacerbated the limited access to sexual reproductive health information and services for young people.

“In fact, it has invoked fear among district officials, leaders, parents and other stakeholders that some girls may not return back to school due to unintended pregnancies,” she added.

She reckoned that much as the lockdown is necessary to curb the spread of the virus, emphasis and rights of all children should be valued to avoid the long-term consequences even in post-Covid-19 times.

With this in mind, the ambitious Karungi and her colleagues set out on a fundraising drive and raised over US\$50,000 to reach out to young girls across the country, and those in worst-hit places, especially the Busoga and West Nile sub-regions.

A Fundraising in Memory of Aggrey's Nephew

“Covid-19 claimed my nephew, but what can I do? Let's buy an ICU in his memory and all those who died because they could not get ICU services in time,” Former Journalist turned entrepreneur Aggrey Nshekanabo posted on his Facebook.

“We all react to situations and calamities differently. Covid-19 just like HIV, 30 years later has hit me hard. Every homestead I turned to had a mound of red soil; a grave. It left me timid, beaten. I was just a little thing.” His dearest nephew Tweebwe Vincent passed away on the early morning of Sunday, 27th June 2021. The entire experience left the scribe wondering how he would heal. **“10 hours later, my son's body was lowered into the grave; the red soil swallowing him. That red soil again,”** he added.

Nshekanabo explained that the coronavirus has not only claimed his nephew but a part of him too. He then delves into the events that led to his nephew death and, in the end, announced a fundraising drive.

“So, then what should we do? Do we just eulogize our loved ones?” he asked. **“Do we**

coil and be intimidated by this virus that has left sorrow, grief, pain, tears, damage, mourning, fragile families, fatality and futility, crushed breasts of mothers burying their sons and daughters, pounded manhood, children deprived of their parents in its different waves? Not this time.”

He wondered if his nephew would have survived had he accessed the ICU. **“He would have lived to see the outpouring of love as everyone contributed to see that he lives. Every individual he touched came through at his greatest hour of need. He should have lived to see this. This did not come to pass,”** he added.

Nshekanabo implored his followers to come together in his nephew's memory to equip one Not for Profit hospital with an ICU bed. **“And I choose Mildmay Uganda Hospital, renowned for pediatric and adult HIV care and treatment,”** he said.

Days into this drive, funds started trickling in from friends and family and acquaintances, and he had raised over a million shillings (about US\$300). **“I understand a standard unit is about Ugx100 million (about US\$30,000), but I am not intimidated,”** he said. **“To donate, you can call, email, WhatsApp or inbox me. If you want to send mobile money, you can use; +256703688447 or 0775414596 or anshekanabo@gmail.com.”**

WhatsApp Group comes to Asiimwe's Rescue.

At the start of 2021, 24-year-old Flavia Asiimwe made what she calls a social media audit. She had found herself in 34 WhatsApp groups and decided that was too much. She quit most and remained in only four; she told herself that work and family-related groups were enough.

When she was re-added to her high school old students WhatsApp group, she was furious. Little did she know that this would be one of the best things to ever happen to her!

In early June, Asiimwe, a resident of Kihiihi Town Council and old student of Kihiihi Seventh Day Adventist School in Kanungu District, developed a fever and chest pains. When a Covid-19 test was carried out, it

returned positive after three days. She was admitted to a local health clinic and started on medication until her condition escalated, and she was driven to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital.

“That is the longest journey I have ever been on. The pain increased after every minute and I feared I would die along the way,” she narrates.

Pricilla Kyokukunda, who doubled as an old schoolmate and village mate, noticed her absence and inquired from her family. They broke the news to her, and she immediately posted it in the WhatsApp group. A total of Ugx 2.7 million (about US\$700) was collected within two days and transferred to her mother’s mobile money account.

“It came in at the right time. Though treatment was nearly free, we had a lot of expenses with upkeep and medicine from private pharmacies,” Asiimwe narrates.

She made it out of hospital after two and a half weeks, and the first item she asked for was her phone to send her heartfelt appreciation to the group. Today, she jokingly concludes that she is on the lookout for WhatsApp groups to join.

Owonda takes Covid-19 Student Debate to Virtual Realms

When news of the second lockdown first broke, Owonda Denis, a fresh graduate of Bachelor of Arts in Education at Makerere University, wondered how he could help spread the message. Soon he found a solution through the Nebbi University Students Development Association, where he served as secretary.

Today, he holds debates on the pertinent conversation that is the coronavirus. It also helped that the organization is built on peer support, public speaking, dialogues and writing. For weeks now, the assertive and passionate Owonda has been organizing thematic debates and poetry competitions on the organization’s Facebook page and WhatsApp group.

This helps spread the correct information, sensitize and share ideas with young people,

including those from other universities like Kyambogo, Uganda Christian University, Kampala International University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Gulu University.

While speaking to the Zombo District task force Publicity Department, Owonda said they had taken on a virtual approach to keep the conversation alive.

“We choose participants who send in their submissions in form of voice notes on WhatsApp and direct message on Facebook, and these are vetted by our judges who then decide who the winners are,” he explained the selection process.

When asked about the response, an elated Owonda said, **“So far, the virtual debate has gone well because we have received submissions from people all over the country. Some of our Alumni and politicians like the MP for Ora Constituency in Zombo District, Hon. Songa Lawrence Biyika and the Pakwach Chairperson, Hon. Omito Robert Steen, have participated in our discussions so far.”**

Owonda’s single idea on a WhatsApp group has now turned out to be a platform for the district Covid-19 task force, politicians and elite members of the society to address and sensitize the youths on the deleterious upshot of Covid-19.

Strides of Hope in the Lockdown

Her commitment to ensuring the girl child is safe is nothing short of admirable. Should anyone doubt it, then we would dare them to explore her socials. Hope Nankunda lives for the girl child; every day, she reminds her audience of this pertinent cause with one campaign or another.

When the lockdown started in Uganda, Nankunda, the Regional Coordinator Girls Not Brides- Uganda and team leader with Raising Teens Uganda, reminded many about the plight at hand. She shared a message woven by the Charis Care Foundation and her organization Raising Teenagers Uganda.

Read verbatim, the message goes:

I keep saying hunger strikes like any pandemic. It instantly kills like any virus. I also keeping encouraging people, the government to treat hunger like a pandemic too and donate food to the less privileged.

Times are hard, we are trying, but you haven't visited the ghettos, you will know what's going on. Their voices of "Please help us too, we are dying" are still echoing in my head. But we can't feed everyone. I wish I could.

For weeks, Nankunda called upon everyone who could help the vulnerable in the slums with the day's meal through a campaign dubbed, Feeding the Homeless Children and the Elderly During the Lockdown.

Elderly During the Lockdown.

"Life is difficult for many people out there especially those that have spent days without any meal. While we are reaching out to the most underprivileged, the numbers are overwhelming," she pleaded. "We are calling upon kind persons to donate food; please stop throwing away food when many children are starving."

She implored her followers to donate maize flour, rice, beans, sugar, baking flour and also check on their neighbors.

"Remember that even in your neighborhood, someone may be starving and you can be their light today," she noted.

"Should you want to make some contribution, you can send through 0772 305742 in the names Hope Nankunda. God will bless you more. Let's save humanity together because life is about service."

Natukunda took to telling real-life stories of what the vulnerable groups were going through in the community. "There are so many untold stories amongst young people during this lockdown. All they need is someone to listen to them and guide accordingly," she said before poetically giving a way forward for those living with young people.

Young people need encouragement, motivation and inspiration.

They need constant reminders that it's not over.

They need to know that this season will end and life will get back to normal, and they will be able to realize their dreams.

There is so much happening in homes that makes young girls agitated, and we need to be mindful of what we do around children.

Be the best example you can be so that your child will feel safe around you.

Children are looking for safety. Children are looking for Care and Love.

Children are looking for Peaceful environments.

Be the Light and Shine in their lives.

When those with little gave - Social Media Tales

Recently, a post on Twitter caught our eyes. Though it attracted rude comments, it had a series of exciting replies that delved into the world of giving by the vulnerable.

"My boda guy has bought me these things after realising I haven't been working since the lockdown started. My heart has melted. Be nice to everyone you never know when you will need them," Mwiza posted.

The elated Mwiza shared a picture of rice, sugar, soap, pasta and added: **"I am so happy!"** Just like that, her followers started telling of generosity from motorcycle riders, fondly called the boda men.

A user told of when she lost her wallet while on her way back home from school. **"I started crying and the boda guys crowded around and one drove me home for free, they are heroes,"** she narrated.

Another told of when she was in secondary school and insisted on returning home by

herself but soon regretted it. **"I got lost in town and had little money, some boda guy saw me crying and he took me home and waited until I entered the gate,"** she narrated. **"Some of those guys have big hearts."**

A user told of a recent generosity from a boda rider who carried him for free after a simple greeting. **"I said man, I don't have money and he said, I am the one who called you,"** he recalled.

Another narrated of a time his boda rider bought him juice and then said: **"I wish I could bless you more than this but please accept it, thank you."**

The tales continued and became about vulnerable groups that gave despite not having much. **"I have been given sugar by my neighbor who I used to give clothes to wash. I felt so touched!"** a user said.

The thread continued to uncover acts of kindness and generosity, affirming the notion that you don't need much to be a giver.

Chapter Four

GIVING ACROSS THE HILLS OF THE WEST



Unlike the previous lockdown, where the country still had few cases, this one had alarming numbers, and many health workers bore the brunt. Therefore, like the rest of the country, this year saw an increase in giving geared towards treating Covid-19 in Western Uganda.

It also informed philanthropy tales like the kind reported by The Independent Magazine publication of July-27th-2020 (<https://www.independent.co.ug/mps-launch-support-fund-for-health-workers-managing-Covid-19/>).

They told of a health worker fund launched by the Western region parliamentary taskforce on Covid-19. Dubbed the Rodney Fund, its sole purpose is to facilitate the purchase of drugs for health workers who contract Covid-19 while on duty in Kabale District.

Christened after Rodney Tabaruka, the senior pharmacist in charge of the drug store at Kabale Regional Referral Hospital, the fund raised nearly Ugx10 million (about US\$3000) within a week.

The Kabale Municipality Member of Parliament, Dr. Nicholas Thaddeus Kamara, said that the task force on Covid-19 had learned how health workers were burdened with treating a disease they caught in the line of duty and sought to do better by them.

Led by Hoima City Member of Parliament Joseph Ruyonga, they thought of the Rodney Fund specifically to act as backup for the purchase of medicine to support Covid-19 infected health workers at Kabale Hospital.

About 70 health workers had tested positive for the deadly virus in Kabale District alone, home to the regional referral hospital and a managing centre for the disease.

Rodney Tabaruka said that this fund would come in handy for health workers who had been forced to pay for their treatment.

“Even if the treatment is free, we lack essential drugs for treatment of Covid-19 including Tocilizumab whose full dosage costs around Ugx10.5 million (US\$3000) for a single patient, and clexane which is used to

treat thrombosis,” he explained.

Standing with Peninnah Basiime

One day he was alive and well, and the next, he was fighting for his life. It did not take long for veteran journalist Felix Basiime to be pronounced dead. Just like that, the Covid-19 pandemic had taken yet another life!

Behind the scenes was his wife Peninnah Basiime's battle through it all. She recalls that so much would not have been possible had there not been acts of generosity.

Peninnah, who works at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, had been married to Felix for more than thirty years. She refers to the entire period of her husband's sickness and death as the most trying moment of his life.

The late Basiima, based in Fort Portal, had travelled to Entebbe District to receive an award for his prowess in reporting about the environment. Upon his return, he complained of ulcers, which the family initially tried to treat.

It later dawned on them that it could be Covid-19, and he was referred to Mbarara Referral Hospital. As soon as they saw him, Peninnah's work colleagues came together and fought to save his life. Sadly, he succumbed to Covid-19.

What followed his death can only be described as an act of solidarity from the hospital workmates that melted her heart. Right from the director to lower-level staff in her department, they all supported her to the end. **“I remember that the director Dr. Celestine Barigye ordered for every service to be given for free. When the people at the mortuary wanted to cheat me while acquiring the body bag and he came through for me,”** she shared. Her workmates assured her that they would take over all the expenses involved, and true to their word, she never spent any money at the burial. She says the stigma coming from village mates in Kakoba cell where she lives still breaks her. Her four children are still psychologically broken.

“We cannot buy anything from shops around, nobody wants to sell to us. We have to go to shops where they don't know us,” she painfully narrates.

On a good note, the hospital counsellors have since assigned themselves to take care of the children and sometimes even stay with them. This has all come for free, and she hopes her children will recover soon.

Reaching Out to Patients

At the height of the Covid-19 infections in the country, Ntungamo District's Kahumuza Elick took action. Together with his team at an organisation he founded called Habitation and Rehabilitation Agency, he sought to fight the pandemic. They reached out to families with Covid-19 patients to support them financially and emotionally.

"We don't have a lot of funds, but we do hospital visits and support with bills where possible. Our other major area of expertise is counselling. We hold sessions with affected family members and with patients mainly on phone," Kahumuza explained

Despite supporting several other cases, Kahumuza is most proud of their help towards one patient receiving treatment at Medipal International Hospital. At the time of the interview, Kahumuza believes that the patient would be discharged as he had almost recovered.

"We are proud that we stood with him from when he was being treated, throughout the journey to Kampala where he has spent close to a month," Kahumuza, also a former Member of Parliament aspirant for Rushenya County, says.

Despite being rooted in supporting the elderly and empowering people with disabilities, Habitation and Rehabilitation Agency chose to join the fight against Covid-19 at community level.

Kahumuza, predicting that the pandemic would be with us for long, tasked his team to fully include the Covid-19 community support program into their mainstream activities.

To this day, he and his team have supported over 20 recovered Covid-19 patients in Ntungamo District and will continue to find ways to keep helping.

Kindness replicated

When last year's lockdown was announced, Cissy Nakigudde panicked. It had been a while since she had a job and therefore had no source of income. She was worried that she needed to be looking for a way out and not idle at home.

Though her mother stepped in, she also survived due to the generosity of friends. This act of kindness will forever remain etched on her mind.

"My friends kept surprising me with foodstuffs, so, when I got my job contract, I remembered that while I could now survive, other people were going hungry," Cissy narrates. This notion birthed her love for philanthropy that has since seen her reach out to those in dire need.

Together with friends, Cissy decided to visit an orphanage called the Mik Family in Bujumbura, Hoima District. "We were touched by the suffering of the children and promised to help out where we could," she recalls.

When the country was put under lockdown again, Cissy and a friend mobilised six mutual friends and each contributed Ugx50,000 (about US\$14) to buy items for the orphanage.

A conversation with Sophie Kamugasa, who runs the orphanage, would later reveal that even more needed to be done. She said that she had lost her source of income and that they were barely holding it together; she worried that they might have to close the orphanage.

"As a way of increasing the help, I reached out to other people that I knew love charity and they in turn also told others about the cause at hand," she says. With more people on board, they could buy more than they had initially planned to deliver.

To this day, Cissy continues to help out people in her community emotionally and financially. Should a need to help arise, she has been seen to mobilize the community immediately.

How Kayondo Beat Covid-19

One evening, Gilbert Kayondo suddenly started feeling general body weakness,

the last thing on his mind was the deadly Covid-19. He neither had a cold nor cough, but the weakness persisted and forced him to take a break.

The 33 year-old, also a former speaker of Fort Portal Municipality, says that he had been making work visits around the community, and perhaps that's how he had contracted Covid-19.

"I called a friend and I asked him to drive me to Alpha Medical centre, one of the big health facilities around. My pressure was high. My temperature was extreme. The doctor frankly told me he suspected that it could be Covid-19," Kayondo narrates.

The next day, a test at the referral hospital was organized, and his worst nightmare was confirmed, a positive Covid-19 test result. He recalls that the news reduced him to intense perspiration; he worried that he might not beat it.

He was admitted to the medical facility and started on medication. His campaign agent, whom he only refers to as Robert, was quick to organize a fundraiser among close political agents and allies. He recalls that even the community that he calls his electorate came in to support him financially.

"I started to receive phone calls from people I never knew, with many sending in money. Close friends also played a big role," says Kayondo.

Within a week, more than Ugx5 million (about US\$1,600) had been pooled. His bill was as much. Kayondo never spent much from his coffers and, within 20 days, was recovered. This took a combination of help from family, friends, colleagues and the community in general. It was humbling to know that the electorate was among those who wanted to see him nursed back to health.

Clearing Hospital Bills with Money He Did Not Have

When Robert Kahuma presented with all the signs of Covid-19, he immediately set off for Kampala City. The 30-year-old Fortportal-

based employee of Joint Medical Stores did not want his case to escalate while he was upcountry.

Even though he expected to foot a hefty bill, Kahuma did not think it would be a whole Ugx 15million shillings (about US\$5000). Upon arrival in Kampala, he checked in at Platinum hospital but found all beds occupied. He instead sought out a guest house in a Kampala suburb called Kyebando that cost 60,000 (about US\$17) a day.

While that was costly, it was nothing near the Ugx 15 million (US\$5000) he had to pay by the end of the 20-day treatment. **"I had not yet recovered when we learnt that the money would be that much. I guess this delayed my recovery because I spent sleepless nights wondering where we were going to get money from,"** he narrates.

He had not anticipated the power of generosity that would be unleashed upon him. **"My family and I had put together 5 million shillings (about US\$1,400) when I chose to treat myself in Kampala, but Ugx 15 million left us numb,"** Kahuma shares.

As soon as he reached out to his employers, they were receptive and immediately took action. Upon getting news of his predicament, his friends quickly mobilized funds amongst themselves and cleared the remaining fee. Together with their employees, they helped offset a large chunk of the remaining bill.

Despite testing negative and fully recovering, he was met by stigma when he travelled back home. Lucky for him, his family and friends found him a counsellor, and he is now coping. He emphasizes how all of this healing would have been impossible had his employers, friends and family not come in when they did.

Susan Nimusiima's Thank You Note

In the thick of horrifying reviews across the country, I have at least been privileged to see the humane side of government health care. Upon admission to the Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, Dad's oxygen levels were shallow; he was on the normal oxygen with a rebreather mask for extra oxygen.

He was restless, so the doctor approached him and counselled him, telling him how he had handled worse cases and that dad would walk out okay. As days progressed, Dad's situation worsened, and he was put on the ventilator in the isolation unit.

At this point, I should note that our only expense was medication, meals and the services of a critical care nurse. Doctors fussed over Dad without a single extra penny given. It felt like a privilege.

I thank the Covid-19 response team at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, especially Dr. Rose, Dr. Tendo, Nurse Eric and Nurse Donald. They gave their best to save Dad's life.

News of Dad's passing spread so fast in an hour; we had over fifteen people at home. We couldn't admit them in the house because we needed proper social distancing as we all were Covid-19 contacts, but we also could not sit with them in the compound as I feared the effects of the evening cold on Mom.

Eventually, realizing they could not commiserate with us at this moment, at least with their presence, they left. People could not travel with the inter-district control of movements, so they decided to find other ways to help.

We received money from friends, neighbors, relatives, workmates, even people we did not know. The financial support was overwhelming.

My Mary hill Senior Four classmates led by Winnie Kisakye, my workmates at National Agricultural Research Organization led by our boss Dr. Halid Kirunda, friends, in-laws all remembered us during this time.

Then came Better Your Farm, a farmer's association for whom Dad was the treasurer. They decided that since physical presence was impossible, they could buy radio airtime and have Dad's sendoff broadcast by a local station.

Because of this decision, many of our friends and family could listen to Dad's sendoff in real-time. That way, they could tune in and,

in a way, give Dad a proper sendoff Dad. We felt privileged.

Some people have walked with us this journey from when Dad was diagnosed to date. People like Dr. Joseph Ngonzi, Rev. Can. John Mulindabigwi, Pastor Benon Tumwine, Assy Asiimwe, Andrew Wange, Ruth Kirabo and others.

They held our frail hands and prayed with us; they showed up where no one could and sat with us in the silence and loneliness that is the absence of Dad.

We are eternally grateful.

Relieving Pain in the Pandemic

The 42-day lockdown suspended many aspects of the lives of Ugandans, but it did not suspend the pain experienced by cancer patients. Prior to the lockdown, patients with advanced illnesses like cancer received palliative care at various Hospice Centers in Uganda; a noble initiative started in 1993 by Dr. Anne Merriman.

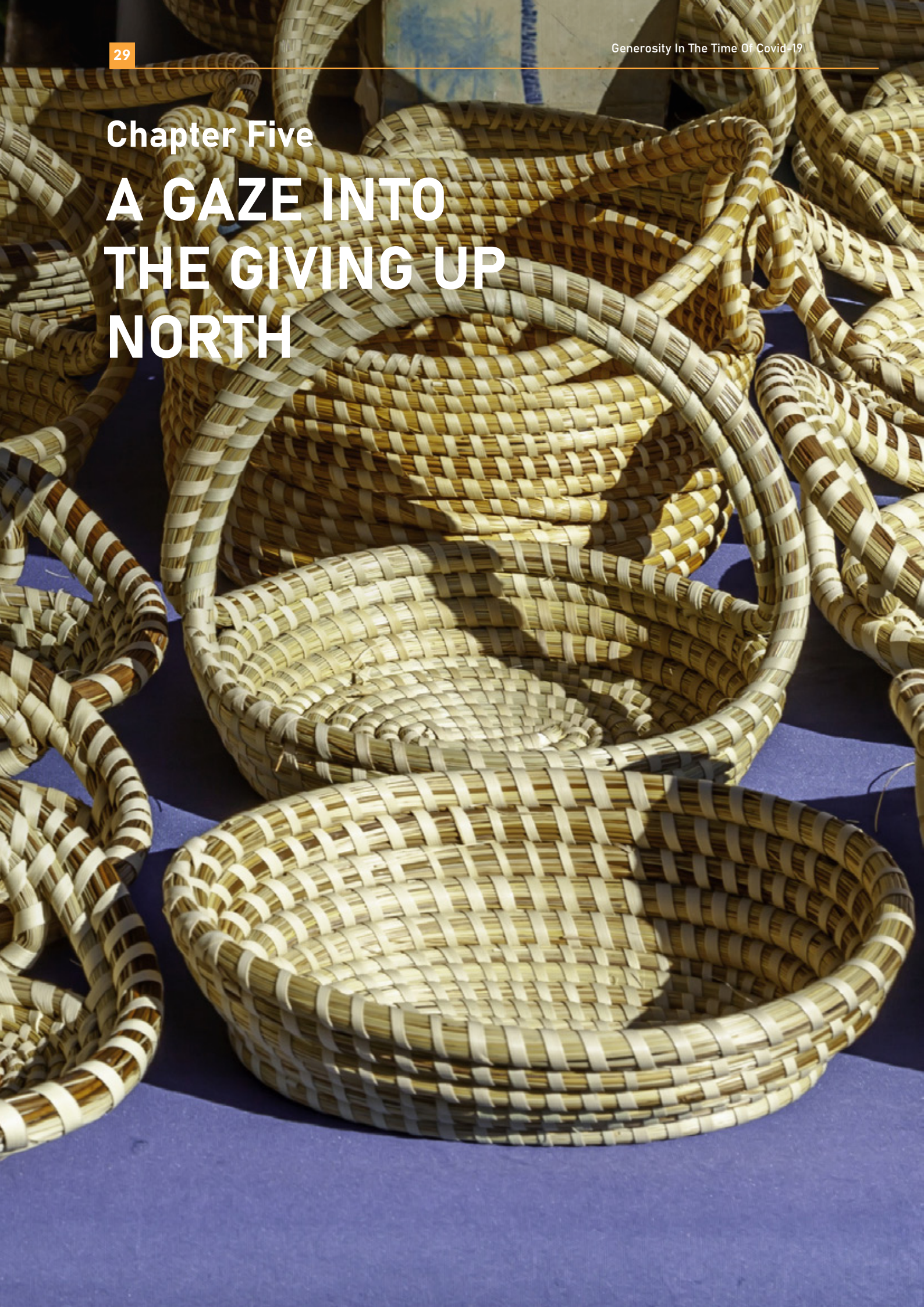
Palliative care administered through oral morphine, subdued the patient's pain and took the emotional load off the caretakers. However, the transport restrictions imposed by the lockdown directives made the access to the morphine and medicare difficult and expensive.

According to eHospice it was in this crisis in that Catherine Nakasita a nurse trained to administer palliative care in Kitagata Hospital rose to meet the need before her eyes. When patients kept calling for refills, transport and expressed the need for follow-up hospital visits, Catherine was moved to give her time, talent and treasure to the ailing patients. She started off by using her own resources; a cell phone, her own car and the help she solicited from motorcyclists to deliver drug refills to the ailing in Ntungamo District.

When she had exhausted the resources within her reach, she made a call to Palliative Care Association Uganda (PACU) for support, and support they did! Together with PACU and the District Health Authority the Kitagata Hospital Palliative Care Unit was able to provide the medicine and care needed by patients battling life limiting illnesses.

Chapter Five

A GAZE INTO THE GIVING UP NORTH



Like most of Uganda's countryside population, the West Nile region relies on the radio for information. With this in mind, Radio Maria Uganda – Nebbi, a local Christian radio station serving Nebbi District Catholic Diocese, part of Hoima Diocese and South Sudan, joined the drive to raise awareness about the deadly coronavirus.

Their campaign is focused on encouraging people to stay at home while observing the SOPs and prevent the spread of the virus. The radio management that usually charges 700,000 Ugandan shillings (about US\$200) for a radio talk show dropped the charges to 60% for the Covid-19 task forces in districts like Nebbi, Zombo, Arua, Madi-Okolo and part of Bulisa.

This is meant to provide enough airtime for awareness creation and exchange of information between the locals and the Covid-19 task forces. Radio Maria has also taken to the 'Stay Safe' campaign by committing their June/July operational budget to provide a constant flow of trustworthy news and information on the radio and social media.

Radio Maria's listeners also have free access to essential mental health information through the 'Chat with the Doctor' program every Sunday, 5pm. This is to help people struggling with trauma, mental health issues and stress while in lockdown.

Through their 'Stay Connected in Isolation' campaign, Radio Maria created a program, 'the lockdown request hour', that allows the listeners to call in and request any gospel songs of their choice, greet their loved ones on-air and give hope to others while they keep at home.

In addition, every 7am, the Director, Fr. Joseph Luger, celebrates mass over the radio, and it is also broadcast live on their Facebook page. Prayer ignites hope

and strengthens the faithful. It can be said without a doubt that Radio Maria's emphasis during this lockdown has been on awareness and hope.

Yumbe All-Stars Caution the Aringa Community on Myths

When the coronavirus was first detected in Uganda, musicians played a significant role in sensitizing the public. In Yumbe District, they continue to do so in the year 2021. Artistes have once again come together in a song titled, It's about us.

It is a Rhythm and Blues (R&B) and Hip-pop piece written in Aringa, a local dialect in West Nile. The artistes start the song by demystifying the myths around Covid-19. They explore the conversation around the AstraZeneca vaccine and dismiss the notion that the vaccine contains toxic ingredients that can harm humans.

They then caution against unconfirmed reports that natural immunity is better than the vaccine and call upon the public to go and receive their jab to protect against the deadly virus.

In song, the Yumbe All-Stars re-echo the signs and symptoms of this virus, including persistent headache, high temperatures, persistent flu, cough, and difficulty breathing. The group advises the public to maintain social distance, wash hands at all times and wear masks.

Most importantly, they ask the people to stay at home and keep safe, "Wash your hands, report to your village health teams (VHTs) through the contacts provided by the Covid-19 District task force when you notice any signs and symptoms, stay home and keep safe," they sing.

They remind people that the coronavirus has led to the closure of schools, mosques, churches, businesses' disabling, and a pause in the national economy. "We cannot

take this virus for granted now, lest we die just as it is happening in Kampala, Wakiso, Soroti and other districts,” they add.

Written purely in the local dialect, the message is direct and can be interpreted by the simplest of minds. It is no wonder that this song has been a choice for those looking to sensitize the masses on coronavirus in Yumbe District.

A Friend in Need: A tale of the Nebbi Business Community

When Richard Onegiu tested positive for the deadly coronavirus, he instantly went into a panic. Even though beating the disease was going to be tough; it was the worry for his family’s well-being that kept his heart racing.

The Nebbi District trader and father of four felt like he had failed his children. Despite recommendations from doctors, rest eluded him. Then he got good news, and with it came bouts of relief.

Onegiu heard that the Nebbi Municipality business community had reached out to his family and delivered enough relief items to last them through his time in hospital.

“I was admitted for 15 days,” he tells of the time he spent bedridden at the Nebbi District Referral Hospital. “I have four children and a wife, they needed food, and there was no money since the little I had was used to buy medicine and sustain my welfare while in the hospital.”

He says that had the community not reached out when they did, it would have been tough for his family. **“Thank goodness, the business community visited my family and gave them 10kgs of posho, 3kgs of sugar, 5kgs of beans, 3 litres of cooking oil, a bar of soap among other things,”** he explains.

Jatex Opio, the Chairman Nebbi market

and a member of the business community, says that besides people getting sick, the stringent measures employed to stop the spread of the virus has created dire situations in the informal sector. **“We have the most vulnerable people; they work hand-to-mouth every day,”** he explains. **“We have taxi drivers, casual laborers, Boda-Boda cyclists, market vendors especially women.”**

He maintains, therefore, that the lockdown has impaired their ability to battle the coronavirus. “When they contract the virus and they are admitted in the hospital, they can hardly afford the high cost of treatment and food required,” he said.

“Therefore, as the business community of Nebbi we have decided to provide relief to the families of Covid-19 patients who fall in this category of the vulnerable, so as to lighten the burden on them.”

Opio says that this initiative was launched seven days after the President announced the first 2021 nationwide lockdown in Uganda. Today, the association seeks out both those admitted in hospitals and receiving treatment from home. So far, twenty members of the business community have benefited from this generous initiative.

Staying with His Friend to the End

Like most major government health facilities, the Nebbi District Referral Hospital closed doors to outpatients with minor symptoms to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. The late Valente Oyukutu, a resident of Nebbi Municipality, was among those asked to stay at home and receive treatment there.

Sadly, it was hard to tell if and when a patient’s conditions would deteriorate for a disease as wildly unpredictable as the coronavirus. This is precisely what

happened to the now-deceased Oyukutu. He fell sick in mid-June, and his doctor treated him from home because he was not critically ill.

Despite the risk of infection, his close friend Okumu Charles Kobil showed up daily to cheer him up. He understood the risk but could not bear the thought of letting his friend feel abandoned.

He often visited with food prepared by his daughter, Lucy Fuambe, until Oyukutu's condition worsened and he passed on. **"On the evening of his demise, he developed breathing difficulty and was rushed to the hospital where he was immediately put in the Intensive Care Unit,"** Kobil narrates.

Within a short time, his friend was pronounced dead, and again, Kobil had to help the family plan for the funeral. **"Together with the family of the deceased, we were immediately put under isolation for two weeks,"** he recalls.

Despite attempting to maintain the Standards Operation Procedures, Kobil and his daughter tested positive for the virus. Even as he battled it, Kobil understood that this was because he had not wanted his friend to feel abandoned, especially during his final hours.

Note that this comes when the stigma around coronavirus is so high that some patients are abandoned in hospitals. Many who recover have to prepare to live with this very stigma in isolation from what used to be their communities. Kobil's act of kindness towards his friend is worth celebrating.

Community jubilates when Agnes Beat Covid-19

Agnes Awekonimungu recently had one of the toughest battles in her life. The

coronavirus infection had reduced her to breathing through an oxygen machine at the Arua Regional Referral Hospital. Chances that the young lady would make it kept dwindling by the minute.

Grief engulfed residents of Kuluva Cell in Arua City, where Agnes resides; they worried for her young family, mother and siblings. Then Agnes lived, and they jubilated. The community had converged in small groups to pray for her, asking God to bring her back to them.

Agnes miraculously triumphed over the virus after spending weeks in the hospital. Today, her journey bespeaks that our most significant healing comes from the support our neighbours, family, and friends give to us. The community in Kuluva offered immense support to Agnes, from prayer to food relief and counselling to her family members.

People kept calling her home to strengthen her mother, husband, siblings and children since they could not visit her at the hospital. They asked how they would help and ensured that the family was only focused on Agnes' well-being.

"Agnes and her family are very good people. They are jolly and supportive to the community, it was painful to watch her fight for her life," Kuluva Cell elder Jalobo Gabriel said. **"So as members of this village, we decided to stand with her and her family through it all."**

It has been a while since Agnes was discharged from the hospital to a raving welcome from her community, albeit maintaining social distance. She might still be recovering, but Agnes knows that she is loved!

The community, led by Canfua Kevin, a village council member, Pirwoth Robin and a host of Agnes's neighbors, organized a small thanksgiving prayer ceremony in jubilation of her triumph over Covid-19. They delivered more food stuffs, took the time to demonstrate social distance and sensitize the community about the virus that nearly took one of their own.

Chapter Six

INSIDE THE CENTRAL-TYPE OF GIVING



The Central Region has a host of districts, one of which is Uganda's capital Kampala. It also has the highest number of the urban population affected by the coronavirus-induced lockdown. The slum's people are primarily in the informal sector with a 'hand-to-mouth' income; a day without work would leave many a family hungry.

Generally speaking, the Central Region has had the greatest number of infections due to its overcrowded cities. Watching the giving that manifested in this region was nothing short of humbling. At the onset of the lockdown, for example, Rashid Mukisa, a trader, father and husband with physical impairment, found himself at the mercy of the Ugandan police enforcing the lockdown directives.

He pleaded with them to let him hawk his items to find a meal for his young family, but they would not listen. Lucky for Rashid, good Samaritan Joel Biyinzika saw the video and was just as touched as many Ugandans. He immediately reached out to him with a host of relief food items to last him a long while.

Rashid received two bags of charcoal, 100kgs of rice, 50kgs of posho, 50kgs of dry beans, 50kgs of sugar, a jerry can of cooking oil, a box of salt, bar soap and toothpaste. Before he left, Joel sorted out Rashid's rent arrears and bought him a brand-new smartphone.

When the Giving Commenced

One of the sights of the beginning of the lockdown was people stranded in the city. Acts of kindness and generosity manifested at that very moment. Many Ugandans could barely beat the deadline to return home as buses hiked prices and bus parks remained overcrowded. Some were forced to find solace in the houses of relatives and friends in Kampala.

Dorcas Wanyenze, a snack trader in the

Nakasero area, recalls that some of them had to help, especially mothers and children find a place to stay. She remembers that people slept on their wooden boards, and anything that enabled one to catch a little bit of sleep. **"Even the women who were selling food would reduce the price especially for the school children,"** she says.

Wanyenze recalls that they also helped protect the young girls from the rowdy petty thieves and drug addicts who suddenly increased in numbers. They went a step ahead and pointed out the known thieves to the police whenever they saw them. This happened until the taxi and bus parks were empty; people helped in their own little ways.

Because of the skyrocketing infections, the givers had to do so with a keen observance of the SOPs. For example, when Pastor Herbert Kiwanuka of Glory of Christ Church in Kawaala sought to give his 'flock' relief, he did so under the guidance of the Covid-19 national task force.

Before announcing this act of generosity that he dubbed the 'Lord's table a program to feed vulnerable families around our neighbor communities', the generous man of God quoted a Bible verse on giving from the book of James 2:15-16:

"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, **"Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,"** but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?"

Generosity and Politicians

Despite not winning the Woman Member of Parliament seat back home in Kanungu District, Shantari Murekatete reached out and donated foodstuffs to people from Kanungu who were stranded in Kampala. This she believed would last them the forty-two days of lockdown as they figured a way to return upcountry after.

Politicians like Francis Zaake, the Member of Parliament for Mityana Municipality, had packages for the vulnerable. In the typical

politician style, he sarcastically frowned upon the government's strides in reaching out to the poor before announcing what he would be doing.

"Since not everyone can endure the long wait for the 'junta handouts', on behalf of the Zaake Foundation, we have given out relief items like matooke, rice, beef, maize flour and liquid cash to our people who convened at Mityana Gombolola grounds," he said.

Like Hon. Zaake, Joel Ssenyonyi, the Member of Parliament for the Nakawa West constituency, took a subtle strike at the government for its slow strides in delivering relief aid to the vulnerable before announcing his donation.

He delivered an assortment of medicines, 400liters of sanitizer, PPE at Naguru referral hospital, which serves Nakawa Division and beyond. He also implored people to help each other survive these trying times.

"Today I distributed some 3 tonnes of maize flour and 2 tonnes of beans in different areas of Nakawa West to help our vulnerable people a little bit. I encourage us all wherever we are to do whatever little we can to help the needy around us; bulyomu agumye munne (let's strengthen each other)."

While fellow politicians mostly reached out during the lockdown, Honorable Ssegirinya Muhammad, many would argue, has been doing this longer. Fondly called Mr. Updates, the Member of Parliament for Kawempe North, uploads pictures about a giving activity he has just participated in every day.

First, it was food, then stimulus packages for the low-income businesses, next was an ambulance, beds, more food, cash, and a host of other things. His consistency remains unmatched, and many even wonder where he gets all the money to keep doing what he does.

As questions of whether he could sustain this level of philanthropy arose, he also reached out to family members of political prisoners within his constituency and delivered the much-needed relief food items.

A Smile in the Thick of Death

When death invaded Marion Ikasewa's family home in Kiira Municipality, it pitched camp until nearly everyone was gone. First, her father died, then grandmother and next was the auntie and gateman. All three had just returned from an uncle's burial who passed from the coronavirus and had all tested positive for it.

Unable to bury any of her people, Marion stayed indoors, mourning and severely depressed. Then one day, there was a knock on her door, and she heard little children playfully running away.

Just beside the gate were handmade cards, a basket of fruits and burnt pancakes. The neighbor's children had made them for her, and it was the best thing she had ever received. **"I cried and smiled all at once; this was simply so amazing,"** she narrates.

Within the hour, Marion had gathered the strength to clean her house and prepare a hot meal. **"I also turned on my phone and found messages from our community group asking where they should deliver the condolence money,"** she recalls. **"They had collected almost 4million shillings (US\$1000) for me. Can you imagine?"**

Sharing the Burden of Medical Bills

Watching friends and family make pleas to the public to help Dr. Ian Bwete pay his medical bills was humbling. Ugandans both here and abroad shared the news of the vibrant doctor's coronavirus diagnosis in what can only be equated to the African spirit of community.

Recently, Beatrice Amulen initiated a GoFundMe fundraiser on behalf of Ronnie Zziwa, the doctor's relative. She started by giving a brief history of the doctor's strides and how he would later wind up exposed to the virus.

"In 2018 Ian came to the USA to continue specializing in Otolaryngology surgery. He attended and worked at University Genetics in Cleveland, Ohio from 2018 to 2019," she explained.

After this course, Dr. Ian returned to Uganda to pursue his dream of serving in his native land. He is one of the few Otolaryngology (ears, nose and throat) surgeons in Uganda.

Together with other doctors, Dr. Ian worked tirelessly during the pandemic attending to all kinds of emergencies in many hospitals within the Kampala City area. "With the exposure to Covid-19 patients, Ian developed symptoms and was admitted to Medipal International Hospital in Kampala," she narrated.

When the doctor's condition deteriorated, he was put on life support and placed in a medically induced coma. He stayed in the coma for about two weeks until doctors reported signs of progress.

Even though he was on a path to recovery, the medical bills were worrisome, hence the call for help. "We are challenged by the enormous medical bill and thereby appealing for assistance from the general public in offsetting Ian's medical bill," she implored.

"Any and all donations will help and are greatly appreciated. If you cannot donate, you can help with prayers." A few days after Amulen made this call, over a million shillings was raised.

Helping One Needy Person a Day

Caroline Nanvuma is the area chairperson of Kabalagala Parish in Kampala City. She set out to help at least one person survive the day in the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Though more focused this year, her journey into helping the community can be traced back to last year's lockdown. It helped her understand how she would support this year, knowing that people would reach out.

"This lockdown was abrupt, we were not expecting it, they stopped people from working and most of them work hand to mouth," she tells of the reasons she set out to help. "On a daily basis I get at least ten people coming to ask for help in terms of food or to cater for transport bills to go to the hospital for medication."

Caroline, also a law student at Cavendish University, has carried out the task gracefully even though she is unemployed. First, she understood that she couldn't help everyone and prioritized HIV patients that she believed faced double jeopardy.

"When the lockdown was declared, some patient's drugs were done. I had an incident where I had to pay the transport bills for a patient in need to pick drugs from Namuwongo," she narrates. "On top of that, I had to ensure that I provide them with what to eat before they take the strong medication."

Whatever income might trickle through from her role in the community, Caroline has found herself sharing it with the needy. "Every day, I find myself giving out at least Ugx5,000 (ApproximatelyUS\$2) and when I am not doing well, I ensure to give at least 2,000 shillings that they have something to eat," she says.

Feeding Mukono and Buikwe's Vulnerable

At the onset of the 2021 lockdown, a group of philanthropists set out to help the vulnerable in Mukono and Buikwe districts. They specifically sought out child and female-headed households first because of how dire they believed their situation would be.

Through an organization called Kida Foundation, the philanthropists distributed 40kgs of corn flour, 3kgs of salt, 3litres of oil, 10kgs of beans, 10kgs of rice and 4 bars of soap.

Explaining their decision to start the initiative, philanthropist Henry Nsubuga said that this was informed by the fact that children were back home. He said that it is very likely, that the closure of schools, businesses and the inter-district-travel ban would hit the poorest and most vulnerable groups most.

"Since schools in remote areas play a big role in promoting good nutrition of vulnerable children, their closure is likely to affect the health of most of these children," he explained. "We shall go to hard-to-reach

areas, where our recipients often tell of not eating for several days.”

They also reached out to the public with a collection goal of US\$13,000 to help them donate food items to at least two hundred households with an average of five members each.

Katende's Commitment to Giving

During the 2020 lockdown, Robert Katende was featured in our giving reports for the same thing he is doing this year. The chess teacher whose stewardship informed the movie Queen of Katwe has found ways of reaching out to the needy children in Kampala's slums. This time round, he was joined by Som Chess Academy, Sports Outreach, and Uganda Unites to distribute food.

“From Saturday 10th July 2021, we started distributing food to the families that we work with in the slums of Kampala. On the first day, 82 families received food family packs to enable the children and their families endure the total lockdown,” he said.

He said that the further into the lockdown we got, the direr the situation in the slums. **“Most people in the slums are casual laborers (hand to mouth earners) and with a total lockdown, it's extremely challenging for these families to get food,”** he said.

Katende and friends distributed food in slums like Katwe, Kawempe, Nateete, Kibuli and Bwaise. **“The food package included 10 kgs of posho, 3 kgs of beans, 1 liter of cooking oil, 1kg of salt, a bar of soap among others,”** he offered.

Because he anticipated stricter conditions for the city's vulnerable, he made a plea for more help in order to reach out to even more

people. **“With US\$25 you can provide a family food pack and bring a smile plus restoring hope to an entire family,”** he said.

Looking Out for the Cancer Patients

When the 42-day-lockdown was announced in the country, restriction of movement became the most significant area of concern for those battling cancer. For many, they had been forced to wait it out and watch as cancer ravages their bodies. That is what informed the decision of a group of philanthropists' to help through For Patient Relief Mission Uganda. They broke down the three significant ways the lockdown had affected patients.

“The cost of transporting the patients to the Uganda Cancer Institute has become so high; this is because the number of people to occupy a car at one particular time is limited to only three (3) the driver inclusive. This, therefore, requires us to make more trips to be able to get all the patients to and from hospital,” they explained.

They further said that they were stuck with patients who had failed to find their way back home due to the instated lockdown and, therefore, meant an increased cost of feeding and utilities. Sadly, the lockdown had equally affected those who would have donated to such pertinent causes. **“This has reduced on the help we receive to be able to provide the services to the patients,”** they added.

Despite this, they continue to find ways to help patients continue to receive their treatment and have a nutritious meal while at it. They remain committed to ending the needless suffering for cancer patients, especially in Kampala, Uganda.

They also reached out to the public with a collection goal of to

US\$13,000

help them donate food items to at least two hundred households with an average of five members each.

Chapter Seven

CROSSING THE JINJA NILE FOR TALES OF GIVING



Unlike last year, this year's lockdown saw the Eastern Region worry about both basic needs and deaths from the coronavirus. People have died, leaving behind a sea of confusion. At one point, hospitals were filled to the brim with people sleeping on the floor.

With this in mind, a group of MPs from the Teso sub-region raised personal funds in preparation for the battle. The politicians collected a combined Ugx60 million (over US\$17,000) and bought items for the Soroti Regional Referral Hospital, the major Covid-19 treatment centre in Teso.

Besides the money, State Minister for Works and MP for Amuria County Hon. Musa Ecweru handed over beds and mattresses to the administrators of Soroti Referral Hospital as a donation by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Anita Among.

In Ngora County, the newly elected MP Juliet Achayo distributed handwashing facilities in various public spaces to encourage sanitizing. These came with washing gels and were refilled to help curb the spread of the virus in the district.

Cultural Groups Take to Sensitization

Away from the sub-region's political figures, the tribe's cultural body Iteso Cultural Union, took to a sensitization campaign against the deadly virus. It is important to note that this drive was in partnership with Teso Health Forum.

They put together a webinar to raise awareness on Covid-19 and share a message of hope with the Iteso. The event brought together some of the finest medical brains from the sub-region.

Interestingly, as the conversation happened online, radio stations in the sub-region aired it so that the offline population wouldn't miss

out. Days after this event, clips and quotes from the event circulated among the Iteso online community.

Pertinent to note would be the number of myths that were busted during the webinar. People were encouraged to boost their immunity, accept immunization and observe Standard Operating Procedures. They were cautioned against jumping into conspiracy theories that have only led to an increase in infections.

A Charity for the Affected

To combat the lethal Covid-19 pandemic that is ravaging hundreds daily across the globe, some families of the victims in Teso formed a charity aimed at reaching out to those affected.

This act of generosity was from a group of people headed by Soroti City philanthropist Denis Ineget who started the Emorikikinos Foundation, translated as the 'Let's Unit' Foundation.

"This idea was birthed by those who lost loved ones to Covid-19 and those whose loved ones recovered from Soroti Regional Referral Hospital," Ineget explained to a team of journalists and bloggers.

Before they set out on a series of donations, the group consulted professionals in the medical field on what was most urgent. This was also confirmed by renowned Teso blogger Peterson Oluka, who shared the details with his followers.

While handing over donations to the Soroti Regional Referral Hospital, the foundation's head Ineget, further explained their vision.

"Our goal is to collect resources that can enable the foundation to purchase PPE for the medical front liners in the hospital such as liquid soap, sanitizers, gloves, masks and many others."

This move was welcomed by many who believed health workers shunned health centres because of a shortage of protective equipment. It has since seen the foundation's growth as people seeking to give to the sub-region reach out.

Today, the Emorikikinos Foundation boasts of over 40 registered members, which a twelve-member interim committee steers. Even better, they have committed to monthly visits to the sub-region's hospitals to deliver support.

Like many fundraising drives and donations in the country, each activity is a chance to sensitize the masses. The conversation is steered from just the donated items to mass sensitization on the need to observe SOPs.

Not Forgetting the Sickle Cell Warriors

As the country puts all its efforts towards fighting Covid-19, Eastern Uganda philanthropist Lucas Akol implores everyone not to forget those with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD). He noted that the pandemic poses a double threat to the sicklers should they suffer a sickle cell crisis.

Note that the sickle cell crisis is characterized by severe pain and, it is the leading cause of death for patients. What the lockdown means for those living with the sickle disease, therefore, is no access to health services. Sadly, many would not even last a month or live with excruciating pain should they not get said service.

Through an organization called the Share Child Opportunity Eastern and Northern Uganda, Akol implored Ugandans to join him in ensuring the sicklers received all the help they needed. He set out to help at least 100 families of individuals identified with sickle cell disease.

“With your generous gift, we will ensure that individuals diagnosed with SCD receive appropriate follow-up services including counselling on phone, access to medical care through referral, Personal

Protective Gear, sanitary facilities and other support services like nutrition,” he explained.

His worry was also that the families are not equipped to deal with the pandemic. Sadly, should they also contract Covid-19, sicklers known to have impaired immunity, would not stand a chance.

Besides frequent access to medical care, the solution he said would be good nutrition and information. Akol sought out crowdsourcing sites to raise US\$4000 that he believed would help 100 children with SCD.

“The US\$4,000 will help provide information, care kits-emergency supplies like; immune boosters, nutritious foods (like eggs), 2 bars of soap & personal protective gear for sickle cell anaemia children and their loved ones,” he explained. **“It will also help us continue offering essential counselling programmes to these families on phone to ensure that they are not alone.”**

Jinja turns to philanthropy for oxygen

The conversation started with legislators from the Busoga sub-region crying out to the government for help in the battle with Covid-19. They said that as the number of infections increased, Jinja Hospital had been hit by a shortage of medical oxygen.

Despite rushing patients to Intensive Care Units (ICU), many still passed on due to lack of oxygen. Note that medical oxygen is produced in specialized manufacturing units as industrial oxygen and purified over 93 per cent for the use of patients suffering from oxygen starvation. When at their most critical stages, Covid-19 patients need oxygen support.

The media quoted the Director of Jinja hospital, Ms. Florence Tugumisirize's explanation about the dire situation in her hospital. She said that almost all Covid-19 patients they were receiving needed to be put on oxygen.

“Almost all the 53 patients that are undergoing treatment are on oxygen. Our Oxygen plant releases 30 to 32 cylinders every 24 hours. We worry that the number is increasing every day, yet our oxygen manufacturing capacity is low,” she told the Daily Monitor on June-28th-2021. (<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/Covid-19-cripples-busoga-services-3453378>)

Ms. Tugumisirize said they rely on well-wishers who are donating the lifesaving gas for Covid-19 patients at the facility. “Currently, the hospital is relying on Mayuge Steel Ltd under the Indian Association, which is donating 40 oxygen cylinders daily,” she said.

Had the donations not come in, the sub-region would have continued losing valued members of the society, some of whom were health workers. Before the oxygen cylinders had arrived, a doctor referred from Bugiri District had just passed on, leaving the legislators infuriated.

Impressively, the Busoga sub-region’s business community started helping out wherever they could. They organized themselves in small groups and reached out to the sick in hospital with whatever help they could gather.

Protecting Martha’s Children

As soon as she tested positive for the deadly coronavirus, Martha Namono, a nurse at St.Jude’s Clinic in Mbale, reached out to her neighbors to help keep her children. She was worried that the single bedroom house they lived in would ease the spread of the virus. She took her three children for a test, and luckily it came out negative.

She then reached out to neighbors and asked that they help look after her children. They did!

“At first I thought that they would all run away, but to my surprise, they didn’t hesitate,” she recalls. “When I asked to

send them some money for food, they all refused and said I should focus on getting better.”

Three neighbors each took a child and ensured they were fed and clean for the one month that Martha was not well. Every evening, the children stood a few feet from the window and chatted with their mother to ensure all was fine.

“On top of that, I had three different meals delivered to me in the course of the day,” she recalls. “Yes. On top of taking care of my children, they also cooked food and sent it every day.”

In the little clinic she works, colleagues collected 20,000 each (about US\$6) and sent her 200,000 (about US\$60) and fruits to last a few weeks. “I cried!” she recalls. “I didn’t even know such kindness existed; moreover, from people who are not relatives.”

When she got a negative Covid-19 result, she sent out matooke (green bananas) bunches to her neighbors and baked a modest cake on the charcoal stove for her colleagues. “Can you imagine, when I arrived at work, they had organized a welcome back lunch with a cake for me,” she laughs. “I again cried!”

Despite being a woman of science, Martha believes that she beat Covid-19 because of the generosity she received in her time of need. “I keep saying thank you to the Lord for using these people the way he did,” she adds. “I am blessed.”

A Maintained Lawn for Esther

The coronavirus left Pallisa District’s Esther Nachamu fighting for life for over a month. What had started as a mild fever and cough had turned out to be the devastating virus that had seen the retired teacher transferred to Mbale City for treatment.

During her time away, her neighbors in the Agule sub-county noticed the deserted compound. **“We knew that the two people she lived with had all gone with her, that is why it was bushy and we really needed to help,”** Esther’s neighbor Gladys Adite says. **“Besides collecting money from our Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) to send her, we agreed that we would send our teenagers to slush her compound every weekend.”**

The neighbors said that they did not want her to return to a snake infestation. **“Imagine after suffering with coronavirus like that then you are again bitten by a snake,”** Adite explain. **“No way, we decided that our friend would battle only one thing for now.”**

Besides maintaining the lawn, they tasked each other with opening doors for Nachamu’s chicken in the morning and ensuring all had returned safely in the night. **“The good thing is that we have many little children home from school, this one was just a matter of assigning them the task,”** she further explained.

When Esther’s chicken needed a place to incubate its eggs, they prepared a comfortable place in the corner. **“Can you imagine, she hatched 13 chicks before Esther came back!”** Wennene gleefully explained.

Upon her arrival, Esther smiled! She was pleasantly surprised to learn that it was all done for her by the neighbors. Though the site of a trimmed lawn warmed her heart, it was seeing her healthy chicks following their mother that melted her heart. Esther was happy.

Protecting Kalyebi’s Produce

Butaleja’s Gerald Kaleybi had just finished storing his produce when he developed chest pain. A few days later,

he was gasping for air and rushed to the district hospital, where he was referred for further treatment to Kampala City. To ensure all was well, his wife, the only adult in the house, went to help take care of him. When the area thieves noticed this, they sprung to action.

“One morning the son came and told us that her father’s bicycle had been stolen, we felt so bad,” Kalyebi’s neighbor Richard Mukwana narrates. **“Quickly the community agreed that we would try and safeguard the remaining things.”**

That very evening, they each agreed to hold onto bags of the food items that their neighbor, a known produce retailer, had just stocked for resale. **“We registered our names and about 10 people carried three bags of food and kept them,”** he further narrates. **“We also asked our wives to keep checking on the family to make sure the children had eaten and bathed.”**

As they did this, they put out news of Kalyebi’s stolen bicycle and asked the community to be on the lookout. **“Within few days, we had identified the thief, notified police and returned the bicycle,”** he said. **“I didn’t even think it was possible, but once we told people it was our sick friend’s bicycle, everyone got concerned.”**

Mukwana says that it was the least they could do for their friend who had been forced to sell land to clear exorbitant hospital bills. **“At least when he came back, he found his children looking healthy, and had a business to return to,”** he added gleefully.

Upon his return, Kalyebi sent ripe jackfruit from the family tree to each of the ten people who ensured his family was safe and his investment secured.





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