



To what extent are countries prepared to minimise the impacts of Covid-19 on the poorest and to prevent impoverishment?²

Human Development

3

MPI = 0.18

Social protection coverage

1

Minimum measures

Economic growth

1

Limited pro-poor support

Progressive social change

1

Minimum measures

● Inadequate policy preparedness

● Satisfactory policy preparedness

● Strong policy preparedness

Areas of concern for the poorest and potential impoverishment

Economic



Lost livelihoods: Movement restrictions have resulted in lost income for small businesses and employed people with limited labour rights, such as domestic and transport workers. The closure of local markets has reduced income of small traders.

Increased costs of staple goods: Respondents in rural and urban areas reported increased costs of food and other staple goods. This is supported by secondary evidence (APRA, 2020). The price of soap is also reported to be high.

Caring responsibilities: Increased caring responsibilities for out-of-school children have restricted time for livelihoods generation.

Health



Food security: Additional costs of food staples combined with reduced income is leading to households reducing daily meals and threatening food security. The majority of households interviewed indicated eating one meal less per day since the outbreak began.

Access to health services: Fear of contracting the virus or being subjected to quarantine by attending hospitals is reportedly deterring some people from accessing health services for non-Covid related health issues.

Social



Stigmatisation: Stigma has been reported among those showing unrelated symptoms (e.g. a cough), attended a funeral, or have a relative that died from Covid-19.

Social cohesion: Many respondents report a decline in social cohesion, particularly affecting informal support networks, the ability to attend church services, and simple greetings such as handshaking.

Education



School closures: Disruptions to children's education and increased caring responsibilities are the most widely reported impacts of government restrictions. Respondents reported impacts on children's behaviour, lost interest in returning to school and increased demand for food in the household.

Teachers: Multiple respondents who are teachers or relied on teachers for household income reported losing their jobs or not being paid for work before lockdown.

Groups at risk of impoverishment due to Covid-19



Unprotected workers

Informal and formal workers report loss of employment and unpaid wages due to lack of labour protections.



Children and youth

Children's learning has been disrupted, some reportedly not returning to school, idleness being linked to increased protection risks (e.g. pregnancy).



Older people

Movement restrictions have limited contact with relatives and among church communities and support networks.

Sectors most affected by containment measures



Markets for food and staple goods: The pandemic and containment measures coincided with the planting season in March. The imposed curfew and travel restrictions affected farmers and vulnerable populations in the food value chain. All respondents reported market disruptions affecting the price of staple goods, with the majority pointing to increased costs of food as a principal strain on household income and negatively impacting food security.



Informal workers and small businesses: The majority of Kenya's employment, 82.7%, is in the informal sector where labour rights are minimal (World Bank, 2016). Informal workers do not have access to social insurance, and social protection provisions remain largely targeted to households that were assessed as vulnerable before the pandemic (World Bank, 2020). Some reported a total loss of income, and all reported at least partial loss leading to reduced wellbeing.



Education: The most widely cited impact of government containment measures has been felt by the education sector. Teachers have reported losing their jobs and failing to receive pay for time worked before the pandemic. Added caring responsibilities among parents – mainly women, but also reported by men – have put a strain on livelihoods generation. Children's disrupted learning is reportedly leading to disinterest among children to return to school, with potential long-term effects on education outcomes.



Transport and travel restrictions: Those working in the transport industry were affected by the curfew, lockdown and social distancing. Cost of public transport increased due to the need to carry fewer passengers to adhere to the social distancing measures. The boda boda and taxi transport network faced a reduction in the number of customers. Long-distance journeys have been affected by border closures and curfew hours.



Governance and security: Court activities were scaled-down, and all appeals, hearings and civil cases were suspended. There is an increase in reports of gender violence cases at household level which is attributed to loss of employment, no income, depression and strict Covid-19 measures and there have been no courts to address these cases.

"As a shoemaker, before Covid-19, I could receive as high as 500 shillings a day. But now I hardly take home any money. On a good day I can get 40 shillings at most"

Older male respondent,
Nairobi

Government containment measures



Partial school closure



Limits on social and public gatherings



Border closures and restrictions on internal movements

"Covid so far has been the biggest shock I've faced. No going out? No solace? No going to church? This has never happened to me in all my lifetime"

Older female respondent,
Nairobi

Coping strategies being employed by poor and non-poor households

Migration: Respondents in rural areas had children return from urban areas who had lost their jobs or were struggling to afford daily costs. A respondent in Nairobi sent his family to live in a rural area to minimise household costs. In Nairobi, respondents report moving in with friends or relatives due to being unable to pay rent or to share food costs.

Informal support through networks: Many households are relying on support from informal network, friends and relatives in the form of food assistance, lodging and loans..

Selling assets: Respondents report selling household items and appliances to smooth out consumption, namely of food. One respondent reported selling her spare wheelchair and another reported selling their children's textbooks to buy food.

"The cost of food is very high and even getting it isn't easy. I eat meal a day of Ugali/Omena [small fish] and add a banana"

Older male respondent, Nairobi

Programmes in place to mitigate impoverishment due to Covid-19

Food distribution: Respondents reported that food support was being distributed in their communities but expressed concerns that this was not being allocated effectively to those most in need.

Pensions: The only social assistance identified by respondents were pensions. Some reported delayed payments, though the Kenyan government allocated additional funding in April to clear arrears in payments ([The Star, April 19 2020](#)).

Social protection: Kenya's social protection system targeted older people and orphans with cash transfers prior to the pandemic, with overall protection low at just 10.4% (ILO, 2020). The national treasury has allocated an additional 10 billion shillings to this programme since the pandemic. One respondent reported receiving a Covid-19 reprieve cash transfers worth 1000 shillings per week.

41,937

Number of reported COVID-19 cases¹

787

Number of reported COVID-19 deaths¹

To find out more about the impacts of Covid-19 on poverty in Kenya, please explore the following sources that were reviewed for this bulletin:

- [Future Agricultures Consortium \(APRA\): Synthesis Report 1 on the impact of Covid-19 on Food Systems and Rural Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa](#)
- [International Growth Centre. Covid-19 country dashboards](#)
- [IMF Policy Responses to Covid-19](#)
- [ILO Social Protection Responses to Covid-19 Crisis Around the World](#)

Footnotes

1. Johns Hopkins (2020). Coronavirus Resource Center. Data as of October 16th 2020.
2. Read more on CPAN's Poverty Eradication Policy Preparedness Index adapted for Covid-19.

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Find out more at www.chronicpoverty.org/covid-19



Chronic Poverty
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