



Bringing Hope During the Pandemic

**The CRVPF Covid-19 Emergency Grant Support
in Mukono, Kampala, Luweero and Mubende
Districts**



CRVPF EMERGENCY GRANT SUPPORT RESPONSE

Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF) provided Covid-19 relief emergency grants to low income families to help households access food and other essentials; to support the restoration of small businesses run by youth and women; and to engage communities in activities that prevent sexual violence. Village Health Teams were given personal protective equipment to enable them to continue health-related work in communities, especially creating awareness around prevention of Covid-19 infections.

Left: *Namatovu Esther, is a 42-year-old single mother of five. She had just given birth to her baby, and lost a teenage child to sickness when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Unable to travel to the towns to look for odd jobs because of the lockdown, she had no income and her family was left destitute. She was identified by a Village Health Team member as a low-income family and she received an emergency grant of USD100.*

Esther was able to buy food to feed her young children and essentials like soap and salt during the lockdown. She was also able to save some of the money to take her children back to school.



Implementation of the grant response

CRVPF in consultation with partners identified the following groups for life-saving grant support: low income families with many dependent children, families with Covid-19 patients, families with elderly people and people with disabilities and child-headed households.

Cash grants were also provided for the restoration of small businesses that collapsed as a result of the Covid-19 lock down. The cash grant targeted low income families, adolescent girls and boys and young mothers,

These categories of people were identified from existing structures such as Village Saving and Lending Associations (VSLA), Parenting for Respectability (PFR) Program participants both women and men, adolescent boys and girls attending Safe Spaces or identified by community-based facilitators and Village Health Team (VHT) members.



The Double, Triple, Mega Grandmother

Mary Namutebi, a 57-year-old single parent, and grandmother

In Nsuube village, Mukono District, Mary Namutebi, a 57-year-old single parent, and grandmother, is the sole provider for her family. Mary has worked at a stone quarry for more than 10 years to support her children and grandchildren.

“I am the one who provides for my grandchildren and children. My daughters gave birth as teenagers and they do not work. I had to look for food for the family. During the Covid-19 pandemic, things became so bad because there was no demand for the stones, so I could not earn anything. I borrowed from everyone until I started avoiding my neighbors. We could only afford to eat one meal a day, and that was wild greens at night.”

As a member of a local women’s group, Mary was selected as a grant beneficiary due to her lack of income during the pandemic and the large number of dependants in her household.

“When I saw the text message that I had received the money I could not believe it. I was overwhelmed. I had never seen that kind of money. I immediately withdrew some of the money to buy food and pay off my debts because I was always worried. It was like a heavy load lifted off my head. I used the rest of the money to buy dried plant material which I use to weave baskets which I sell to get some additional incomes. I feel I am now double, triple, mega happy,” said Mary.

“The grant improved our nutrition because now we can eat at least two meals a day. I was also able to buy beef for the children, for the first time, on Christmas day.”

Supporting elderly access to health care

Melida Nassanga, 60 years, has lived with disability and chronic back pain for more than 15 years and is unable to move her lower limbs. Two of her orphaned grandchildren live with her. Melida has always depended on handouts of food from her neighbors and friends since she cannot work. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the community could no longer support her due to lockdowns on travel and work. Her household was one of the low-income families supported with an emergency cash grant.

“When I received the grant, the first thing I did was to buy some medicine because I was in so much pain, yet I had no money. The medicine gave me some relief. I was also bought food for my grandchildren because I cannot till my land or do any work. This money helped us survive in this difficult time.”



A woman with her hair in a red headwrap, wearing a red top with white and black patterns, stands in front of shelves filled with various bottles. She is gesturing with her right hand.

“The grant completely changed my life.”

Racheal Kasansura, 27 years, had just delivered her third born child, when her partner abandoned the home.

“Here in Nsuube village, I used to have a vegetable stall where I could earn some income to feed my children. However, when Covid-19 came, we faced so many challenges especially with the transportation of produce because of the lockdown. Since we could not receive produce to sell, we had no income. We ate all the produce we had in stock to survive and the business collapsed. After that, we were left with no money. Life was very hard.”

“I cried tears of joy when I received the grant for the business, because although I am a single mother, I was able to feed my children during the pandemic.”

Community leaders, like village chairpersons, often identify households and individuals that suffer high levels of vulnerability and link them to community organizations for support. Rachel was identified through a parenting training program at the local church and registered for grant support.

“I was overjoyed at seeing that I had received UGX 400,000 (USD 100). For me, the grant changed my life. I used the money to set up a beverages business and painted the shop interior to make it attractive to customers. I brought my small fridge into the shop to keep the beverages cold. I also decided to buy some simple shoes for resale to gain additional income. I can now save with my village savings group. I had no problem paying school fees because the grant helped to restore my income-generating activity,” said Rachel.

“Before Covid-19, I used to visit homes and businesses to collect metallic scrap which I would then resell to smelters. It was profitable because in one day we could sell several kilograms. However, during the Covid-19 lockdown we were not allowed to move so I could no longer collect scrap. Eventually, I had to shut down the business because I had nothing to sell and I used up my savings to be able to look after my family.”

Matovu Robert, 28 years, was supported with a business restoration grant and he has re-established his business, keeping a detailed record of collections, sales and profits.



A close-up portrait of Robert Mukasa, a middle-aged Black man with a friendly smile, wearing a dark blue and orange striped shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

Transformed into a community sexual violence prevention champion

Robert Mukasa, 53 years old, is a father of four girls and four boys in Magada Village, Namataba, Mukono district.

"I lived a selfish life. I had children but I didn't care for them. Together with my friends we used to befriend young school girls. Two of these students got pregnant and their children live with me at home. I was always in court for such cases."

The sexual violence was further worsened as the Covid-19 lockdown resulted in the closure of schools, leaving young girls unprotected in community.

"Before I went for the training I would fight with my wife. After the training, my brain was awakened. Now I spend time with the family and watch television, and we laugh together. My children no longer fear me. We discuss their needs and I tell them what is within my means to provide. In the community, I now protect the children instead of violating their rights. My wife and I have also rekindled our love."

Today, Mukasa is the Secretary of the village committee, and shares parenting and child protection lessons with the community.

"There used to be a lot of sexual violence in this village. After the training, we shared the lessons, books, and parenting games in the community, and cases of violence have now decreased in our community," said Robert.



Fideri Twibanire and Mary Asimwe are leaders of a Safe Space in Mubende

“Sometimes, the girls are forced to have sex with different men because they need UGX 30,000 (USD 8) to buy basics. So the Safe Space is preventing that since we support each other.”

A rise in cases of early pregnancies during the Covid-19 lockdown was documented by multiple nonprofits in Uganda including CRVPF. Dorcus Nangozi, 21 years, was supported by a community organization to avoid sexual gender-based violence after dropping out of school during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Identified by a community-based facilitator, Dorcus was enrolled in an adolescent Safe Space where they are taught about protecting themselves against sexual violence. The Safe Space which meets on Sundays in the community, is managed by peer mentors who are selected by the group members of up to 20 girls and boys.

“In the Safe Space, we learn about family health, family planning methods and prevention of HIV/AIDS through abstinence or the use of condoms. We are taught where to report sexual violence, how to avoid sexual harassment, and what to do in case of defilement or rape. Before, we knew nothing, and we just did whatever we wanted. Now, pregnancies amongst my peers have reduced because we discuss the things we are taught.”

Adolescent Voices for Sexual Violence Prevention



Dorcus Nangozi, Peer Mentor, Muvubuka Weyogele (Youth Voice), Safe Space



“My family was reunited because of the grant.”

When Namuyonga Annet, 33 years, separated from her husband, due to religious differences, she left with her 5 children and moved into a one-roomed house.

“At first, we survived on small jobs that I did around the village; however, when Covid-19 struck, we had nothing to eat because no one was willing to pay for jobs they could do themselves like washing and cleaning. We were always hungry, the children were sick and I was desperate.”

Annet was identified as a low-income family in need of emergency grant support, during a parenting training supported by CRVPF.

“When I received the money I was so happy, I bought some food, and medicine for the children and a pig as an investment. After receiving the grant I was motivated to continue attending the parenting training. My husband also began to attend it because we lived in the same village. Eventually, we reconciled so we could parent our children together. The grant brought my family back together so we could build our family income together.”



Ronald Munguyiko is a 31-year-old father of six children. In Luweero District, he lives with his wife as a subsistence farmer.

“With the Covid-19 pandemic, life was very hard. The small garden we till does not yield enough food for our family. My wife could no longer do odd jobs to supplement our income. We had nothing to eat. When we got the grant money, we used some of it to rent a quarter acre of farmland for a year, and planted cassava, maize, and beans for our home consumption. I also bought a pig and we used the little money left to buy food, salt and soap. When the pig gives birth we shall sell the piglets to get money to pay school fees, and other household essentials.”



Caroline Nakyeyune, 36 years old, is a mother of five, living in Kisidenzi village in Mubende District.

“Before Covid-19, I was a clothes hawker, but I used all my savings to pay my mother’s medical bills before she passed away from cervical cancer. We rarely had food; we would eat jackfruit mostly. During the village savings and loan meeting, I was informed that my family had been selected to receive a grant. I immediately paid UGX 150,000 (USD 42) to rent an acre of land where I planted beans and Irish potatoes. I also built a wooden shelter and bought saucepans and utensils for my pancake business. I am now able to pay school fees weekly, from my pancake business.”



Margret Nagawa and Martha Bukenya are VHTs in Luweero district



Nalunga Christine, a VHT in Luweero district

Equipped to protect communities

Supporting VHTs to meet community health needs effectively

Village Health Teams (VHT) are a critical link to health services in communities; however, as volunteers, they are often ill-equipped for their work lacking critical equipment and support for their work.

During Covid-19, VHTs were assigned by the government of Uganda to monitor Covid-19 infections in the community as well as sensitize communities about the prevention of transmission of the disease. However, due to

limited government resources, VHTs were particularly vulnerable to infection as they lacked protective equipment.

“In this village, we are only two VHTs. My colleague Martha lives in this town and she serves 2,000 households, whereas I live in a village setting I serve only 156 households. Our work was not easy during the pandemic because the health workers in hospitals were already over-worked treating Covid-19 cases



Saula Ruth, a VHT in Mukono district

and other illnesses. Therefore, we became the hands and the feet of the government on the ground to be able to monitor Covid-19 prevention and infection,” said Margaret Nagawa, a VHT.

The VHTs were equally worried about contracting Covid-19 because they lacked appropriate protective equipment. CRVPF used the emergency grant to purchase personal protective equipment for these critical health support teams.

“They gave us masks, gloves, sanitizers, bags, and gumboots to protect ourselves when we visited people during Covid-19,” said Ruth.

“This encouraged and enabled us to continue to support health awareness and health-seeking behaviour in communities. We were able to visit homes to identify families without food, Covid-19 affected homes, the disabled, the elderly and those vulnerable to sexual violence and link them to grant support.”

The VHTs also attended parenting meetings so they are now able to counsel families with parenting problems.

Esther Nankinga is a 30-year old single mother of 5, who owns a vegetable stall in Wobulenzi Village, Luweero District.

“My father was a farmer and when I dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy, he sent me to sell our farm produce on market days. I gained experience and started my own business which was successful. However, tragedy struck when they restricted the movement of people due to Covid-19 and they closed markets to prevent the spread of the disease. I had just purchased stock and I made a huge loss because all my vegetables rotted and I had to throw them away. I had to use up all my savings to feed my five children. Without capital or stock I was forced to close the business and I had no other source of income.

When I received a grant to restore my business, I bought pesticides and sprayed my vegetable farm to protect my tomatoes and eggplants from pests. I also stocked vegetables that are frequently purchased. Because of that grant, my business is back and I now supply to traders twice a week and I also sell at my own stall. I am now saving with a village savings group so I can purchase a small plot of land to build a house for my children.”



The wealth of healthy food and drink



Before the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, Viola Namazzi, 25 years, earned a monthly profit of UGX 300,000 (USD 70) selling smoked fish in her village.

“When the curfew was imposed, transportation became a challenge and we could not sell in the evening. People could no longer afford to buy fish, so we ate some of it, while the rest got spoilt. During this time, I got pregnant and because my husband was not working we used up the business savings. When I received the grant I decided to construct a shelter for the stall and re-stocked the fish. Within a month business started picking up as my clients already knew where to find me.”

Namazzi is saving daily and hopes to buy a plot of land so she can have her own home.



Arone Matabishi, 26 years, was teaching sciences at a secondary school in Mubende district, when the government closed schools because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The lockdown was terrible for me because I lost my job which was helping me to support my younger siblings. I had no other source of income. However, since I had always wanted to study food processing, I asked a friend to share his class notes with me because I could not afford to pay for the course. A few months later I was given a business restoration grant. I bought fruits, a juice blender, and a kettle to boil water. I started packing juice in disposable cups and bottles. The smartphone has helped me promote my business and reach more customers. Now I supply juice to several villages.”



“This business improved my living standards.”

Mariam Nakazzi moved to Luweero District in 2019 hoping to get into the coffee business.

“I realized that the business was not going to be as profitable as I had hoped. I therefore, decided to set up a small outdoor restaurant selling only matooke and soup. Within a month, I expanded the menu to include potatoes, rice, meat, fish, and groundnut sauce. When the Covid-19 pandemic led to travel and work lockdowns, I lost all my customers. I also got malaria and I was forced to use my savings to buy treatment and food.

The grant came at the right time; I bought saucepans, a table, a few stools, 2 dozen plates, and ingredients. The business is doing well and I now charge four times the price with my improved menu. This business has enabled me to pay rent on time, and improve our living standards.”



Sylvia Nambatya is a 38-year-old mother of four, living in Bututumula Village in Luweero District.

"I did not want to stay at home doing nothing. I observed that rubber shoes are the most common footwear in this village. The only supplier was in Luweero town which is far and the transport costs were high. I decided to go into this shoe business."

Within a few months of starting, the Covid-19 pandemic started and my customer base collapsed. Transportation to restock was a challenge and it increased the cost of the shoes which customers could not afford. Eventually, I had to close business."

Sylvia was able to qualify to receive a business grant to restore her business. Today, her shop is fully stocked with a range of shoes and Sylvia can save some of her profits.



Justine Naigaga, a 26-year-old mother of three, works as a tailor in Mukono District.

"I used to work as a tailor repairing clothes. I was saving up to purchase materials to sew new clothes. When Covid-19 came, my family and I fell sick, which required me to spend all my savings on medication. We had no money left over for food and I had just given birth so I could not do any work. However, when I received the grant, I bought some fabric and accessories. I kept some of the money because I am looking for a shop in town so that I can access more customers. The grant was life-saving; I was able to re-stock so that I can have a source of income."



"The situation was very bad during the Covid-19 pandemic because in Kampala there is no where to farm and I have orphan grandchildren. When I got the grant money, I bought salt, sugar, food, and two goats. This made me happy because I will sell the young goats and buy medication, school supplies, and food."

-Hanifa Nakate, 80 years, Kampala

Reaching the elderly with life-saving care



"I am unemployed and I have cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and ulcers. I would be dead if the gentleman from that organization had not found me and carried me out of the house because I was too sick to move during the pandemic. When they gave me the money I was able to buy the medicine I need and some food. Now, I am now able to walk without support. There has been a big improvement in my health."

Rosemary Wanyana, 50 years, Kampala



“Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I used to visit homes to wash clothes. When the lockdown started, children stayed at home so parents no longer needed my services. My husband also had no job. The people from the organization found me at home helpless with no work or income. They registered me for a grant. When I received the money on my phone, I paid rent, and some little food for my family. I bought a kilo of cassava and sweet potatoes so that I could start a fried snack business. Today, my husband and I work together; we fry cassava, sweet potatoes, and pancakes to provide for the family.”

-Hadija Nalijja, 38 years, Kampala



“During my senior six vacation, my uncle took me in as an apprentice and taught me how to make African rubber sandals. I used UGX 150,000 (USD 40) to start the business. I would buy materials and pay someone to sew my designs. I would hawk the shoes in the neighborhood. However, the Covid-19 lockdown made business difficult. I could not buy materials to make shoes and my customers had no money to buy the existing stock. When I received the business grant, I paid off the sewing machine debt I had and put a deposit on another shoemaking machine. Since then, my shop is now fully stocked. The business helps me pay rent and buy raw materials.”

Brian Ssebugwawo, 18 years, Kampala



“I have become an example for adolescent girls.”

Florence Nankya, 20 years, lives with her parents and two siblings. She is studying a diploma course and works to pay her tuition fees.

“When I finished high school, I started selling sweet bananas to earn some income and to buy myself some essentials like sanitation products. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to shut down my business because people had no money and wanted food not snacks. As adolescent girls in my community, we created a Safe Space where we discuss issues that we face around reproductive health, sexual harassment, and protecting ourselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. It is from this Safe Space that I was selected to receive a business grant. I decided to start a charcoal selling business and paid my grandmother to rent her space where I kept the charcoal. Now, I supply all my neighbours. This business has taught me the importance of self-employment and my peers look up to me as an example.”

Single parent household support

Martin Owor is a single father who lives with his eight children in Magada village, Namataba, Mukono district.

“When my wife abandoned the home and the children to go and work in a fishing community, I struggled to raise these children and to feed them. I had borrowed a motorcycle from a friend to run a boda-boda business. Unfortunately, it had been stolen from me and I was struggling to handle the issue so that I would not go to jail.

The Covid-19 pandemic found me when I was already suffering with high blood pressure and without employment. I had also become an alcoholic. One day, I was attending a parenting training held in our village, where my family was identified for grant support as a low-income household.

I bought food and sent some money to my sickly mother. I knew I needed a source of income and so I paid a deposit on an old motorcycle which I now use to run errands for people in the village. At least now the children have food to eat.”



Hodilia Kyosimire is a 35year old single mother of 4 who lives in Mubende. The family survives on subsistence farming around the home.

“When I received the money, my husband had just died. I paid off some of his debts, and bought essentials like clothes and utensils. With the rest of the money, I rented an acre of land and planted maize, beans, and irish potatoes for our future feeding needs. I also got scholastic materials for the children.”



Bringing hope to low-income households

Nalongo Justine Nabukera is 57 years and lives in Namataba, Mukono District with her husband, 7 children, and 7 grandchildren.

“Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I had a vegetable stall at the trading center. All the savings I had were used to treat my husband who spent four months in Mulago Hospital following an accident. During this time nursing him, our two girls got pregnant and then later our house got burnt while I was at the market. We lost all our documents, savings, medical files, and every material possession we owned.

My husband could not walk so he could not look for money. We do not have a garden to grow our own food, and my vegetable stand was our only source of livelihood. With the COVID-19 pandemic, things got worse. I had to go and dig for people in exchange for food like yams or money. When there was money, I would buy cassava and grind it to make flour that could be eaten for a few days. We ate this food with plain water or tea leaves. We built swings to entertain the children so they could stay at home.

I was very happy to be given the grant money and I decided to buy more than food. I bought soap, a pig, some ducks, 4 hens, and a cockerel. In the future these could be sold for cash, and we could also sell or eat the eggs to improve our nutrition. I was also able to get medical treatment for the children. This money made a big difference to our lives.”



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“Ensuring children and adolescent girls are safe and empowered where they live,
learn, play and work”