

Work in progress: First digest of Covid-19 community and citizen led responses

Examples from on-going L2GP and partner research into community responses to Covid-19
March – August 2020

- Voluntary sharing of food, small services and acts of kindness to neighbours, vulnerable individuals and within families and communities were documented across many and often very different social, economic and cultural contexts and across all continents. Although the individual cases may seem small in scale and are basically impossible to track and put a fixed value to, **the total global impact of this kind of spontaneous mutual aid is likely to have been very significant** – in many cases it also happened swifter and appeared to be more adaptable than most external/institutionalised aid
- Myanmar and Myanmar/Thai border: Self-organised local cooperation and coordination to access and share food, especially with destitute citizens – including rural areas and supporting poorer, more vulnerable urban citizens
- West Bank (oPt): Creating and maintaining "friendly checkpoints" and disseminating info on quarantine procedures to at-risk workers/households at village level
- Groups around community radio stations (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso) play an important role in: 1) raising basic awareness about the virus and how to mitigate spread (hygiene and lock down measures) along with essential myth busting, 2) supporting/amplifying relevant messaging from authorities but in a manner and language more accessible to folks at village level, 3) organising mutual aid in their communities including utilising small savings and loans schemes in mitigating effect of C-19 – and lastly 4) sharing also reflections etc on the psychological/psycho-social impact of the C-19 crisis (All these examples identified through collaboration with [International Media Support](#) and their local networks in the Sahel)
- Marsabit, Kenya and Sudan (South Kordofan) and Philippines: Awareness raising and income generation at community level – through for instance making and selling face coverings by a group of individuals living with disabilities in Marsabit, Kenya). Similar efforts were documented by ECOWEB (Philippines) with self-help groups making face masks for sale as well as using for themselves
- Sudan (South Kordofan), Palestine and Philippines: Early practice around farming and house gardens, with successful production and sharing of the surplus (for free), urban gardens used by sclr communities and excess produce included in ECOWEB (Philippines) food distributions as part of Covid-19 response project (CRP)
- Sudan (South Kordofan): Voluntary youth groups sharing C-19 messaging, offering to do odd jobs for vulnerable/isolated households, and also peace messaging with other youth from ethnic groups they had not previously engaged with

- In Sudan (Darfur) chief asked relatives wanting to flee big urban areas not to return home to villages (with risk of bringing Covid-19 with them) – but instead tried to send support from villages to city-dwelling family members
- West Bank/oPt: sourcing sanitation equipment to sanitise public spaces, communicating with local authorities on vulnerable households, coordinating with provision of medical supplies to those who need it, and compiling and distribution hygiene packages.
- West Bank/oPt: documentation and a sense of increased Israeli violations – referring cases and details to legal aid organisations
- West Bank/oPt: Emergency groups evolved out of existing Protection Group, for specific assessing, supporting and responding to local Covid-19 related needs and responses. Creative use of prepaid items with local shops/suppliers with backing (financial guarantees) from national and internal NGOs to work around lock down restriction on usual aid activities
- Philippines: Self-help (sclr) communities involved in identifying their own beneficiaries to participate in activities and or instance purchase their own items
- Marsabit, Kenya: Existing community groups volunteered to support the limited capacity of local authority’s administration by monitoring curfew, and supporting / accompanying community health workers
- Marsabit, Kenya: role reversal between men and women as main income generator for some households - women have started small businesses at home
- Marsabit, Kenya: individuals nominating themselves and organising to buy and sell livestock at market up 200 km away on behalf of several herders
- Marsabit, Kenya: Local volunteers (PALC) sharing Covid-19 and other related health information with distant and isolated communities without radio/TV. Also encouraging mothers to continue accessing pre/antenatal care as well as seeking usual vaccination, as usual vaccination rates had significantly reduced due to fear of Covid-19
- Marsabit, Kenya: sharing of savings among SHG members (survivors of GBV), and for the first time, community members offering loans without charging interest to those who need them within the village.

Perception of Covid-19 (in the early days and weeks of the pandemic – but some of the same patterns still hold true not least in rural/isolated communities):

- belief that the virus isn’t real, that its existence is political/ideological or religious “scheme” (“it’s a punishment”), “it is not ours”, and in several places “it’s only affecting other people” (e.g. Europeans etc.)
- On the other hand, Sahel-based informants report that villagers have turned away from traditional medicines/herbs etc. as they see Covid-19 as a new and “modern” disease which can only be dealt with by “modern” medicine.

Some early threats / risks / challenges / concerns identified

- Cases of GBV and domestic violence likely to have increased (as seen in Marsabit)

- ❑ Uptake in violations in the occupied Palestinian territories (reported as increase in land grabbing and demolitions)
- ❑ Very significantly disrupted education throughout the countries who reported
- ❑ Increased hunger and food insecurity related to drop in income-generation, trade, movement etc
- ❑ More pressure on active community members/citizen activists who feel a particular urgent need to provide for their communities

Early observations regarding self-help groups (sclr) community adaptation

- ❑ A shift in mindset within some communities towards relying more on their own resources and leading their own responses – rather than waiting for outside help
- ❑ Greater levels of community cohesion, as suggested by increased culture of volunteerism, supporting vulnerable or isolated families and numerous other forms of mutual aid. Also coming together as a community more frequently to meet and discuss featured in several cases.
- ❑ Recognition in local level leadership role, e.g. connecting with other leaders, and also taking the lead for and by themselves. Also increased recognition of own potential
- ❑ Support offered to local authorities to boost their capacity, including monitoring curfews and supporting community health workers

Compiled by Mandeep Mudhar for by L2GP on September 1, 2020

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