

LEARNING REFLECTION NOTE: IMPLEMENTING "COVID RESPONSES: TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE AND LESSONS TO SUPPORT MORE RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS IN FACING FUTURE CRISES"

Reflection Date: January - June, 2023

Key Successes:

1. **Impactful Research:** The implementation of the study on COVID responses in Kampala, Uganda has yielded valuable insights into the challenges faced by residents, workers, organizations, and state authorities during the pandemic. The research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and implications of the crisis, providing a solid foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** ACTogether Uganda and Makerere University (Urban Action Lab) successfully engaged with a wide range of stakeholders during the COVID collective study, including residents, workers, organizations, and state authorities. This collaborative approach ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives and experiences, enhancing the relevance and applicability of the data analysis, key findings and recommendations.
3. **Policy Recommendations:** The study has generated a set of policy recommendations aimed at promoting social justice, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods in the face of future crises. These recommendations provide a roadmap or framework for policymakers and other stakeholders to address the challenges identified and capitalize on opportunities for positive change including appropriate planning or preparedness for similar pandemic.

Challenges Faced:

1. **Limited Resources:** As a donor-funded project, ACTogether Uganda faced resource constraints that impacted the scope and scale of the study. Limited funding restricted the ability of the research team to reach a broader stratified sample size for Focused Group Discussions and Household surveys, the in-depth data analysis, or extended research beyond Kampala City. Such limitations should be acknowledged when considering the generalizability of the findings.
2. **Time Constraints:** The urgency of the COVID-19 crisis necessitated a rapid implementation process, which may have posed challenges in terms of data collection, analysis, and stakeholder engagement. The time constraints affected the depth of the study and limited the team's ability to explore certain aspects in greater detail.
3. **Contextual Factors:** The unique context of Kampala City, Uganda, including the governance, cultural, social, and economic factors, relatively posed challenges in understanding and addressing specific dynamics and needs of the local population, local leaders, politicians and City authority officials. It is important to recognize the influence of context and ensure that the recommendations consider the specificities of the study location.

Lessons Learned:

1. **Adequate Funding:** Securing sufficient funding is crucial to conduct comprehensive research and ensure the effectiveness and impact of the study. It is important to explore diverse funding sources and establish a budget that allows for a robust research process, including data collection, analysis, validation and dissemination.
2. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Building strong partnerships with local stakeholders, including government entities, local councils, NGOs, and community-based organizations, can enhance the reach and relevance of the study. Engaging these partners from the inception of the study can facilitate data collection, access to participants, their collective participation and adoption of recommendations.
3. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Adapting to unexpected challenges and changes in the research environment is vital. The research team should be prepared to adjust research methodologies, timelines, and approaches based on emerging needs and realities on the ground (research local communities and Cities).
4. **Contextual Sensitivity:** Acknowledging and understanding the local context is crucial for effective research and appropriate policy adoptability or uptake. It is important to recognize the unique characteristics, challenges, and opportunities specific to the study location, ensuring that the recommendations are contextually relevant and feasible to meet the study timelines with expected deliverables.

Moving forward, the findings and policy recommendations from COVID Collective study provide a foundation for future actions to enhance social justice, resilience, and livelihoods in the face of future crises. ACTogether Uganda, National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda, Makerere University-Urban Action Lab and University of Manchester should continue to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations, engaging with policymakers, donors, and relevant stakeholders in the private sector to drive positive change in planning and preparedness for future pandemics.

Additionally, further research and monitoring efforts should be considered to assess the long-term impacts of the recommended policies and to capture lessons learned for future crisis response and resilience-building initiatives in Uganda.