# COVID- 19 IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON REFUGEE LIVELIHOODS

## MULTI- STAKEHOLDER RAPID – ASSESSMENT IN ZAMBIA, JUNE 2020

JULY 3, 2020

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## Introduction

COVID- 19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on people's lives. The pandemic is no doubt evolving into an economic and labor market downturn affecting all communities. A World Bank report estimates that globally, the pandemic will incrementally push between 40 to 100 million people into extreme poverty by June 2020, measured at the international poverty line of $1.90 per day[1].

The situation is even more critical for vulnerable populations including refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and stateless persons, who often rely on humanitarian assistance and are mainly absorbed in the informal sectors of host country economies. According to a UNHCR global press release of the 18th June 2020, this population now constitute 1% of global humanity i.e. 1 in every 97 people. A global report by the International Labor Organisation (ILO) indicate that at least 134 refugee hosting countries are affected by the pandemic.

In Zambia, daily status updates by the Ministry of Health indicate that, the cumulative number of cases are nearing 2,000 (*as at 10th July 2020*). The pandemic has further compounded the already distressed macro-economic outlook. Preliminary estimates indicate that wholesale and retail trade, tourism sectors are most hit. Job losses, business closure and downsizing, food insecurity at household level, inability to meet basic needs have been resultant impacts, with vulnerable populations being hardest hit.

Cognisant of the resultant effect on economic systems, including trade restrictions, limited mobility of people and goods, and restricted movement in and out of the refugee settlements, a multi- stakeholder rapid assessment was conducted during the period 8th to 19th June to quantify /determine measurable impact on refugees and hosting community livelihoods. The rapid survey was conducted in Lusaka and in the three refugee settlements and hosting villages of Zambia. Steered by Government District line Ministries and UNHCR, with the support of WFP, UNDP, Caritas Czech Republic (CCR) and WVI- Zambia, the survey specifically set to quantify the immediate impact on livelihoods, food security and local markets.

## Methodology

A structured methodology was employed to facilitate a higher level of data validity and reliability. A 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error was used to calculate sample size in each location. The data collection tool was developed in consultation with partners both in the field and in Lusaka. The tool (https://enketo.unhcr.org/x/14aIPk6x) was mainly designed with closed-ended multiple questions and a few open-ended ones. Random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify respondents. Enumerators were oriented on the mobile based questionnaire and a pre-test conducted days prior. Staff from Government District Ministries, UNDP and partner agencies CCR, AAH and WVI administered face to face android enabled mobile based kobo tool to a total 2,796 respondents across the locations.

## Limitations in the assessment

- The rapid survey was not in-depth in scale and did not cover critical household economic indicators such as expenditures and income levels. However, quantitative data collected has been triangulated by secondary sources including national (by Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health) and global reports (by International Labor Organisation- ILO, World Bank, UNHCR, International NGO's)
- Given the limited timing and restrictions associated with the pandemic, training of enumerators was not extensive. UNHCR livelihoods staff in the field, who participated in the daily field exercise, provided regular guidance on the tool ensuring that key aspects of the survey were incorporated.
- Lack of adequate data collection tools i.e. Android phones. As such only enumerators in possession of own android phones, were engaged. Data entries were daily monitored in the system and cleaning done prior to analysis.

[1]Source: Lakner et al (2020), PovcalNet, Global Economic Prospects, GLOBAL POVERTY MONITORING TECHNICAL NOTE 13 by World Bank

- In some locations, initially recruited enumerators absconded. New teams and leaner teams were later deployed.

## Summary / At a glance

- Survey targeted refugees, former refugees and neighbouring host communities across all locations including local integration areas and hosting villages.
- The negative effects of COVID -19 pandemic has been widely felt by the population of concern. Approximately 84% of the respondents have reported having been negatively impacted in one way or another.
- The livelihoods of at least 70% of the population has been extremely impacted by the pandemic, which compounded an already distressed economic situation.
- Slightly over half (53%) of the general population of concern partook two meals a day prior to the month of March 2020. This number reduced to 46% in June 2020 indicating a worsening of the situation.
- Before March 2020 only 17% of the general population had three meals a day with Lusaka scoring highest at 38%. However, in June the general population score reduced to 12% having three meals a day with Lusaka hardest hit having a drop by 31%.
- Population of concern resulted to coping strategies such as begging and having one meal a day. About 56% in Meheba, 50% in Mayukwayukwa, 47% in Lusaka and 23% in Mantapala are now having one meal a day compared to before the pandemic.
- Majority have food stock to last less than a month with most living on ‘hand to mouth’’. Approximately 57% in Lusaka have food stock to last only one day or less while 31% in Mayukwayukwa and 26% in Meheba have food stocks to last a month.
- 48% of the respondents engage in farming, mainly in the settlements, while 23% in business, 17% in casual or piece work, 2% contracted employment while another 2% depend on remittances.
- 64% have recorded reduced income with population in Lusaka hardest hit. Only 7% recorded increased income resulting from the crisis related opportunities.
- Crop forecast results announced by the Ministry of Agriculture in the month of June 2020 estimates a national increase of 69% in Maize (*grain for the staple food ‘Nshima*) production during the ending 2019 /2020 farming season. About 93% of the national 3,387,469 metric tonnes production is by small holders who also comprise population of concern farmers in the settlements. A similar increase in production is estimated in the settlements particularly in Meheba where production of 2,400 metric tonnes of maize and 191 metric tonnes of soya beans is estimated. Approximately 21% of the farmers in Meheba responded that they have adequate harvest for both household consumption and for sale.
- Population of concern has resulted into reducing expenditure patterns, income diversification and family/ friend/ agency support as a way of coping with effects of reduced incomes.
- Availability of basic items (food and non- food) in local markets has not been significantly affected. Range of choice not changed. However, 87% of the population decried of an increase in the price of basic items. Data from Zambia Statistics Agency record that inflation has increased by 3% between the months of February (at 13.9%) and month of June 2020 (15.9%).
- Access to other services like protection, education, water and sanitation and health has been affected. About 29% of the respondents felt an impact on protection services given the limited accessibility to Government/ UNHCR/ Partner staff at the height of the pandemic while 36% attributed an impact on health services owing to people not accessing health services for fear of contracting the virus.
- An overwhelming 83% have recommended a package support mirroring the ‘graduation approach (GA)’. GA is widely being mirrored through stimulus packages by many Governments and has been highly recommended by the World Bank. The Bretton Wood Institution references this approach as best action needed to help vulnerable populations to recover from the pandemic. Respondents have requested for financial support to cushion their situation and recover /start business (52%) and agricultural input support

(20%). About 11% have requested other livelihood support including need to ease movement and other COVID related restrictions.

- The survey recommends prioritised attention to Lusaka, Meheba and Mayukwayukwa for the above support. However, this is not to indicate that support should not be provided to Mantapala settlement.
- There are efforts being put in place to cover some of the critical gaps / missing information in this rapid assessment. An in-depth national socio-economic assessment (COVID- 19 related) is being planned by the Government with the support of UN system in Zambia led by UNDP. Through participation in the planning and drawing of the related survey tools, UNHCR has advanced the need for inclusion of the refugee hosting regions. This request has been granted and affirmed.

## Findings

## 1. Demographics

### Gender;

Approximately 69% of the respondents were male and 31% were female. Low participation of female respondents was mainly recorded in Meheba. This is because of equally important exercise, mobile sim card registration, continued during the assessment period.

### Age

Most of the respondents were within the age range of 36 – 59 (at 46%), whereas 15% constituted respondents aged 60 years and above.

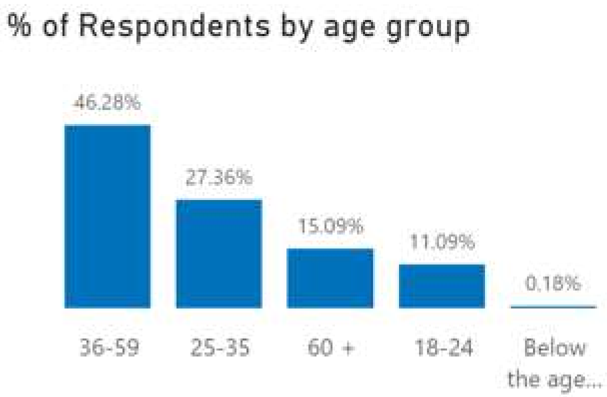


*Figure 1: Respondents' Age representation*

### Legal status

40% of the respondents were refugees, 36% Zambians from the hosting villages and compounds and 24% from the resettlement/local integration areas.

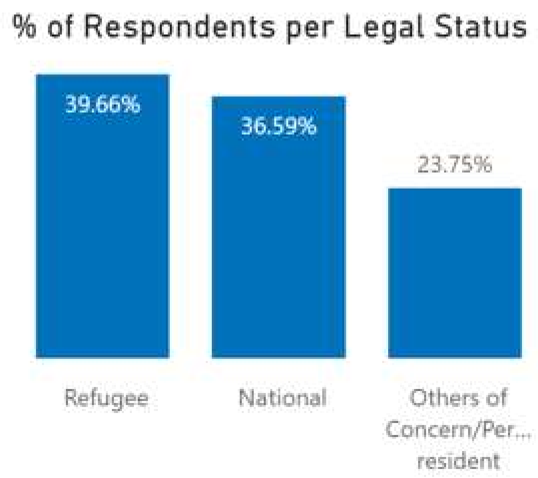


*Figure 2: Respondents' representation by legal status*

### Location

Majority of responses were received from Mantapala where 29% of the total respondents were covered. About 27% of the respondents were in Mayukwayukwa, 26% were in Meheba and 18% in Lusaka.

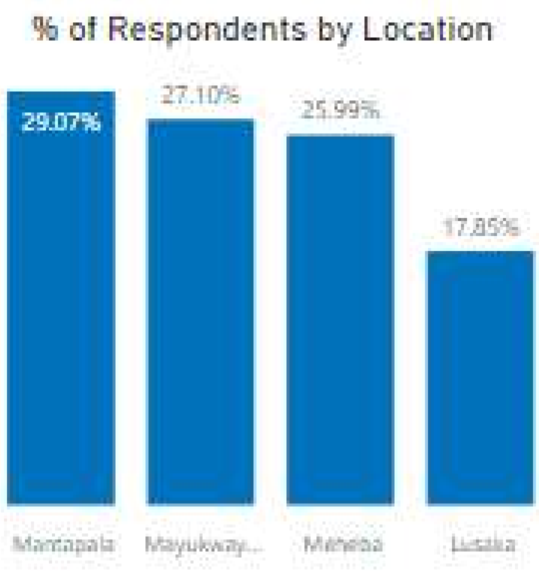


*Figure 3: Respondents' representation by location*

A total of 661 (23%) responses were covered in the Local Integration areas of Meheba and Mayukwayukwa while 722 (25%) responses received from villagers neighbouring Mantapala, Meheba and Mayukwayukwa.

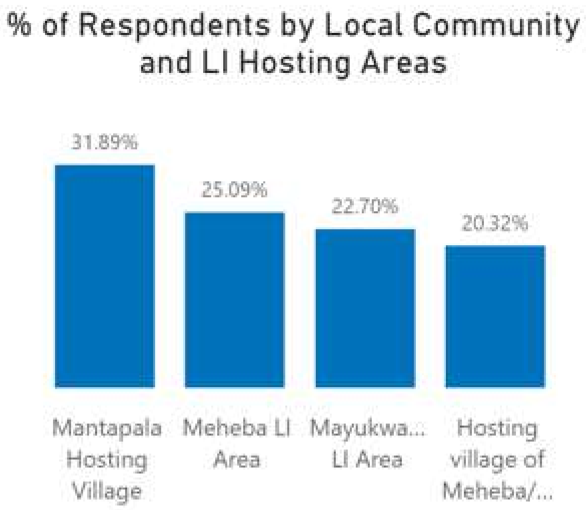


*Figure 4: % of respondents' representation in LI and hosting areas against the total respondents in the LI and hosting villages*

## 2. Impact on Food Security

The survey sought to determine food consumption pattern and food stocks at household level following the pandemic. Questions were designed to probe the situation before and after March 2020.

Results point to the fact that food security at household level has been hardest hit by the crisis owing to disrupted and reduced income sources. Vulnerable populations in urban areas such as Lusaka have absorbed most of the negative impact/ change on food availability as opposed to population in the settlements.

Of the settlements, Mantapala is least affected mainly attributable to the monthly general food distribution by WFP. A shift to cash transfer has been effected by WFP with an initial 1,500 PoCs targeted. It is expected that all PoCs in Mantapala settlement will be transitioned to cash by WFP by the end 2020.

### - Food consumption

Survey results reveal that just about 50% of the population consume two meals per day. This has been the common situation both before (*at 53%)* and after (*at 46% in June)* March 2020. A slight decrease was recorded following the pandemic. Impact on both female and male headed households was noted to be similar.

#### *Three meals a day*

About 17% of the households in the general population had three meals, *before March*, per day with Lusaka recording more households (at 38%).

This has decreased to only 5% the number of households having three meals a day, with Lusaka worst affected. Only 10% of the population in Lusaka can now afford three meals per day, as at June 2020, a sharp decrease of 31% from the 38% before March.

The settlements and host communities have equally been affected. Households affording three meals a day, decreased to i.e.

- 5% decrease in Mayukwayukwa (i.e. 10% to 5%),
- 9% decrease in Meheba (i.e. 15% to 7%)
- 7% decrease in Mantapala (i.e.12% to 5%)

Respondents in the survey reported having employed coping mechanisms to manage available foods stocks. Whereas Lusaka recorded the highest increase in the number of those resulting to one meal a day, over 50% of households in Meheba and Mayukwayukwa are now living on a meal a day.

#### *One meal per day*

Amongst all the targeted population of concern, there has been a general increase in the number of households partaking one meal a day. Lusaka worst affected; increase from 17% to 47%.

However, there are more people in Meheba (56%) and Mayukwayukwa (50%) having one meal a day.

Of the settlements, Mantapala least affected 23% (from 10%) partaking one meal a day as compared to Meheba with 56% (increase from 38%) and Mayukwayukwa with 50% (increase from 47).

### - Food stocks

Impact of the pandemic on food stocks at household level (especially amongst non-faming families) was recorded.

- 23% survive on hand to mouth as they have food stock available for a day or less.
- 21% have food stock available to last for more than one month.

Lusaka worst affected with 57% having food stock for only a day.

Mantapala least affected. 21% have food to last more than a month and 32% have food to last between two weeks and a month. Only 6% mentioned food stock for one day.

In Mayukwayukwa 31% have food stock to last for more than a month while 19% have only daily food stock.

In Meheba 26% have food stock to last for more than a month while 24% have only daily food stock.

The assessment was conducted at a time when farmers in the settlements and surrounding communities were engaged in/ some preparing for the 2019/2020 harvesting season. As such a higher scoring on food stocks in the settlements is linked to the harvests during the 2019/2020. This is detailed in the next section of this report.

#### *Support from other social networks/ begging*

About 3% reported as having resulted to begging whereas 2% are undertaking intermittent starving/ whole day without food.

### 3. Impact on Livelihoods

Agriculture remains the mainstay economic opportunity and activity in and around the three rural located settlements. This was affirmed by a majority 40% respondents (48% from the settlements) who indicated agriculture as their main livelihood activity. Other livelihood activities cited by respondents include petty trading and business ownership by 23% of the population, 17% engaged in casual and piece work. About 2% are on contracted employment and 2% depend on remittances. Charcoal production as a source of livelihood was also reported to be common in the settlements and surrounding host communities.

The pandemic has had devastating impact on the above livelihood activities particularly, non-agricultural strategies. People have lost jobs, businesses downsized and /or closed, and incomes decreased. Approximately 84% of the respondents confirmed of their livelihood sources having been negatively affected in one way or another. Of those running small and medium sized enterprises and employed, 64% recorded reduction in income. Farmers also reported reduced access to external markets and dwindled number of customers. Population residing in Lusaka recorded the highest number of respondents who lost jobs (16%) and businesses (70%).

On a positive note, 7% of the respondents recorded increased income resulting from emerging opportunities such as engagement in production of personal protective equipment. Mantapala settlement recorded lowest impact on income levels as compared to existing baseline.

A majority 49% of the refugee population cited restricted movement in and out of the settlements/ suspension of mobility permit issuance by CoR, as main cause for disruption of livelihood activities. Other reasons provided for the reduced inability to meet household needs included; limited/ reduced wage opportunities (8%), reduced purchasing power by most households/ customer base for businesses (10%), reduction in remittances, reduced movement for fear of contracting the virus etc.

#### *Crop forecast; harvesting period 2019 /2020*

The recent national crop forecast survey for the 2019/2020 agricultural season released by the Ministry of Agriculture estimate that small and medium scale farmers contributed 93% of the total maize production. The survey forecasts that, for the ending period, there is an expected 69% national increase in maize production from last season, i.e. from 2,004,389 metric tonnes to 3,387,469 metric tonnes.

In Meheba and Mayukwayukwa settlements, forecasts by the District Agriculture teams estimate that 2,400 and 700 metric tonnes of maize will respectively be harvested from both locations. Soya beans production in Meheba is estimated at 191 metric tonnes and 338 metric tonnes in Mayukwayukwa. The survey results however, reveal that, of the farmers;

- Upto 31% expect harvest that is only adequate for household consumption for more than a month.
- 21% confirmed having adequate harvest for household consumption and sale.

The above finding reveals of a potential 70% of the population, whose livelihood strategies has been extremely impacted by the pandemic.

### *Coping strategies*

To address the situation, households have adopted coping strategies with 28% reducing their expenditure pattern, 40% diversifying income sources and 20% seeking support from family/ friends / UNHCR and partners. In Lusaka a majority are relying on support from family/ friends and reducing expenditure patterns.

## 4. Impact on local markets

- **Supply chains to the local markets in the settlements**

About 86% of the respondents confirmed that transportation and supply of goods to the local markets in the settlements had changed. This is following the containment measures announced by the Government, suspending issuance of mobility permits, thereby impacting supply chains. Traders devised alternative ways of maintaining supplies. Some traders continued to travel out of the settlements for stock sourcing particularly in Mantapala where traders were permitted to travel within the Nchelenge District for trading reasons. Host community traders, from nearby District Headquarters, were allowed to deliver stocks to retailers in the settlements. In other instances, grocery and vegetable traders purchased from local farmers for their retail needs.

- **Range of choice**

Availability of basic food items (meal mealie and grains) in the local markets largely remained unchanged as confirmed by a majority 86% of the respondents. However, increased business costs occasioned by disrupted supply chains and speculative trading practices led to price increase of basic items.

When asked whether the range of choice of goods were the same in the local markets, in the month of June, as before March 2020, whereas a larger **population (61%)** still had considerable product options to choose from, *and that range of basic items were largely found in the local markets*, a considerable **39% of the respondents** reported of notable change in the range of choice. This segment of the population decried of the price increases and limited choices.

- **Food prices change/ inflation**

The Zambia Statistics Agency (Zamstats) estimates that the average prices of goods and services increased at a faster rate in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. However, the agency also estimates that while the prices of basic **food items** such as cereals (breakfast mealie meal, Roller meal, maize grain) and fish (i.e. dried bream, dried Kapenta (Chisense), and Fresh Kapenta, decreased (*following a Government Directive*) between the period May and June 2020, the prices of **non- food items** increased over the same period. Price increases were highly recorded in Lusaka and the Copperbelt Provinces while North Western Province recorded lowest inflation rate[2].

The survey results mirror estimates by the Zambia Statistics Agency. About **87% of the respondents** reported that prices of basic goods had increased during this period thus impacting their ability to meet their household daily basic needs baskets. According to the monthly June bulletin (vol. 207) by Zamstats, the inflation rate stood at 15.9% in June an increase of 3% from the month of February when it stood at 13.9%. Increase in prices of basic goods, however slight, has a critical impact on vulnerable households living on survival thresholds.

[2]https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/phocadownload/Monthly/2020

## - Access to other services

***Protection***

The pandemic has contributed to an increase in protection related concerns as confirmed by 18% of the respondents. Whereas the assessment did not determine the exact protection issues, this could be related to physical violence and psychosocial challenges associated with the pandemic.

About 29% recorded that access to protection services has deteriorated given the limited accessibility to Government, UNHCR and partner staff during the height of the pandemic in March to May 2020.

***WATSAN***

Despite the increased attention and focus on provision of water and sanitation services, only 14% of the respondents recorded that access to WATSAN services has improved while a majority 53% felt that there has been no change.

***Health***

Approximately 36% of the respondents indicated that access to health services has decreased. This is majorly attributed to fear of contracting the virus during visits to the local health centres. Some of the respondents e.g. in Lusaka have preferred to stay at home.

***Education***

Education is one of the sectors that was hugely impacted at the onset of the pandemic. As part of the containment measures, the Government closed all schools. Resultantly, 77% of the population feel that the education of their children has been hugely affected.

## 5. Recommendations

The survey also set to collect recommendations from/ record voices of respondents on how best the Government, UNHCR, UNDP, WFP and traditional/ non-traditional partners can support them to recover from the negative impact of the pandemic and thereby boost their livelihood strategies.

A new analysis released by the Center for Global Development, Refugees International, and the International Rescue Committee finds that only 7% of refugees work in the least impacted sectors, like education and public administration. COVID -19 has no doubt eroded the gains made by most households in meeting their daily needs amidst a receding economic situation. Savings have been depleted, social capitals have also been weakened; more households are becoming economically vulnerable.

Across the World, Governments have embarked on economic stimulus support package programmes aimed at cushioning its population from food insecurity, to boosting business recovery and recreation of job opportunities. Both fiscal and monetary measures are being employed.

Additionally, during a World Bank facilitated webinar on the '*The Graduation Approach is an effective approach for livelihoods recovery''*, https://live.worldbank.org/coronavirus-safety-nets-and-jobs?cid=ecr_fb_worldbank_en_EXTP', the Bretton Wood Institution (BWI), through its Social Protection Director, Michal Rutkowski, in reference to actions needed to help vulnerable populations recover from the pandemic, opined that "*what they first need is cash, and then on the longer term they need economic inclusion packages. This is our recommendation to maintain employability of informal workers. This is the approach called the Graduation Approach*".

Similarly, an overwhelming **83% of the respondents** provided suggestions aimed at financial assistance to buy food, pay rent, support recovery of businesses and provision of agricultural inputs for engagement in the next farming season considering that current harvests will be strained with current household needs. Specifically, 52% requested for financial assistance to meet basic needs and capital for their businesses, 20% requested for agricultural inputs and 11 % requested for other related livelihoods support such as the need for Government to ease COVID related / movement restrictions.

Given the huge impact of the pandemic on the livelihoods of urban based population such a Lusaka, this survey recommends prioritised attention to population of concern in Lusaka, Meheba and Mayukwayukwa. Nevertheless, this does not negate the need for prioritising support to population in Mantapala.

Given the nature of the survey, *rapid*, not all critical socio-economic indicators were captured. Resultantly UNHCR has presented strong recommendation for the inclusion of the refugee hosting regions as part of the target locations for the planned Government led COVID - 19 Socio- economic impact assessment. The assessment is being supported by the UN System in Zambia, led by UNDP.