



UYDEL Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation

## **UYDEL RESPONSE TOWARDS GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND ALCOHOL ABUSE DURING THE LOCKDOWN**

### **Background:**

The COVID 19 pandemic globally has had a devastating negative impact especially in low income countries like Uganda who have no welfare system and medical care is wanting. Families and children in the city were caught off-guard as Government struggled to draw a strategy to deal with the pandemic both at medical and social behavioral level. Governments declared lockdown and everything stood at stand still. The initial 14 days of lock down appeared manageable, then 21 and another 21 then things become worse. Children and their families depending on small informal business closed, capital eaten up and didn't know what to happen next. We saw an increased in enforcing the lockdown and stay at home policies.

We received distress calls from some our 1,500 young people we serve daily in our drop in centers that life had become unbearable, there was a lot of hunger, and some violence was inflicted on children. Children trying to cope in the pandemic were far worse off and some taken play by the exploiters in the name of giving food (exchange for sex). There was a spike and increase of sexual exploitation and abuse of children in the informal settlement and slums. Gladly we requested for support from OAK Foundation, who responded positively to this emergency to assist and help over 1500 children in Kampala city who were scattered in the city.

UYDEL received USD \$ 25,000 from OAK Foundation towards support for procurement and distribution of food relief and other basic necessities to young people to contribute to their welfare and also prevent infections of COVID 19 in the communities. It's worth noting that most of the young girls and boys are no longer working due to COVID-19 pandemic outbreak lockdown especially those that were supporting themselves for a living and also those that were supporting their families. This has raised the poverty levels of vulnerable young men and women in their households making their feeding and survival difficult. In addition to that, those that were also supported by their parents/guardians are also no longer working and in order to support their life continuity and also reduce on young people's susceptibility to violence.

**UYDEL Response:** With support from our donors, we have put together hygiene basket composed of wash stands with buckets, soap and Dettol, with informational brochures that were distributed through our networks and with our partners in urban communities, and in support of local government leadership. We are mobilizing and supporting youth in our networks who know how to sew to make artisanal face masks that can be made available to the wider community on sale at reasonable cost.



UYDEL Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation



Figure 1: Face mask making by UYDEL beneficiaries

In these few weeks we have seen families living in extreme poverty being hit even harder by the crisis as prices for basic food items and supplies skyrocket. We are lobbying our networks for support and once this is realised then we plan to provide these families with additional cash subsidies to help keep food on the table. For homeless people and children this is worse. The UYDEL communication and M&E team has worked on critical messages to share as the risk for violence and exploitation of women and children - especially girls – increases significantly in times of crisis. These messages will be shared on community radio, on Whatsapp networks, by text messaging and other ways UYDEL usually communicate.

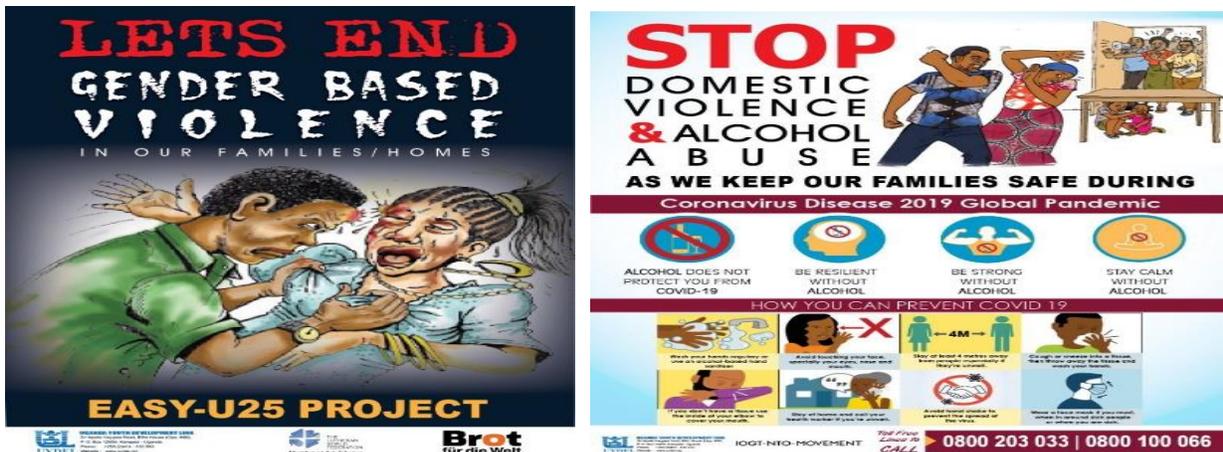


Figure 2 some of the messages compiled to end GBV and Alcohol abuse during COVID 19

**Supporting Joint Response Efforts:** We know that together we are stronger, and so the team is working closely with local authorities, community surveillance teams, the COVID-19 Response Task Forces, and other actors to coordinate response efforts in order to avoid duplication and make sure the most vulnerable receive help especially with the food portions being distributed by the Government officials.

Working with **IOGT –NTO East Africa** we have agreed to adjust the activities and increase our messages on how Alcohol affects immunity as well how gender based violence has escalated. We



**UYDEL** Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation

intend to increase our dialogues within Nansana communities via whats app platform, zoom meetings and media discussions. There appears to be an increase in drinking alcohol to deal with stress, violence has increased in families, though petty crime appears to be low.

**Plan International** has also as an emergency agreed to adjust the quarterly plans to include Payment of salaries for 28 staff and artisans for 3 months; Provision of Psychosocial support services and Temporary Shelter to Young people at the Masooli Centre and support to UYDEL drop-in centres; Support to Slum youth who have not been working to boost their business and support towards food and other basic items.

**Lutheran World Federation** has agreed an adjustment in some items of the budget to support and provide food rations and emergency support for vulnerable slum youth and their families under the project (food support, cash transfers/ cash subsidies to youth and families; fuel costs to support travels and purchases and distribution of supplies and equipment.

UYDEL is more worried about COVID 19 because many families are likely to become financially vulnerable and fail to meet the basic needs of children such as school fees and children are likely to drop out of schools. Many young people may fail to adjust and cope while others may seek out support from charities and NGOs for new vocational and survival skills to recover from the negative consequences of the pandemic. UYDEL has worked with **OAK Foundation through its emergency funding** to provide some support to mitigate the negative impact and distress that may cause long term impact on children. They provided food rations and emergency support for vulnerable slum youth and their families.

### **DISTRIBUTION AND MITIGATION ACTIVITY**

Government required that whoever wanted to give food had to inform the national/district Covid 19 Task forces (TSF) to seek permission and also follows the SOP. UYDEL had to declare and seek permission from the districts TSF which was granted After UYDEL procured the food from our prequalified lists. The social workers using the attendance log sheets started by calling young people individually through mobile phone) to report at their respective youth centres in person so as they could receive their food relief and other necessities that were generously donated to them by the OAK Foundation. Each young person was called individually to come to the center alone to receive the items with the purpose of maintaining standard operating procedures of social distancing to avoid large crowds at the youth centre as directed by the Government. On reporting to the youth centre, each youth was directed to wash their hands thoroughly before entry and later signed on forms as an approval of receiving their relief. Upon receiving the relief items, the young person acknowledges receipt and goes home immediately.

This relief food comprised on 5kgs of maize flour, 3kgs of rice, 3kgs of beans, 60ml of hand sanitizer, 2 bars of soap, and 1 face mask. *As part of skills building and empowering our young girls with livelihood skills, the young girls under rehabilitation were given an opportunity to learn how to sew face masks of various shapes and*



**UYDEL** Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation

*sizes under the guidance of the tailoring instructor.* These Facemasks are now mandatory and required to use in public place at all times even in the lockdown which ends 2nd June 2020

We are happy to report that UYDEL working together with the Kampala Capital City Authority Division Taskforces and we were granted authorization from the respective Resident City Commissioners of the five divisions of Kampala.

**Table showing numbers served as of 19th May 2020**

Name of Center	Girls	Boys	Total
Banda	132	68	200
Makindye	168	46	214
Nateete	96	62	158
Nakulabye	88	58	146
Bwaise	140	60	200
Masooli	70	30	100
	<b>694</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>1018</b>

\*|The above centers and figures covered are preliminary as we aim to complete the distribution soon



*Above: 100 boxes of bar soap, samples of alcohol based hand sanitisers ready for distribution to the centers, and food ready for distribution*

**Experiences and Lessons from the distribution of food relief items:**

As of 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the President has extended the lock down by issuing stay home orders for another 21 days which obviously has a negative effect on the economic survival and livelihood of the young people. The distribution of food rations came at the right time because many children and young people especially girls were exposed to sexual violence and abuse including commercial sex and transactional sex in order to survive and meet the basic needs of their families/caregivers who are unemployed due to closure of business in the lock down. It has been revealed that even the children



**UYDEL** Transforming society where young people live a good quality and life free from exploitation

who had been rehabilitated and in the process of recovery from sexual exploitation were on the verge of relapsing back to illicit activities in order to provide resources to their families. The young people who were previously gainfully employed before the lock down and those who had business enterprises have collapsed which affects the livelihood of the families.

On the other hand, some boys have been subjected to child labour and harsh working conditions. Since they are desperate, they move in the community looking for jobs to work at construction sites, fetching water among others. Some men have abandoned their responsibilities and left their families because they don't have any money to feed their children. Parents/guardians and beneficiaries were grateful and appreciative for the support given to them since most of them were dying of hunger. This was expressed through phone calls to social workers appreciating the food packages received. They narrated that they had taken long without eating three meals a day.

The problem is still enormous as most families lack what to eat in the poverty stricken slum communities. The neighbors of the beneficiary households also made an appeal for support towards food because hunger does not discriminate. There have been many instances where former UYDEL beneficiaries also wanted to benefit from the relief items but they not considered because we concentrated on the current beneficiaries being served by UYDEL before the lock down.

**Conclusion:** This has so far been a successful activity since many young people have benefitted from the relief items. We still have some leftover food to reach some more young people. However, many numbers of youths are still unreached and they need food now since the lock down has been extended for another 21 days. Many will not start immediately any enterprises to improve their survival and coping. We anticipate many parents will not be able to support their children in the immediate future and many children are likely to be enticed into sexual exploitation, homelessness.

The way forward goals are to reach 1,300 (900 girls and 400 males) at UYDEL training centers and 9 city youth drop in centers. Vulnerable poor hit by pandemic as a short term measure to reduce trauma, dependency, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and violence and encourage recovery and also to build resilience and social capital for full recovery and reduce trauma and sexual exploitation.