

IICLD CROSS-POLLINATION DIGITAL SEMINAR SERIES JUNE 9, 2021

COVID-19 EMERGING ISSUES FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACIES

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AS A FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC DISTRESS DUE TO THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC



*Photo credit: Olga Shadura, IICLD
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Background

The novel Corona Virus disease or COVID-19, declared a pandemic on the 11 March 2020 by the World Health Organization, is one of the gravest challenges the world is facing at present. Containing the COVID-19 pandemic as well as addressing the fallout effects of the containment measures is now the undisputed top priority for all the countries in which ICLD is implementing International Training Programs (ITPs) and has ongoing Municipal Partnerships, as well as the wider international community.

Both central and local governments must remain committed to keeping their citizens and residents as safe as possible during this global experience. This safety extends beyond the primary public health concerns to include socioeconomic resilience. The pandemic has also created radical changes in the way people go about their daily lives.

It is therefore urgent and important for all ICLD ITP and MP stakeholders to clearly identify and adequately prepare to address the emerging realities precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic across all participating local democracies.

Women are disproportionately shouldering the burden of unpaid care and domestic work triggered by the lockdowns, and they are losing their livelihoods faster than men. The World Bank report 2020¹ indicate women constitute between 60 to 80 percent of the labor force in the global value chain for apparel. The volume of order cancellations in the apparel industry and the temporary closure of retail shops have resulted in factory shutdowns in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, negatively impacting women's jobs. Women in the tourism and hospitality sectors have faced similar challenges (World Bank and World Trade Organization 2020).

As an example; the UN study of April 2021², shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching and diverse effects on women and girls in East and Southern Africa, and will set back global efforts to achieve most gender-related SDG targets, especially those relating to SDG 3 and SDG 5. These among many findings inform the need to urgently ensure gender responsive budgeting for an equitable and inclusive economic recovery.

Main objective of the seminar series

To facilitate continuous structured learning, knowledge-sharing and exchange of practical experience among teams in ICLD's programs across the world in a deliberate effort to address key emerging issues and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The seminar was moderated by **Anne Scheffer Leander**, program officer at the ICLD and **Joseph Ossiya**, national mentor in Uganda. 67 participants from 13 countries joined the seminar online.

¹ World Bank and World Trade Organization. 2020. Women and Trade: The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality. Washington, DC: World Bank.

² Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in East and Southern Africa-UN 2021

Session I: Introduction

Welcome remarks by Johan Lilja, Secretary General, ICLD

Johan Lilja welcomed everyone to the seminar while stressing that full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to build a strong vibrant democracy. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the conditions for democracy while having an unproportionally negative impact on women. The voices and input from all participants at the seminar are therefore important to find new solutions. The participants are in the centre of knowledge sharing.

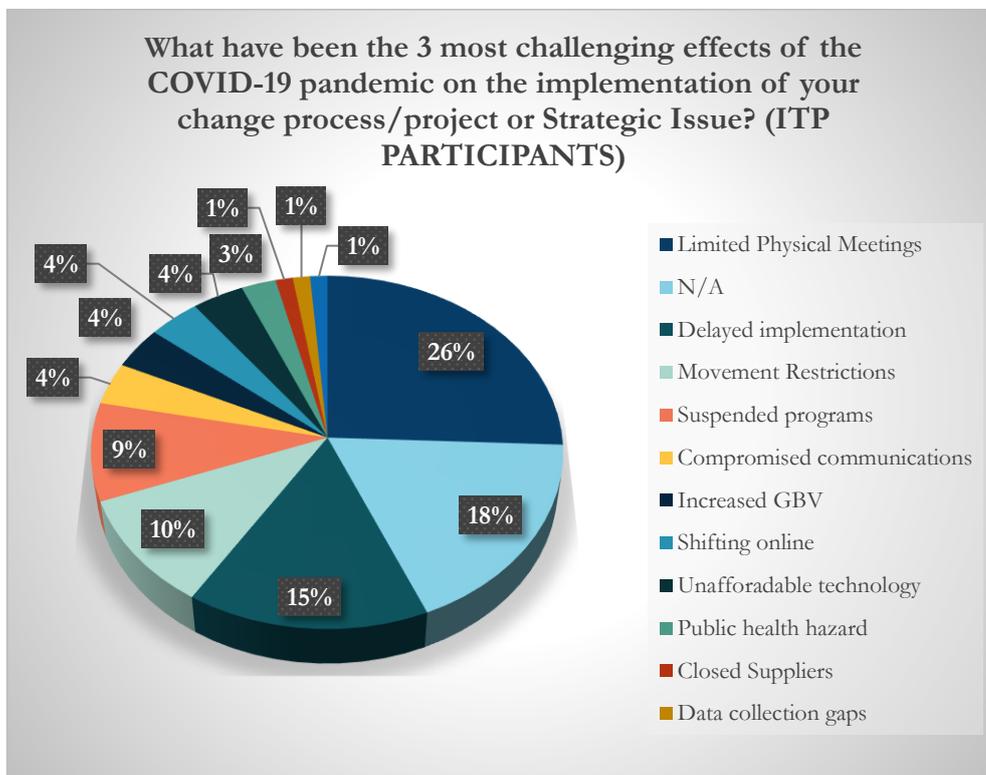
Anne Scheffer Leander presented the intention of the seminar, which is to give input and share insights. To cross-pollinate among peers and colleagues to find new solutions to move forward.

Expectations shared from the participants

- To learn about gender equality and experience from other countries, and how they deal with the effects of COVID-19 – and especially how to empower women
- Learn how to budget for gender specific activities and gender mainstreaming activities
- Get more insights on gender responsive budgeting across the globe to enable to think globally and act locally
- Learn about women participation in inclusive budgeting and how women should position themselves to ensure that they are not left out in these important discussions

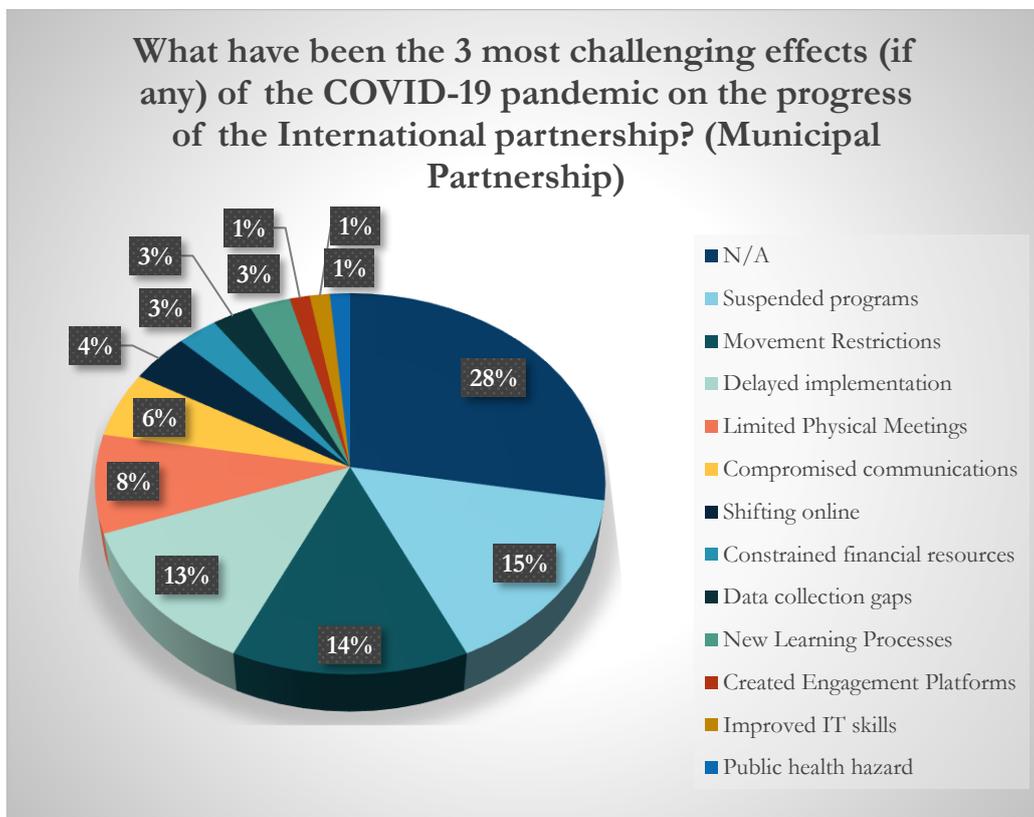
Survey results

Joseph Ossiya shared the results from the pre-seminar survey with 95 respondents.



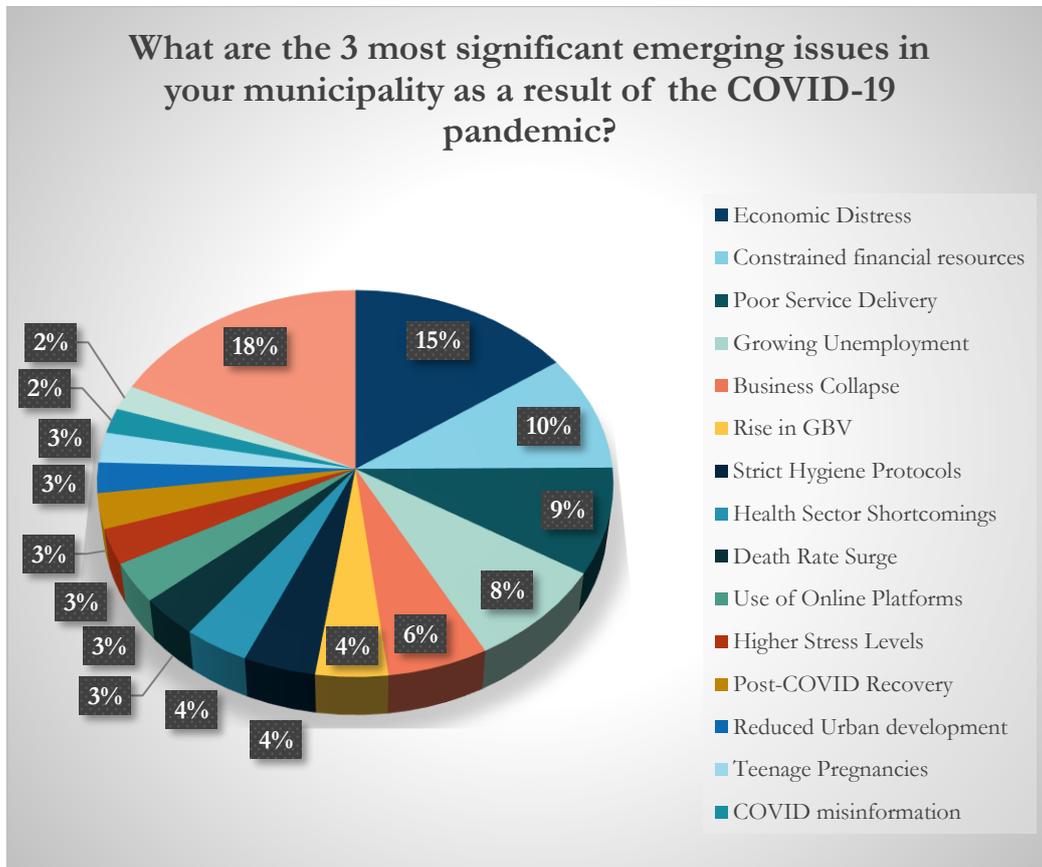
Highlights

The results reveal that Limitations on physical meetings (26%), delayed implementation of change process activities (15%) and restrictions on movement (10%) have been the most common effects on the progress of the participants’ change processes. However, it must be noted that 18% of the participants’ responses were non-committal on the effect of the pandemic on their change processes. Unfortunately, there is no certain way to interpret this 2nd most common response. Interesting to note, public health concerns only accounted for 3% of the results while the technology-associated effects accounted for only a combined 8% of the responses. Programs suspended or discontinued due to COVID 19 stand at 9% of the responses.



Highlights

The results reveal that suspended programs (15%), movement restrictions (14%) and delayed implementation of planned activities (10%) have been the most common effects on the progress of the international partnership. It is of interest that 28% of the participants’ responses were non-committal on the effect of the pandemic on the international partnership.



Session II: COVID-19: Understanding the new normal, lighting up an uncertain future

Joseph Ossiya gave a presentation about:

- 1. A broad look at the gender and economic dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
The pandemic and the responses to limit the spread of the virus affect women more than men. The pandemic has made resources scarce. Equity refers to a fair distribution of output for the population. There is an overrepresentation of women in the sectors most affected by the pandemic and its responses. Moreover, gender-based violence is increasing when there is less mobility for citizens and more isolation.
- 2. Defining the key cross-cutting characteristics of the new normal**
Questions to think about: Who is setting the agenda in your municipality? Who is part of the process? We must have policies for the new normal, it requires to vision the future but act in the present.
- 3. Case Study: Emerging gender issues in Kumi district in Uganda**
Kumi district in Uganda was presented as a good example where the local authorities changed the perspective to be proactive about the crisis. For example, educating rural women to do online business when they cannot access local markets. It is important to create participation and involve women in the design and implementation of policies.

[Download the presentation here.](#)

Breakout session 1: How have you addressed the challenges of the new normal within you change processes?

Some key points from the discussion:

- Sharing information during COVID-19 is a challenge that was addressed by using PA system to disseminate information and using local radio stations where listeners can call in to ask questions.
- Increased cases of gender-based violence and lack of opportunities to report was addressed by creating small groups to discuss these specific challenge
- Monitoring and evaluation are difficult with restricted movements: some used social media where local communities that send videos and pictures to update.
- Lock-down was challenging for small-scale business: some provided online services, network, and education for women on how to use online business.

Session III: Adopting innovative responses and implementation strategies

Survey on emerging gender issues precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[See the results here.](#)

Breakout session 2: What are the possible responses to the emerging gender issues that have been shared? And that you have in your group?

Some reflections shared:

- A challenge shared was increased gender-based violence, and that the police face problems of reaching areas in time due to insufficient transport; it is possible to report to the police but for the police to reach the place in time is challenging. The municipality could provide special transport assistance.
- Another challenge is increased unplanned pregnancies – there is a need to ensure distribution of effective family planning
- In Tanzania, there is a policy that states 10% of the revenue should be targeted specifically to women youths and people with disabilities. This policy was not implemented. However, the COVID-19 situation created incentives for implementing this policy as the issues for these groups became more visible.
- Instead of closing down markets, other measurements can be taken, such as wearing masks, washing hands, keeping distance etc., this will help smallholder business often owned by women.

Case study: Responding to COVID-19 through gender Responsive Budgeting in Local democracies: A brief case study of Amuru district in Uganda by team Amuru

The Team from Amuru Uganda presented their challenges, strategies to face those challenges and key learnings regarding Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) during COVID-19:

- GRPB is fundamental for responding to economic distress situations in local democracies.
- GRPB advances holistic community empowerment and provides a basis for more successful IGA interventions.
- Strong partnerships & coordination mechanisms are key tools for implementing GRPBs

They emphasised the importance of partnering with other actors when working with limited resources and to intervene without deepening dependency. [Download the presentation here.](#)

Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting: A gender mainstreaming approach to promote local democracies in the new normal by Ong Bee Leng, CEO, Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC), Malaysia.

Ong Bee Leng presented the Penang approach to gender responsive budgeting that takes on a holistic approach acknowledging the top-down approach to gender responsive budgeting the bottom-up approach of participatory budgeting. The method promotes good governance and gender equality. It looks into diversity and embrace principle of inclusion, transparency and accountability. She presented some examples of projects where the approach was applied: housing projects, public spaces, participatory budgeting etc. In these projects nearly all solutions came from within the community, showing that the community has the solutions but not the voice. Furthermore, Ong Bee Leng shared the strategies and key learnings from the projects. [These can be found in the presentation here.](#)

Session IV: Taking action: Analysing emerging gender mainstreaming priorities

Recognizing opportunities and threats to gender mainstreaming in local democracies in the new normal by Lauren Paremoer, senior lecturer, the Political Studies Department at the University of Cape Town

Lauren Paremoer encouraged everyone to think about the question “what are the biggest opportunity and threat for gender mainstreaming as a result of the pandemic?”

The pandemic affects people differently but can also create opportunities. The key messages are:

- Opportunity: COVID-19 revealed the unpaid work and the heavy burden women take.
- Threat: we see the value of women work but do not respond accordingly.

[Download the presentation here](#) for concrete recommendations provided on the last slide. What is not captured in the slide is the need for to have a conversation about how the workload in households can be more equally distributed between men and women.

Survey on emerging opportunities and threats to gender mainstreaming in local democracies precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
[See the results here.](#)

Lauren Paremoer suggested that one way to work with existing resources is to partner with the communities and getting the communities involved, this will also create ownership. Municipalities can also be flexible about land-use providing small land to communities for farming projects, communal space and safe environment.

Breakout session 3: What kind of actions or responses can we take on the threats and opportunities that has been identified?

Some reflections shared:

- It is important to be inclusive in decision making processes and try to reach everyone
- Education for is important – getting the children to stay in school and educate on the effects of early marriage

Fostering sharing and learning teams by Demere Kitunga, CEO, Readership for Learning and Development

Demere Kitunga invited everyone to reflect on language and what gets lost in translation. She shared her experiences as a storyteller and working with strengthening feminist storytelling. The pandemic required rethinking ways to work, some examples are:

- Mobile market app for small-holder women
- Solidary hotline to address health issues and gender-based violence
- Collection of stories of resilient women organisations and activists during covid – to learn from

She shared her reflections on working with online platforms in four questions and thoughts:

- *Whose story need to be heard (and why should we be interested)?*
- *How do we navigate overlapping agendas?*

In many networks, a lot of work is done in the local context., but problems manifest in different ways in different contexts and it is always important to consider the local context

- *How do we mitigate the digital divide?*

Digital platforms allow to be part of a global village but require access to technologies. Digital platforms therefore need to be combined with physical platforms.

- *Media and curatorial consideration*

Need to work across media to access platforms, as well as consider gatekeepers

[Download the presentation here.](#)

Key conclusions from the seminar

- It is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies to tackle the virus have affected women and men differently, where women are more affected
- Increased gender-based violence is a stressing issue in many of the participant's countries/municipalities. Local authorities can provide support groups, shelter and to make it easier to report and for the police to follow up
- Lock-down affected smallholder business usually owned by women. Local authorities can try to use methods to limit the spread of the virus such as providing opportunities to wash hands, provide masks, keeping distance etc. instead of closing down markets. They can also enable access to other markets by providing education and for women to use online business, invest in internet connection etc.
- Local governments can mobilise resources by partnering with other organisations and involve the communities.
- The pandemic can create opportunities for change as it makes visible many of the gender-related issues