

The impact of Covid-19 on the poorest

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IT TAKES

Research Paper 5
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Summary

As part of a multi-country initiative to examine the impact of Covid-19 and related policy responses on the Extreme Poor, Concern Worldwide Sierra Leone have tracked changes in the lives and livelihoods of a number of programme participants between June and September 2020. While knowledge levels about Covid-19, its causes and symptoms remain high, people continue to face a variety of challenges in adopting the guidelines put in place, such as being able to pay for facemasks. Initial high levels of fear associated with Covid-19 appear to have declined over time, and the disease is perceived as being less of a threat by some interviewed, reducing their incentive to follow the guidelines. Already difficult economic conditions were compounded by the early restrictions introduced to address the spread of Covid-19 and while improvements have been seen in recent months, food prices remain high, partially attributable to increases in transport costs, while the environment for selling goods remains challenging. When added to regular seasonal problems, earning a livelihood continues to be a struggle for many of the poorest. The most significant event for many of those interviewed was the lifting of travel restrictions allowing them to trade again in a greater variety of markets. Respondents spoke of reductions in the quantity and quality of food consumed which in turn will lead to negative impacts on the nutritional status of children. Initial fear of attending health centres appears to be dissipating and the re-opening of schools for exam grade children has been well received, though this is tempered by the long-term impact on children's education due to the extended closure of other classes. Notwithstanding, we find a generally positive attitude towards the action taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Sierra Leone. Support to the poorest has been generally *ad hoc* in nature; and while many have heard of the plans of the National Commission of Social Action, nobody interviewed had benefitted from this, causing some questions around the fairness of how this is being implemented.

Introduction

Following the rapid escalation of the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in early 2020, it was declared a public health emergency of international concern at the end of January, and a Pandemic on 11 March, by the WHO¹. While globally cases have passed the 45 million mark, as of 12 October, there were 2,306 confirmed cases in Sierra Leone and 72 deaths² albeit with a general sense these figures may underestimate the scale of the pandemic. (Figure 1 shows the cumulative cases and deaths since April).

The Sierra Leone Government has implemented what is generally perceived as a well-organised national response. A 12-month State of emergency was declared effective from the 25 March, schools were officially closed at the end of that month, and other actions included a series of short three-day lockdowns since early April, limitations on inter-district travel (subsequently lifted), a curfew, and the compulsory wearing of facemasks

since 1 June. On 10 July, as part of a partial lifting of restrictions, the president announced that places of worship could reopen and from 13 July, that air travel could resume. Exam classes returned to school on 1 July for four weeks, and schools reopened in early October 2020. Current restrictions are not considered overly stringent compared to other countries³.

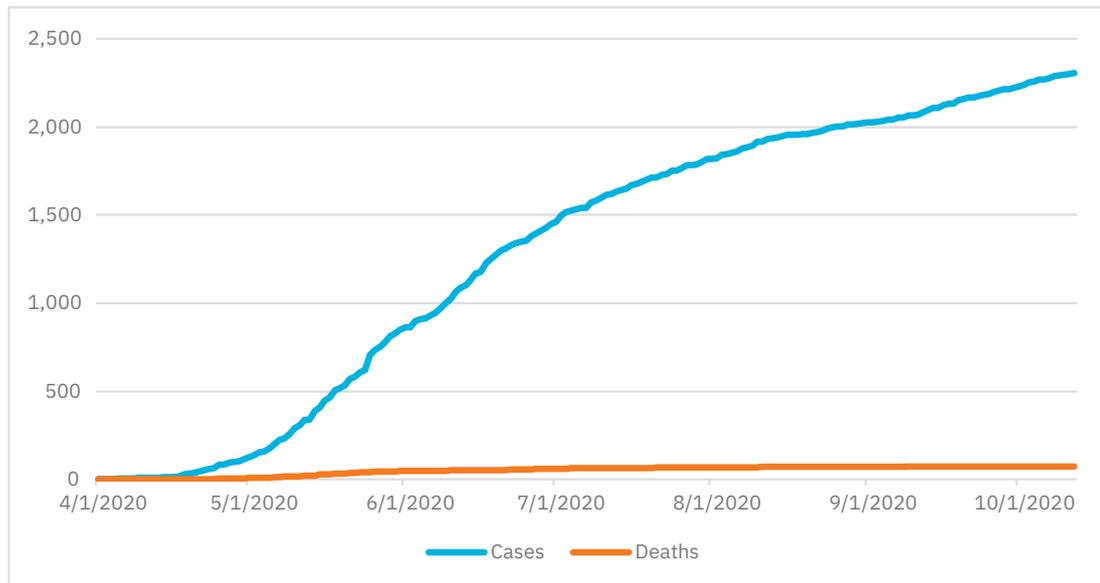


Figure 1 Number of confirmed cases and deaths from Covid-19 in Sierra Leone

However, the pandemic is considered to be compounding an economic situation already severely affected by currency depreciation and rampant inflation, with a drop in external and internal demand curtailing economic activity, and containment measures disrupting domestic supply chains and leading to bottlenecks in the transportation of agricultural products. Prices of major food commodities have risen well above their long-term average, and a potential reduction in domestic agricultural production, given a below-average rainfall forecast, in the coming season could lead to further food price increases⁴.

In this Brief, we examine how the response to Covid-19 in Sierra Leone has affected some of the poorest households in terms of their food security, livelihoods, access to basic health services and the longer-term impacts on children’s education in locations where Concern Worldwide works.

Methodology

Face to face interviews were conducted with seven Concern Worldwide programme participants (three men and four women) across three locations – the predominantly rural areas of Tonkolili and Port Loko and the urban area of Freetown. A first round of data was collected between 29 June and 13 July, with a second round of interviews undertaken between the 13 and 17 July and a third between the third and 18 August. The fourth and final round of data collection took place between the first and eighth of September. This was designed to allow for the identification of major changes and challenges respondents were experiencing because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures put in place to contain its spread. This data is supplemented with price information on foodstuff collected from five markets in Tonkolili. Respondents were aged between 30 and ‘over 50’. Household composition remained consistent across the earlier rounds of data collection,

possibly reflective of travel restrictions, with some changes observed in August (when a number of relatives joined the urban household, and when an adult male migrated from one of the households in Port Loko) and September (when an adult child re-joined one of the households in Port Loko).

Findings

Amongst the people interviewed there was a reasonably good understanding of the symptoms of Covid-19 and how it is transmitted, even if there was less clarity on whether it can be cured⁵. A number of respondents attributed their knowledge to information campaigns run by Concern and other agencies, whether through community sensitisation meetings or megaphone messaging in the community, along with radio jingles. There were, however, variations in terms of the level of fear associated with the messaging and the extent to which people continued to see Covid-19 as a threat.

The majority of those interviewed spoke about how the early messages frightened them, but for many as they received more information through community sensitisation sessions the level of fear receded. One man described how initially *“as a parent and husband I was worried about how my kids that stay at home would abide to the precaution measure and also how my wife being a trader at the market could prevent getting affected”*. Another in Tonkolili explained how *“[previously] there was this fear in us when they checked our temperature at the checkpoint during the lockdown which stopped us travelling”*. A small number of people who were better informed about Covid-19 from the start of the pandemic, through their engagement in various community groups, described much lower initial levels of fear. Those with more restricted access to formal information, but who continue to be exposed to second hand news stories and reports from elsewhere, were more likely to be anxious. As one woman who falls into this category described *“I was beginning to have peace of mind on the presence of the disease, that it is fading away, but now my fear has revived”*.

By August, the responses suggested that for many Covid-19 was no longer seen as a threat, with one woman in Tonkolili observing that *“the number of Covid-19 cases are reducing that is why they lifted the inter district lock down and now we have access to go to the luma [periodic] market”*. By September, most of those interviewed identified how there was no new information on the subject, even though one respondent explained how this is still prominent in the media and how recently she had *“heard about two new Covid-19 cases in the country. I had wondered about the presence of Covid-19 up until then. It was news to me because I do not possess a radio of my own.”*

People were also asked whether they were able to follow the guidelines provided. Most were able to do so; many have installed hand-washing stations at the household, while others had these as part of the response to the Ebola outbreak (2014-16), and were practising social distancing and avoiding large-scale gathering. In some cases, Concern has provided basic materials, such as Jerry Cans for water and face masks that are helping people to follow the guidelines. One woman from Port Loko described how she has changed her routine and has been *“washing my hands regularly as well as my children. I do not allow my children to mingle or go outside in the public and I use face mask”*.

“Even when watching movies we ensure social distancing, the social distancing is part of us now and sometimes we joke over it”

(Female Respondent, Freetown, July 2020)

However, where material such as face masks have not been provided, people are forced to make choices in terms of what they will spend their money on, as one older woman in Port Loko highlighted she has to “*prioritize her daily sustenance rather than buying a face mask*”. A further challenge noted in the third round of data collection, in August, was a degree of frustration creeping in to responses, one woman in Port Loko identified how the restrictions and behaviour changes were “*becoming boring*”. Respondents were also asked their opinion of those who regularly wear facemasks, with the responses being overwhelmingly positive, considering those wearing masks to “*serve as an example for other in the community for safe practice*”.

Impact on Livelihoods

As most of those interviewed live in rural areas, unsurprisingly farming is the main livelihood source (for four people), albeit often working as labourers for others rather than farming their own land. One person who identified as a farmer also earns an income as a teacher. The other major source of livelihood is petty trading (for three people), while one respondent earned enough to survive working as a volunteer for a variety of NGOs. However, nobody does only one activity, for instance those who are farmers sell their produce in the market.

In the first round of interviews, people particularly highlighted how they faced challenges in terms of inter-district movement and being able to buy and sell food, with produce being left to rot, and traders who came to the area previously no longer doing so. One man in Tonkolili highlighted that “*business people used to come to our community but now this is not allowed*”. This situation had improved through July, with one respondent in the same area highlighting how he is now able to “*transport our harvested crops (sweet potatoes and Corn) and our palm nut that has being processed into palm oil to other communities (Freetown) for good sale prices*”.

By August, some respondents were able to identify further improvements, with one man in Tonkolili describing how “*now the traders come to our community to sell, they bring plenty of 50kg bags of rice to sell. Before we used to buy a cup of rice in the community at le 2,000 but now because these traders are coming to our community to sell rice we buy 3 cups of rice at le 5,000*”. In September, one of the women interviewed in this district identified a further improvement and how there had been “*a little change since it is the harvesting season for groundnut and corn in our communities we sell some of the harvest crops and feed on some of the yield.so relatively things are better*”.

However, some of those interviewed had not seen any improvement since June, with regular seasonal hardships being compounded by the Covid-19 restrictions. One woman in Tonkolili told how “*Things are not getting better, they are becoming worse at this time of the year, and even during normal circumstances it is always difficult for us, especially during the rainy season. [In the dry season]...I make my way [prepare] for this difficult time but the unfortunate part of it was this time we had the Covid-19 in our country.*”

Those involved as sellers faced similar restrictions in terms of movement and being able to transport goods between districts, while the curfew has meant that those who sell foodstuffs in the urban areas, where the peak time for business is in the two hours before midnight, have been forced to cease trading. Again, some respondents highlighted a small improvement through July and August, though as one trader reported there is *“still a low turnout of customers”*. Another challenge for those who sell is that they have been increasingly forced to provide credit to their customers, as one woman described she *“produces this soap which I give on credit to neighbours and other persons around. With the bad creditors, I barely use the income to buy garri and other condiments to sustain the household.”* This woman, further explained that the best she can hope for is to receive payment after two weeks.

Changing Prices and Access to Food

All of those spoken to say that their access to food had decreased over the early months of the interviews, but that there had been some improvements in August and September for those who produce their own food. Those who were net purchasers of food continued to highlight challenges they faced in accessing enough to eat. This was generally described in terms of a reduction in the quantity of rice cooked.

Respondents clearly attributed this to increases in price – in June, one woman in Tonkolili said the increase for 50kg of rice was from Le150,000 to Le200,000 (though others spoke of it being as high as Le270,000, and by September, some were highlighting a price of Le300,000 per bag). Other key foodstuffs, such as fish (from Le 10,000 per pile to Le 15,000 per pile), palm oil (from Le 1,000 to Le 2,500) and pepper (from Le 1,500 per cup to Le 3,000 – though one woman in Freetown said it had risen as high as Le8,000) were also reported to have increased in price. In some instance, people also highlighted how certain goods, such as fish in Port Loko, were not available in the local market.

“Normally life is difficult during the rainy season, but some commodities like pepper are plentiful in supply, but this time it is worse”

(Female Respondent, Freetown, August 2020)

Respondents clearly blamed the inter-district travel restrictions, which made it costly to transport goods, with price increases passed on to the end consumer. In the first round of interviews, respondents also highlighted that where goods were available they were old stocks and not fresh. While the inter district travel restrictions have been lifted, this has not automatically translated into a reversal of price increases. As one respondent in Port Loko highlighted in mid July when discussing the price of pepper *“sellers said that, they too have been buying it at a very high cost from the producers in addition to moving the commodities through restrictions and checks from security officers coupled with the higher transportation cost”*. Some respondents were hopeful that as *“traders dealing with rice can now move with their goods from one community to the other for sale”* prices would start to fall, though little evidence of this happening could be drawn from the interviews.

Concern has also collected the price of a variety of foodstuffs in five markets in Tonkolili (Makonkori, Matotoka, Mabontor, Bumbuna and Bendugu) since the start of the year, which tells a similar story. The following figure (see Figure 2) shows how the price of local rice (per cup) has risen consistently from the start of the year (from an average of Le1,300 in

January to Le2,200 in September). The price of Gari reached a high in March (of Le1,600) remaining high in May and June (at Le1,500) before dropping in price in recent months to Le1,200. Palm oil showed an early peak in March, as the inter district travel restrictions were put in place, dropping slightly thereafter before starting an upward trend that means it is considerably more expensive in September than January. While some of this is seasonal, the spike in March can potentially be attributed to the travel restrictions⁶.

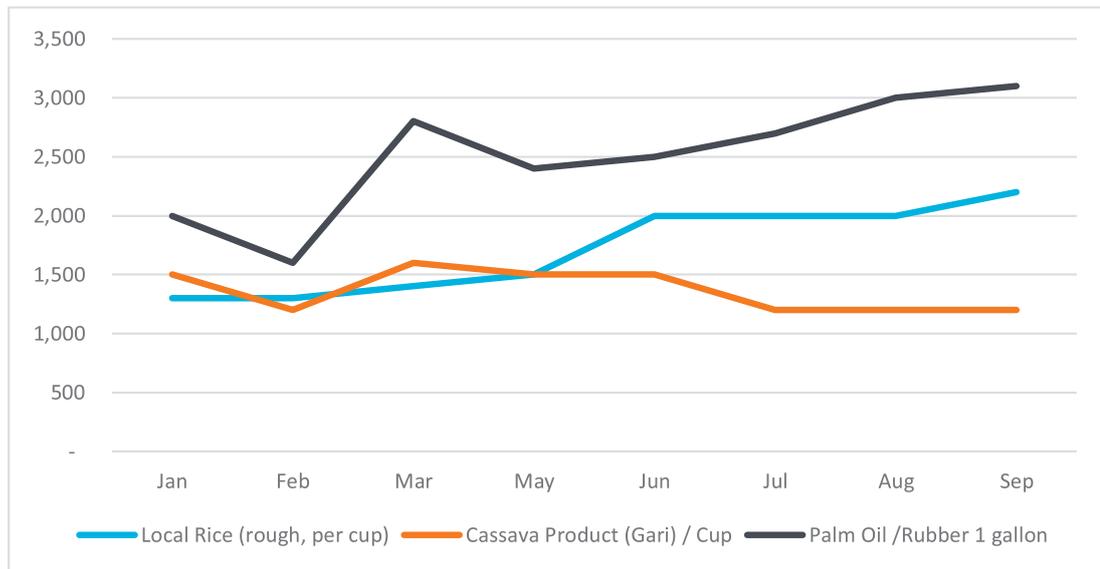


Figure 2: Price changes of three key foodstuffs in five markets in Tonkolili, Sierra Leone (Jan to Sept)

These changes in food availability have the potential to translate into changes in nutritional status over time. One woman in Port Loko explained how her “*children are fast losing weight due to insufficient food to eat*”. To a certain extent, this is already being seen in terms of the number of admissions of children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) recorded by the HMIS in the four district where Concern works (Port Loko, Tonkolili, Western Area Rural (WAR) and Western Area Urban (WAU)).

Accessing health Care

Respondents were also asked whether Covid-19 and the lockdown were affecting people’s decision to attend health facilities. Initial responses to this were mixed, with some people quite comfortable attending, though others highlighted how they had seen that “*In the community, the majority are afraid to visit the facility for fear of catching the Covid-19*”. In late June one woman had described how in Tonkolili “*the lockdown affected my ANC Visit I was supposed to visit the hospital at that time but because of the lockdown I was unable to go*”, further probing revealed that this was because the town chief had asked everyone to stay at home. In July, one man in Tonkolili highlighted how his “*wife’s elder brother was seriously sick we wanted to go with him to the hospital but he refused he said if we go with him to the hospital he will contract the Covid-19 in the hospital*”.

This has had some tragic consequences, with a number of respondents in Tonkolili reporting they had heard of people who had lost their lives because of not seeking medical assistance. By August, due in part to a reaction to these deaths and a reduction in the levels of fear it was possible to identify a greater sense of comfort in attending health services. The woman who was previously unable to attend her ANC appointments highlighted

how now “every month I go to the hospital for my ANC”. By September, one of the men interviewed described how he took his son to hospital, suffering from Malaria, explaining, “People are not frightened to visit the health facility anymore. Initially there was low hospital attendance but now there are sick people visiting the centre especially during the rains.” Another went on to describe how he felt “that the hospital is the safest place to visit if you are sick”.

Throughout, trust in those working in the health facilities emerged as one of the reasons people have attended. One woman described how she was comfortable allowing their family members attend the health facilities, but that this was because she knew the staff in the facility, and that “she would refuse any vaccination campaign from medical staff that she is not familiar with”. Across all rounds of data collection respondents spoke positively of their interactions with staff at the health facilities.

The reluctance to attend facilities in the earlier part of the pandemic are consistent with figures produced from Sierra Leone’s HMIS (Health Management Information System) in Concern’s four programme areas. This showed attendance at health facilities for a variety of services in March and April to be considerably below the average for the same months in the previous two years, this is despite the January and February figures being above the average for 2018 and 2019. For Ante Natal Care (ANC1), this figure was 8% below last years, for facility deliveries it was 12% lower, for Post Natal Care (PNC1) it was 21% lower and for measles vaccinations it was 30% lower in April, and 14% lower in March.

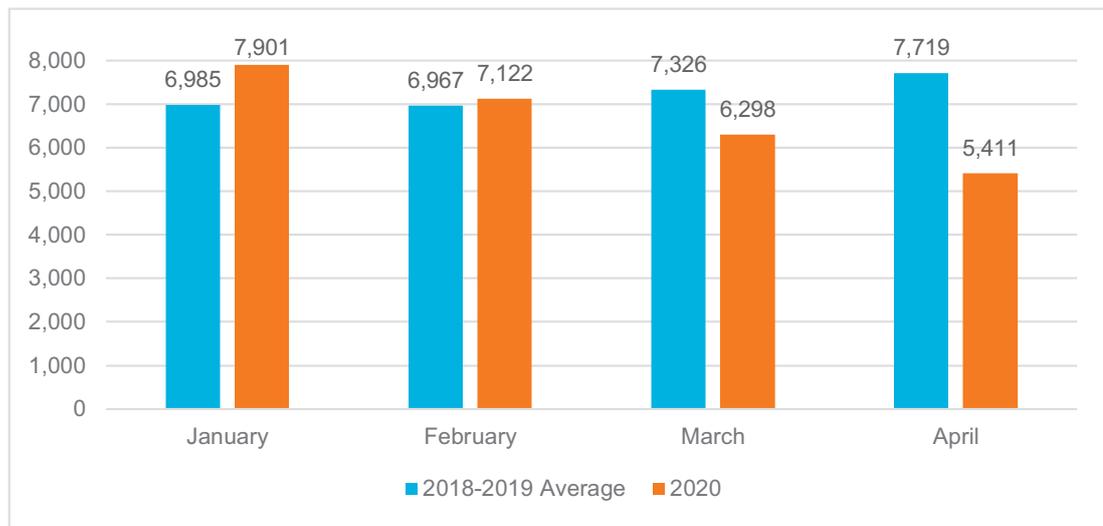


Figure 3 Measles 1 Vaccinations, 2020 Vs average for 2018 and 2019

Source: HMIS Data, Port Loko, Tonkolili, WAR and WAU

Education and Children

One of the biggest changes between the first two rounds of data collection was the reopening of schools for children who were scheduled to take exams. However, as the final round of interviews were undertaken in early September a large number of children were still out of school, with an expectation that all would be able to return in October. While the opening of schools for exam classes was generally welcomed as a means of allowing children progress to their next level of education, those spoken to did not identify whether they expected the gap in their access to schooling would have a negative impact on their ability to perform in the exams. The following statement from one of the men interviewed in Tonkolili in August

was illustrative of the responses received *“The reopening of school has impacted our kids positively as they are all getting to engage with school work and they are more occupied with preparing for the exams.”* Another man identified how *“my children have started going to school again and I am no longer worried because I know where they are now”*.

However, respondents did identify that the impact of school closures has been deep and potentially long lasting. One woman in Port Loko highlighted how her *“children are just seated at home without having someone to take them for lessons which means they are losing their ideas”*, another man in Tonkolili highlighted how the closure of school has *“affected their education and the opportunity for them to learn new things”*.

Opportunities available to better off members of society to provide education for their children were not there for all, as one woman highlighted *“The kids have been forced to sit at home without attending school and not every parent is capable of affording a private teacher to tutor pupils”*. Similarly, a man in Tonkolili described how *“he cannot provide radio or internet for them to learn more.”* While carers encourage them to listen to the radio education programme, children have struggled to maintain their attention, as one woman highlighted they *“quit because they are hungry”*. One respondent in Freetown further identified how *“it is normally difficult to teach children when they are in the classroom with blackboards in front of them Radio learning is less effective”*. Parents have tried to support their children, but face challenges, one woman explained, *“I have been studying them with my little knowledge that I gained in class six as my highest education level”*.

The issue of pregnancy amongst teenage girls, attributed by respondents to them not being in school, was raised frequently by female respondents (men, even when probed, did not identify this as a major issue). One woman described the inequitable power relation between younger girls and older men, and how *“the girl child is vulnerable to [older] men who seek them out”*. Another woman highlighted how *“Parents fear their female daughter to be a victim of early teenage pregnancy ... once the caregiver goes out to make ends meet, the girl child will be persuaded by their male counterpart to engage in sexual activities”*. Another highlighted how she had not seen this yet, but expected it to be exposed over time.

Other Impacts

In terms of who felt the burden of Covid-19 related restrictions the most at household level, women clearly considered it was them; one woman in Port Loko highlighted how men *“try to go out and relax leaving the rest of the household members in a hungry state. Women are left with the children with plenty of questions to answer from the kids such as “grandma, when are we going to cook today”*. Another from the same district highlighted *“Before, my husband was championing the bread winning but since the Covid-19, everything collapsed except me that goes around to find means of survival ... They just leave the house in the morning and come in the evening leaving us with the stress from children”*.

A lack of understanding of the workload of women was apparent from some of the responses given by men, who felt that this had actually decreased during the lockdown. One man explained it as follows *“Before the chores are done by the mothers and it takes time to complete them because they have to do everything now they delegate chores to the children.”* Another man from Tonkolili claimed it is men who suffer most, as *“the burden is heavier as all the family members just depend on him”*. Another man from the same area pointed out that *“the home is no longer peaceful”*, which he attributed to the stress of having no income or food in the house.

Respondents were also able to share some of the additional stories they had heard in connection to Covid-19. One of the women interviewed in Port Loko explained how *“because of the hardship during this Covid-19, somebody committed suicide in Port Loko town”*.

The most frequent impact identified at community level was that there were no more meetings or sport gatherings. A number of people also spoke about how traditional community support systems were being put under pressure. One woman spoke about how *“community members do not have enough let alone to support other neighbours. Due to the hard conditions, no one cares about their neighbour as everyone is busy fending for daily survival.”* Others spoke of how they *“rarely had time to socialise with community people especially during this pandemic”*.

In one of the earlier rounds of data collection, one of the respondents identified how she had heard that *“the police and soldier men are flogging people around town who do not wear their face masks”*. The interviewers probed this in detail with the respondents in September, asking whether they thought the lockdown had been fairly implemented or if they had heard of any incidents of violent enforcement of the regulations by the police or army. Response were mixed: those who felt it was not fairly implemented highlighted how some people *“were moving from one district to another as long as they have a pass issued to them by Government Officials”*. On the other hand, a number responded that they did feel it was fairly implemented, even if they had suffered themselves in terms of being able to trade between their location and another place. One respondent described how *“The previous inter district lock down was worth it, it has prevented the community spread of the virus”*. In terms of enforcement, most respondents were able to relate stories of people being arrested while being on public transport without face masks or being brought to *“the police station or made to pay a fine of Le 20,000”* for various infractions of the regulations, however, none of those interviewed said that this had happened to them.

We also asked about whether the pandemic was forcing people to move to or from the area. Initially nobody identified this was the case, though with further probing one man in Tonkolili identified how *“a few people returned from the big town and another district to be with their family to help them sustain their livelihood during this difficult time”*. Another man in Tonkolili identified how they *“still have people in our community that came from Kono District, Kailahun District and Guinea, they were trapped in our community during the lockdown but until now, they found it difficult to return because of transportation.”* However, the general sense was there had been very little movement in or out of the communities where the respondent lived.

How are people coping?

Those interviewed were asked how they were coping with the challenges they faced because of the lockdown. The immediate impact of the loss of income and the increased prices of foodstuff was that many reduced the amount of food they were consuming. A number have sold household assets, such as solar lights and batteries, radios and traditional garments; however all who have done this complain that the price they received was not a fair one, while others say even if they wanted to sell something there was nobody to buy anything from them in the community. In August, a number of respondents explained how people in their community were starting to sell their previously harvested yield, while others have gone so far as to start to divest their capital assets from their small businesses, one woman described how she was *“using my capital or money from my*

business” to support her consumption.” Money is being borrowed from Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), to be repaid once harvests come in; however, this is based on people being able to sell their harvest. Other people are borrowing from their neighbours, in general without any interest, though one woman spoken to highlighted how she is expected to pay up to 80% in interest.

Support Provided and Needed

Most of the support that has been received was in the form of handwashing stations, or *rubbers* (a generic name for materials that can store water). Only two people highlighted receiving support in the form of food – one from a community philanthropist and one from the national food basket programme. While both described this support as being welcome, they also highlighted it was insufficient. In August, four out of seven interviewees identified the proposed interventions of the National Commission of Social Action, identifying that this is to be given to help *“people to start up business”*. However, nobody interviewed had benefitted from this and many were disgruntled in terms of how the assistance was being provided, with one man identifying how *“the support has not yet been given to the community people”*. Similar responses were given in September, when another man identified *“I have heard about people receiving support in other part of Sierra Leone but my community has not benefited from it.”* One of the women interviewed explained how she knew *“people who have received it”* going on to say, *“In my opinion, this is not fairly implemented as there are people whom they took photos of and registered but did not receive the money. Three of these people are my close friends.”*

In terms of help from extended families and relatives living outside the community, this has stopped entirely. One respondent in Tonkolili highlighted how his *“brother used to send money for us but because of Covid-19, he has being laid off from work “*, another woman from Tonkolili highlighted that *“our relatives that stays in the big towns that used to send support from us are no longer sending because they are out of jobs now”*

“ I have not received any support from anybody including my relatives as they are in fact staying far away from me.”

(Female Respondent, Port Loko, July 2020)

In the earlier rounds of interviews, many of those interviewed looked for assistance in terms of food or cash to help address their immediate needs. In later rounds, and perhaps with an eye on re-establishing their livelihoods, many spoke of the need for assistance to help them rebuild their lives, including support to establish a small business in the form of microcredit or capital, or to provide farming tools and seeds. Other highlighted the need for cash transfers to assist with ensuring children are equipped to go back to school.

Conclusion and Policy Asks

After almost six months of disruption, households are beginning to feel the economic impact of Covid-19, compounded by usual seasonal challenges, and while health issues remain important, attention needs to be given to addressing some of the secondary impacts. Based on the outputs from the four rounds of interviews conducted the following are recommend:

1. Continue with awareness raising campaigns relating to transmission and prevention and the need to put knowledge into practice in a language that people can understand. Follow-up campaigns are necessary to help prevent the spread of misinformation, as well as reinforcing the message that Covid-19 has not gone away.
2. Even basic interventions, such as mask distributions, need to incorporate means to make sure they reach the poorest; they are the ones who have to make life-altering decisions on whether to spend their meagre resources on protective equipment, like masks, or food, but they are also the ones who report that assistance is not reaching them.
3. Provide support to ensure families have the means to feed their children to prevent them from becoming malnourished and to protect their health. Cash assistance to urban and peri-urban communities with no other means of earning a living must be prioritised; in Sierra Leone, cash transfers provide a viable option as the supply market for food and basic necessities is still functioning.
4. There is going to be a great need to 'catch-up' on certain key services, such as vaccinations (in health) and the loss of over six months education. Response plans need to start thinking these through, particularly targeting those that are considered to the furthest behind.
5. Beyond the immediate response, ensure a focus on scaling up activities to promote sustainable livelihoods as part of the economic recovery. There is an opportunity now to provide vulnerable groups with support to develop new skills and livelihoods.
6. Build on the current interventions to put in place a reliable, government led, social protection system that provides assistance to those most in need.

This report has been produced by Isaac Gahungu and Liam Kavanagh of Concern Worldwide Sierra Leone and Chris Pain of Concern's Strategy, Advocacy and Learning Department. It has been produced as part of a series of briefings on the impact of Covid-19, and the responses implemented in a variety of countries, on the world's poorest. More information on this programme of research is available at <https://www.concern.net/insights/covid-19-research>

The research has been supported by the Irish Government, however all opinions expressed are those of the authors. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the Irish Government.

(Endnotes)

1. WHO Timeline – Covid-19 available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>
2. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
3. (<https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker#data>)
4. FAO and WFP. 2020. FAO-WFP early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots: July 2020. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0258en>
5. This high level of knowledge is consistent with findings from a nationwide survey undertaken in April that showed nearly 98 percent of respondents heard of the virus and 80 percent correctly named coughing as a symptom, though nearly half of respondents (43 percent) didn't know fever is a symptom, and only 15 percent said they would self-isolate if they or a family member caught the virus or showed symptoms. <http://news.mit.edu/2020/informing-covid-19-preparedness-sierra-leone-0513>
6. This is consistent with WFP's national level findings that The price of local rice has increased by 12% from Q1 (Jan-Mar 2020) to Q2 (Apr-Jun 2020) and is 56.7% higher than the same month last year (Jun 2019); imported rice increase by 7% between Q1 and Q2 of 2020, with a 47.5% year-on-year increase by June.

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