

Report on Twitter Chat

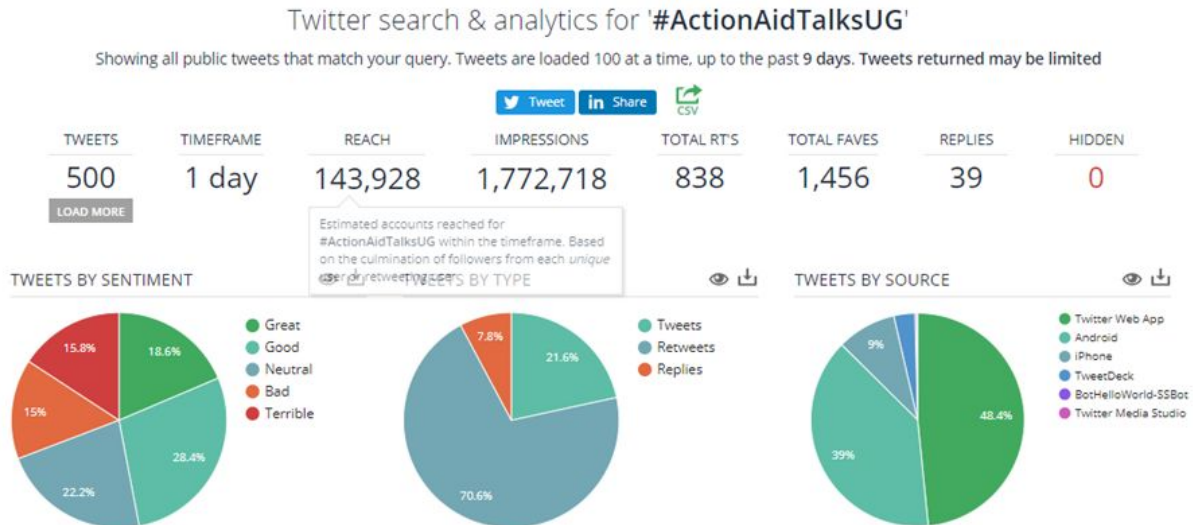
THEME: Tackling corruption, transparency and human rights abuses related to the fight against covid-19 pandemic in Uganda

#ActionAidTalksUG series

Introduction

On Friday April 24th, 2020, ActionAid with support from DGF conducted a twitter chat with the theme; “ Tackling corruption, transparency and human rights abuses related to the fight against covid-19 pandemic in Uganda”. The Chat was moderated by the ActionAid Communications Officer and Project Advocacy Officer Governance and Social accountability. Four panelists i.e Karamaji Andrew- Lawyer and Human Rights Activist, Mubangizi Prosper-Policy Analyst Parliament Watch, Munira Nagawa -Uganda Youth Network and Biraabo Rita- International Affairs Student were the main discussants who were joined by 23 youth.

In participation were Civil Society institutions i.e Tac Teso, CSBAG, ACCU, Centre for Policy, Restless development, University Debate Council, EACSOF, RDP Uganda amongst others. 500 tweets were made, 143,928 people reached and 1,772,718 impressions.



General thoughts on how participants thought the Government of Uganda has performed in the fight against COVID -19

Participants commended the government of the Republic of Uganda for putting in place a well thought public health emergency plan and introducing measures for preventing and containing the spread of the virus and ensuring compliance with such measures amidst economic challenges. They highlighted that Uganda's response to [#COVID19UG](#) from the health containment perspective has been spot on.

“We have not allowed the [#Coronavirus](#) to get ahead of us. This means we can ably contain and curtail its spread.”

Participants noted that though the Government has done well in the fight against the pandemic, the population has however, let them down because they are not heeding the message. To the participants, social distancing is not working as a section of citizens insist on driving cars to ferry passengers, among other ills. They rated the government's performance to almost 90% but their efforts are being zeroed down by corruption among public officials. They noted that the government has chosen citizen's well-being over the economy. They applauded the government for the great information dissemination that has reached all corners of the country. They urged that the same should be done in resource allocation.

How the lock down has affected the young people in the community participants lived in.

According to participants, in terms of response to the economic and psychosocial impacts of the [#CoronavirusLockdown Uganda](#) seems to have no coherent strategy. Beyond the health threat, there is an economic ramification that should be incorporated into planning and programming.

To other participants, Uganda as a country is fair compared to her peers. However, the cost of managing this pandemic will plunge the country into an economic crisis which Uganda shall take long to forget. This is because most of the money being released is being paid out into short term consumption.

The adhoc nature of disaster management by [@GovUganda](#) is a conduit for corruption. For instance, structures created by the National Policy on Disaster Management and Preparedness should have been tested instead of creating ad hoc committees with no legal mandate

There has not been enough inclusion of locals in coming up with solutions and having them work for better impact. Despite donations, the government has not provided enough space for individuals and corporations to play social responsibility.

How has the lock down affected the young people in the community you live in?

Disruption to livelihoods, job losses and long periods of containment for a youthful and energetic population are precursors to many socio-economic problems like poverty and mental health challenges.

According to the online community, blocking the borders would have long term effects on the economy considering that we are really an import based economy. Food distribution has been politicised and the worst on that front is yet to happen. The situation has been exacerbated by seeing media reports where our very own MPs have also allocated themselves 10 billion uganda shillings with each having to walk away with 20 million to their respective constituencies; but this has been rather condemned by the donors. Most of them have less in the fight!

Can you share some of the transparency and human rights abuses emerging from the communities during the lockdown?What has been done about them?

According to the online community, the human rights abuses range from healthcare, security, education, domestic violence amongst others. However, those at the helm of this pandemic should know that people may not necessarily die of covid-19 but rather die of other illnesses.

At the start of the lock down, enforcing of curfew was done by very unnecessary and un-proportional force which led to caning of Ugandans including pregnant women. To the online community, the curfew hours were enforced in a military manner. Many were beaten up, the LDU used it as an excuse to settle old scores and also break into people's houses.

There have been reports of families starving during this Lock down ,how is the food security situation in your area and among your peers?

Participants noted that food is not taken as a human right in Uganda. They highlighted that the constitution is silent on the issues of food and that only provisions on National objectives and directives of state Policy equivocally cite food rights.

Others stipulated that food distribution has always been a political matter. It is being used to reward loyalists. Participants questioned the selection criteria for beneficiaries and the transparency of the procurement process. Some recommended a need for a commission to probe Covid relief.

A kiboga participant noted that most people in his village have access to food. However, in the peri-urban areas, people have limited access to food. Recipients of district task force food in such areas complained about the inadequacy of the food served for their survival i.e. The situation is worse for the old and disabled.

Participants recommended that CSOs should also mobilise support to the government in relief response. They can also support through sensitization, development of Information Education and communication materials and translation of key awareness materials in local languages.

What do you think is behind the cases of rights violations and abuses in your community ? What can be done to deal with these ills ?

- Poor training and supervision of the security forces especially those at the lower rank and also poverty levels. Participants recommended for meritocratic recruitment and training.
- In cases of emergency, citizens tend to fully relinquish their authority to the elected leaders. This power, if not regulated can promote human rights abuses. This is exacerbated by politicization of the [#COVID19UG](#) response.
- In relation to the abuse of human rights, the LDU were not prepared well for this! And since they were trained using the metallic hand they decided to use that on the people.
- It is quite unfortunate that every issue in Uganda is seen as an opportunity to score politically, so sad. As young people we should do better.

Participants urged security personnel to take the defiers to police custody and to continuously inform and remind people about Covid-19 using community radios and media such as "MUKALAKASA".

As regards to what has been done to deal with perpetrators of violence especially armed forces, participants noted that; 'quoted in verbatim'

- Enough is being seen to be done but in reality, enough is not done. What does the UPDF act say about errant officers in uniform? Has the law been followed to discipline them? The answer is a NO.
- [#CHOGM2007](#) went with some political heavy weights in this country (Some). The same will happen with [#COVID19](#). All those profiting now should have that in the back of their heads.
- They always say everything turns out to be a blessing in disguise. This pandemic has exposed the rate of corruption and self centeredness amongst our leaders .
- As it is now, Yes! the LDUs were brought to order and reports have reduced. implementation of Curfew is now done in a better way.

What role can young people play in the handling of the covid-19 pandemic in Uganda?

- Aggressively participate in containing the spread of [#Coronavirus](#) through following [@GovUganda](#) directives.
- To keep the government in check to prevent power grab and wanton corruption.
- To provide policy alternatives to guide response However, there must be a voice for the voiceless. The rule of law must therefore be enforced while dealing with human rights abuses I.e those bartering up people should be tried in the courts of law.
- Research and influence policy through submission of resolutions on Ministry of Health and Civil Society Organisations that are involved in discussions such as [#ActionAidTalksUG](#) [@Accu_Ug](#) [@actionaiduganda](#) .
- Using their social media platforms as whistleblowers just as what happened with the 10 B Uganda Uganda Parliament issue. Young people have a big role, and I believe instead of getting the military to distribute food, the youth should be able to do this.. in this way they are kept busy and helpful.

What do you think are the policy gaps that need to be addressed in regard to dealing with emergencies in Uganda ?

1. Strengthening structures of the National Policy on Disaster Management and Preparedness like National Emergency Coordination and Operation Centre (NECOC), District Emergency Coordination and Operation Centre (DECOC) n District Disaster Management Committees.
2. Creating the National Disaster Management and Preparedness Commission as per article 24 of the Constitution. This will ensure an institutional and systemic disaster response mechanism as opposed to the ad hoc nature of response.
3. The disability gap needs to be addressed through implementing the disability inclusion policy before, during and after emergencies .
4. Experience has it that institutions tend to work where there is no money to be made, as soon as there is money involved, individuals take over. There are many examples to choose from in recent history.
5. The policy framework is robust but it suffers from executive interference. For example, the Local Governments Act is clear about how to decentralize power but as you can see, the response to CoViD-19 has been converted into a military operation.
6. The same leaders who should strengthen are the ones who have led to malfunction and death of institutions. There is a need for leadership change.

I see many responses pointing to gaps in the conduct of the security agencies ,how can this be dealt with ?

1. Proper recruitment, training and supervision. security agencies should not be politicized along party lines
2. The police and military should follow up these operations through their commanders to ensure there is professionalism in implementing the lockdown without causing harm to any citizen of this nation.
3. The police and army follow should first be engaged in several advocacy training such as civil relations, i.e civil police relations and military relations so as to adhere to the guidelines on how to protect basic liberties.
4. Such brutal acts by men in uniform call for retooling the moral kit of security personnel. Training police and army officers on things like interpersonal relations should be more regular. Or else they will continue to behave like robots.
5. Moving forward, after the pandemic, measures should be put to bring police closer to society. They seem to live in isolation as wardens of national parks and look at humans as wild animals. Their brutality to humans speaks volumes about how they are isolated.

6. Nowhere in the Constitution provides for brutal beating of human beings as they used to shot at boda boda riders. Those are crimes against humanity and calls for respect of human rights.
7. The behaviour of police may not be attributed to their individual behaviour but to frustration amongst the force. The police live in isolation of the emotions of man and thus protect what is 'legal or commanded' without thinking deeply about the human.

What is your take on the decision by @Parliament_Ug to allocate itself 10billion shillings for the fight against COVID-19? What message do you send your mp?

- With this kind of action, the greed of the dis-honorable members was once again exposed. They are actually in a trap!

"My message to Micheal Werikhe of Bungokho south is to take back that money!!!

- By law, @Parliament_Ug is not an implementing entity. Article 78 gives their roles as oversight, appropriation, legislation and representation but our corrupt democracy has given them a role of service provision and humanitarian assistance.
- The only wise step for the MPs is to return the money they allocated themselves just like some have already done i.e the Mityana MP, because they're not the body at the frontline of fighting this pandemic.

How do you think @Parliament_Ug has performed in offering leadership during this pandemic? what did they do right and what did they fail at ?

- @Parliament_Ug did its appropriation role as mandated by article 78 and budgeted for #COVID19UG response funds.
- Provided policy direction by asking for amendment of article 121 for prerogative of Mercy to decongest prisons .
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the poor state of public services and how incapable the state and Government institutions are in dealing with social and economic rights of ugandans
- The youth MPs are very silent to the plight youths face as a result of the pandemic. They need to wake up and be of use.
- Save for the \$10b, some MPs are helping their constituents, though their personal resources can not cover an expanse of households.

- Members of [@Parliament_Ug](#) have been unequivocal in their condemnation of human rights by officers in uniform during the [#Lockdown](#)
- Nominated members to the National Taskforce on [#COVID19UG](#) and the district task forces.
- MP Gerald Karuhanga led the process to secure an injunction in which the MPs were awarding themselves [#Covid19](#) cash. This may fall through, but it was an action that resulted into a good deed. Considering that he is youthful is also a good thing.
- They have done well e.g Munyagwa supplied hand washing facilities at markets, giving food like Zaake & sending money. when it came to the 20b they completely undressed...I am so disappointed!!!
- [@Parliament_Ug](#) has passed motions on giving support to Uganda Virus Research Institute [@UVRlug](#) ,support to Uganda Medical Stores 4 protective gear, procurement of ambulances 4 health centre IVs, partnership with donor Community for economic stimulus package.

The office of the prime Minister has been on the spot over inflating food prices. What should the government do about it ? Has enough been done to correct the wrongs?

- Officials in the office of the prime minister are no strangers to corruption and embezzlement of both government and donor funds. But following the Anti corruption Act 2009, for anyone who breaches or goes against the law should be tried in the courts of law.
- However, enough hasn't been done yet. Why goes wrong is that there are growing scenarios of under the table businesses even to the same people supposed to try the criminals. Leaving the whole situation stagnant since everyone seems to be lost in the same.
- Pandemic requires procurement of different items like personal protective equipment, IEC materials, food stuffs among others by multiple agencies and being a state of emergency, most of the procurement may not follow lengthy procedures.
- Such agencies therefore must portray a high degree of transparency by remaining publicly accountable for each and every contract concluded and funds spent
- The arrests of [@OPMUganda](#) officials were only illegal. They are actually a cover up of more rot and corruption in the food distribution.
- These occurrences are a manifestation of what has been going on before the pandemic only that the alarm has been louder during [#COVID_19](#) . We need to rejuvenate our fight on corruption. A fight that will be void of impunity.

- Government can fast track programs that ensure food wastage is mitigated while filling our food stores with all types of food(not maize alone) 2 feed the most vulnerable in day to day life like street children, orphans, elderly etc and during times of crisis.

What recommendations can you provide on state responsiveness in handling future pandemics?

- @GovUganda needs a deliberate policy that shifts from disaster management to risk aversion and Preparedness. A Contingencies Fund will provide funds for disaster management and strengthen our capabilities.
- Empower institutions to do what they were set up for. We are not a country new to these things, the rest should really be easy.
- It is important for Uganda to have a relic management committee revised and citizens' role to come out and condemn the uncouth behaviors and manners of their MPs.
- Strengthen the financial capacity of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Preparedness since no one can know when a disaster will hit.
- To resurrect the state Institutions and strengthen them with appropriate budget allocation & meritocratic staffing. Let us not wait to "fatten the cow on the market day" Preparation is the Answer.i
- Let's treat emergencies as such. Covid19 happened several months before it reached here, we had the opportunity to prepare before it got here, instead we waited for it to arrive so that the emergency purchase could proceed, as this allowed for funds leakages.

Other Recommendations

- If Uganda had a Disaster Management Policy with capabilities premised on human rights, we would be able to prevent hunger in the #LockdownUg and progressively ensure the right to food in disasters.
- Uganda should first of all pick a leaf from the current pandemic and therefore be able to enhance and fix its disaster management committee looking at the potholes registered because a lot is lacking given the approach they're using.
- The first step is to use institutions as they are easy to hold to account. The office of the RDC is not an institutional office meaning that we dispense to them monies and are depending on their good will to use appropriately.
- Prioritisation of military operations reveals how the health sector is unprepared or UNDERSERVICED. This is because we have invested more in security for power

retention than in health for life retention. Each [#COVID19UG](#) test costs US\$65 or UGX 220,000 and we receive more than 1000 truck drivers daily. If that money was paid to Ugandan relay drivers, it would increase liquidity and provide an intermediate solution to [#Lockdown](#) related unemployment.

What critical governance issues and lessons can Uganda government learn from the management of the pandemics?

- Strengthen the financial capacity of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Preparedness since no one can know when a disaster will hit.
- I would have told them to allocate more funds to the health sector only if they are willing to listen. Guns cannot shoot an invisible virus. We left investment in guns in the second industrial revolution when John Speke was hurting his way to the interior.

What is your take on the movement of truck drivers from across the borders into the country ? What should be done with many positives ?

- There is a need to ferry most of the doctors from hospitals that have recorded recoveries to the borders. The worry is that even the few doctors that have registered recoveries have not yet been paid.
- One participant totally disagreed with relay truck driving. It increases the cost of delivery hence the cost of production is felt by the final consumer. Solution is [@MinofHealthUG](#) must ferry doctors to borders on conditioned payments.
- We should gather a pool of relay drivers on our border points so that truck drivers hand over the vehicles at the border to Ugandan drivers. This is the only way to contain importing the [#Coronavirus](#) into Uganda.
- What happened to the Standard Gauge Railway??? this would not be a big problem. Let us painfully use relay driving for the moment. We need better leadership. Where is SGR??

Have citizens delivered on their own oversight mandate in the response to the pandemic?

- Many citizens are reporting illegalities. Citizen led oversight platforms like [@ipaidabribeug](#) are doing great doing a great work. However there is a need by [@GovUganda](#) to respond and work on their concerns.
- Not really. The first thing citizens did was to delegate their power to their leaders. Their leaders have thus done with that power what they think is best. Many citizens are reporting illegalities.

- Not all. Some citizens are stagnating in mindset as regards to protection. Thank God that there isn't much Corona to kill us. Ugandans should stop being careless. They should be sensitised before Covid starts to intimate with us the more.

What are your projections for the post COVID-19 era? how should the young people prepare for it?

- A restricted Civic space with excuses of [#COVID19UG](#) being used to curtail political and civil organizing
- Job losses especially in the hotel and leisure industry.
- Innovative ways of operating that harness the creative potential of youth and technology.
- Post [#Covid19](#) is ushering in a cashless society, optimizing use of tech like zoom etc. Generally a new world order so young people should position themselves to learn, unlearn and relearn.
- A forced launch into new tech jobs and online systems. A greater demand for data and internet use
- We need to be flexible, ditch the old modus operandi and adapt to changing times. We need more young people in value addition, knowledge generation and in the ICT sector. We shd use the [#COVID19UG](#) Pandemic as a wake up call to prepare 4 for a knowledge based economy.
- I expect Uganda to come out of [#COVID19UG](#) stronger with Disaster Response systems rooted in basic principles of participation, accountability, non discrimination and respect for human rights; coherent strategy that addresses both health and economic issues .

Plenary Concerns.....

How best do we tackle corruption during these unprecedented times of [#COVID19UG](#) when some people are behaving like Santa Clause who came early with just one gift: The treasury of Uganda just for them. It is an open season.

Are the few Covid-19 cases actual or the inflated figures by our leaders as a platform to foreign Aid support and local contributions ?

Our Government always wants to "fatten the cow on the market day". we have no food silos and mapped numbers of the vulnerable poor....we use a lot of guesswork..

Those things do not exist because it favours the status quo. Otherwise how would the Government explain food distribution without a scientific formulae and yet statistics exist? [#ActionAidTalksUG](#)

