



**INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

## **Call for Article Submissions**

### **Protection and Respect for Economic and Social Rights During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic**

#### ***I. Introduction***

*We are rallying all possible resources to help countries meet people’s immediate health and survival needs while also safeguarding livelihoods and jobs in the longer term – including calling for a standstill on official bilateral debt service payments which would free up funds for strengthening health systems to deal with COVID 19 and save lives, social safety nets to save livelihoods and help workers who lose jobs, support to small and medium enterprises, and food security.”*

**- Hafez Ghanem, World Bank Vice President for Africa -**

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) invites submission of articles on the theme: ***“Protection and Respect for Economic and Social Rights During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic,”*** which is the focus of the Special Edition of its Economic and Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief to be published in May 2020. The bi annual ESRA Brief is dedicated to Economic and Social Rights (ESRs) advocacy in Uganda and draws on key lessons from the broader East African Community and beyond. The Brief provides insight into the debates and steps currently being undertaken towards the full realization of ESRs in Uganda.

#### ***II. Background***

Currently, the major concerns around realization of ESCRs has further been exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic breakout. On March 21, 2020, Uganda registered its first coronavirus (COVID-19) case and the government put in place a number of measures to contain the virus and limit its spread to wider populations. Some of these measures included a stay at home order, total lockdown of non-essential services and workplaces, closure of all education institutions, places of worship, hotels, a ban on public transportation and private transport of non-essential persons among others. Uganda is largely a cash economy and many people work in informal sectors earning daily or weekly wages.

The public health threat and impact of such a pandemic on Uganda with its fragile health system would be catastrophic if the spread is not contained. However, as noted by Hafez Ghabnem, World Bank Vice President for Africa, it is important that all measures put in place to contain the spread of the pandemic not only address people’s immediate health and survival needs but also safeguard livelihoods and jobs in the longer term.



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Without a doubt, the measures taken by government to contain the pandemic are well intended and commendable. However, they have left a large section of the public grappling to survive. Many people's ability to access social services - including none COVID-19 related health services has been greatly affected since the government instituted a total lockdown and issued a stay home order for all non-essential services effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The ban on public and private transport has constrained the ability to travel to work places even for those in essential services like health workers, market vendors and construction, manufacturing and production workers among others. There are fears of a food security crisis due to the low levels of production. Similarly, there have been increased cases of termination of employment or unlawful forced leave of some employees without pay and tenancy-landlord disputes arising out of failure to pay rent among others.

As such, these measures have affected many informal and casual workers and other vulnerable people who are finding it hard to work, access social services, get food and pay for other basic amenities including rent. Similarly, the measures have left some companies at the verge of collapse and affected employment relations of many workers.

While there are some enabling policy and regulatory frameworks that have been passed to guide various government and Ministry of Health restrictions and measures, these are not without significant gaps - particularly in relation to social protection mechanisms for the marginalized and vulnerable communities during the pandemic and broader respect and protection of ESRs across the country.

**We therefore welcome ARTICLE submissions that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:**

1. Labour and work related rights
2. Access to social services – including health, water, education
3. Evaluating the impact of the country lockdown on the economy
4. Strategies for economic recovery and inclusion – including best practices from the region
5. Protection of vulnerable groups during the pandemic (articles could focus on PWDs, older persons, children, refugees, women etc)
6. Effective social protection mechanisms in the Ugandan context
7. Food distribution V. Cash transfers
8. Assessment of Uganda's legal and policy framework for managing the pandemic;

The deadline for submission of articles is 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Contributions should be 800 – 1000 words in length.

Please submit your articles as well as any inquiries about this call for articles to the editors at [info@iser-uganda.org](mailto:info@iser-uganda.org)