INTRODUCTION:

The Corona Virus which was first confirmed in Wuhan (China) in December 2019, has spread all over the world, becoming a global pandemic. The spread of the virus has since brought governments and countries all over the world to a standstill, with almost all major institutions shut-down, and all community/social gatherings including businesses are banned leaving only essential ones. Uganda, has consequently not been spared as strong and tighter regulations including staying home have been imposed since March 20th, 2020, and has been encouraged up-to-date as more cases of the virus in the country are unearthed every day. For now, over 60 Days of the lockdown in Uganda, a lot of families are struggling and most of all, those in peri-urban communities and the rural poor as resources for sustaining livelihood seem to get scarcer.

Additionally, looking at the poor state of health facilities and medical services in most developing countries, including Uganda, the thought of a wide-spread scenario of COVID-19 puts thousands or millions of lives of those in most vulnerable states at very high risk. It is, therefore, against this background, that Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment in partnership with Signpost International preferred to take a strong stand on prevention of this dangerous scenario in remote communities of Nebbi District (Jupangira Sub-county), providing much-needed handwashing kits to major social and community centers, as well as engaging in community sensitization efforts to raise awareness about the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting basic prevention measures at homesteads in the communities of reach.

DISTRIBUTION OF HANDWASHING KITS

The World Health Organization and different international health agencies have thoroughly emphasized the great importance of handwashing in the fight against Covid-19. It has been proven beyond doubt that, regular washing of hands with clean water and soap or cleaning of hands with alcohol-based sanitizers have over 95% efficiency in killing the virus got through contacts. For the rural communities of Jupangira Sub-county, including major offices within Nebbi District, access to appropriate handwashing kits has been a major challenge. ARUWE, through the partnership with Signpost International, donated a total of 7 handwashing kits
on May 19th 2020 under the Covid-19 Response Grant aimed at mitigating the spread and impact of Corona Virus (Covid-19) within Nebbi District. Included among the recipient communities were the Residence District Commissioner and Jupangira Sub-county offices, community markets or social centers, social centers, and the bordering stations with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

ININVOLVEMENT IN THE DISTRICT COVID-19 TASK-FORCE

Following directives from the president of Uganda, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, sample collection, management, and curtailing of all COVID-19 cases was decentralized to local government level at the districts under the leadership of the Residence District Commissioners. Each district established its COVID-19 task-force to oversee all efforts in the fights against the invisible enemy (COVID-19). ARUWE team was as well invited to be a part of the development partners that are combining efforts with the district team to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID-19 within Nebbi District. The team meets every Friday from (9:00 am to midday). Therefore, all support (500 COVID-19 information posters printed in the local language (Alur), and the 7 handwashing kits) that came through the COVID-19 Response grant to the communities of Jupangira Sub-county, were first handed over to through the Nebbi District COVID-19 Task-force on Friday, May 15th, 2020.
The Nebbi District Covid-19 Task-force expressed great gratitude for the donations towards their efforts in helping prevent the spread of Covid-19 within the district. This support has further strengthened ARUWE’s stake and strategic engagement within the District.

**TRAINING OF COMMUNITY COVID-19 TASK-FORCE (VILLAGE HEALTH TEAMS – VHTs)**

On Saturday 16th May 2020, ARUWE, with support from Nebbi District Health Officer, conducted training for 7 selected Community Covid-19 Task-Force that consisted of mainly Village Health Teams – (VHTs) tasked with the mandate for raising awareness within the entire Jupangira Sub-country (Nebbi District) about the threat of Covid-19 at homestead level. Mr. Jude, who is one of the training experts at the district, helped equip the team with key information about Corona Virus, including current infections, recoveries and recorded death at both global and local levels; how the virus is spread; how it can be prevented; current efforts in finding treatment/vaccines; and our roles in ensuring all those in our communities have the right information and fully step up to practice the prevention measures to deter infections and/or spread of the virus. A lot of questions about myths on the Covid-19 were answered and at the end of the training, each VHT was given some copies of the Covid-19 information Poster to help guide them in their community sensitization efforts.

*Highlights of training for selected Community Covid-19 Task-Force that consisted of Village Health Teams – (VHTs) working within Jupangira Sub-county. The training was held on Saturday 16th May 2020.*
COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION

Nebbi District is mapped as a high-risk zone for the spread of the Corona Virus in Uganda on the account that it borders the Democratic Republic of Congo which already has had cases of those infected with the virus dying. Jupangira Sub-county on the other hand is one of the main bordering communities to DRC and as such, is ranked as a high-risk area. With the latest cases of those infected with the virus prevailing mainly among cargo truck drivers, Goli area, which is the direct border community in the district is in special focus. ARUWE, through the trained Covid-19 Task-Force, has intensified efforts in door-to-door sensitization drive bordering communities, helping spread the most needed information about the spread and prevention of Corona Virus in those located, even in hard-to-reach areas, to ensure that maximum vigilance is observed within these high-risk areas. The team launched the community sensitization drive on Monday 18th May starting with the border community of Boma East Village located within Goli Parish, Jupangira Sub-county – Nebbi District; and shall wind up the entire exercise within 10 days to cover the entire sub-county.
DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION POSTERS

We believe that information is power and the lack of the right information, especially in times of crisis can put an entire society in great danger. Regarding this, ARUWE printed a total of 1,000 Covid-19 awareness-raising posters (translated in the local language spoken in the communities - Alur), that it has successfully been able to distribute to strategic spaces within the entire Jupangira Sub-county and also to key district agencies. With the help of local motorcycle transporters (Boda Boda), the posters were pinned in market spaces, health centers, poles on major roadsides, office boards, and other major social gathering centers or trading centers within the sub-county.

TRAINING OF LOCAL COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS AND SUB-COUNTY COUNSELORS ON COVID-19 PREVENTION

The enormous threat to human life and existence brought by the Covid-19 pandemic has birthed a new approach to disease management by concentrating efforts at local levels. Consequently, as it is in other parts of Uganda, the efforts to curtail this pandemic were as well emphasized at the local level through the formation of Sub-county Covid-19 Task-force’ which is composed of local council chairpersons and councilors headed by local council chairperson III. On a serious note, however, these teams lack key knowledge and information on how to mitigate the spread of the virus and yet are daily interfaced with a large number of people seeking their help and permissions to move or deal with some emerging needs within the villages which put them at even much higher risk of not just contacting but also spreading the virus. This has been the case for the local leaders within Jupangira Sub-county.

To ensure that they are well equipped to deal with the threat of this pandemic, on Thursday 21st May 2020. ARUWE conducted a one-day training for all the 32 local chairpersons and councilors who form the Jupangira Sub-county Covid-19 Task-Force team. On top of providing guidance and support to local community members, these local leaders also tasked with raising awareness about the threat of the pandemic in their
communities they serve and yet lacked such critical information that they needed to share with the people. ARUWE hence stepped into the local leaders with the much-needed content on Covid-19 – (its spread, prevention measures, and other key information that can help in the prevention of the spread of the virus within the communities in the sub-county.

Highlights of training for Local Council Chairpersons and Councilors who form the Subcounty Covid-19 Task-Force for Jupangira Sub-county. This training was held on Thursday 21st May 2020 at the Sub-county Headquarter.