

# **RAPID ASSESSMENT: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON WORKERS IN INFORMAL SECTOR OF CAMBODIA**



**In collaboration with:**



**Studied by:**



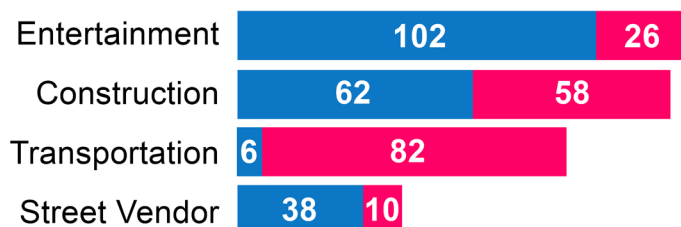
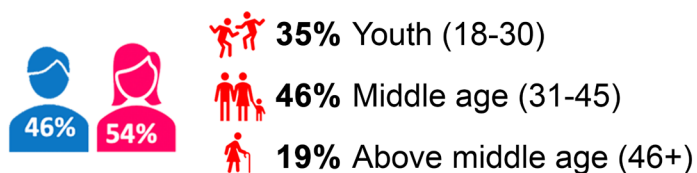
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## Research Methodology & Demographic Information

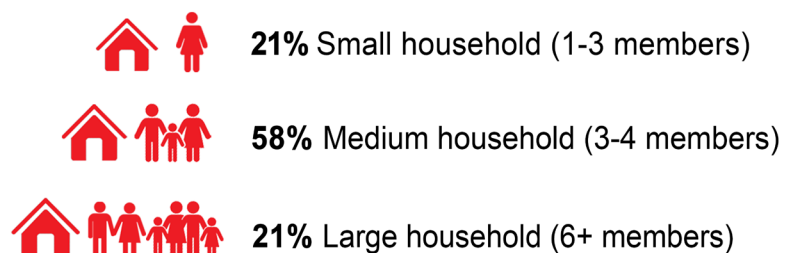
### Quantitative Survey n=384

#### Total Sample n=384

(Phnom Penh:289, Siem Reap:95)



#### Household Size



### In-Depth Interviews n=32

Age: 18-30 years old

Education: Below grade 12

Hometown: Majority are migrating from provinces to work in Phnom Penh

Type of Workers	Men	Women
<b>Transportation workers</b>	8	-
Car taxi drivers	2	
Tuk Tuk drivers (modern and traditional Tuk Tuk)	4	
Moto taxi drivers	2	
<b>Service/Entertainment workers</b>	-	8
Karaoke workers		3
Massage workers		3
Restaurant workers		2
<b>Wage labour workers</b>	4	4
Construction workers	4	4
<b>Small/Street vendor</b>	4	4
Street vendor - specific place	2	2
Street vendor - no specific place	2	2
<b>Total - IDIs</b>	16	16



# How are workers in informal sector economically impacted by COVID-19?

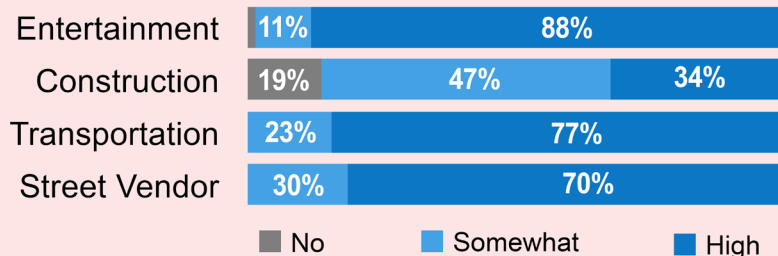
"I have lost a third of my income compared to previously, as there are fewer/no passengers for my car taxi. For now, I earn just limited amount of income.", said taxi driver

**93%** of male workers in informal sector affected by COVID-19, and their average income decreased from **\$340** to **\$163** while **16%** of them earn less than **\$1.90/day**.

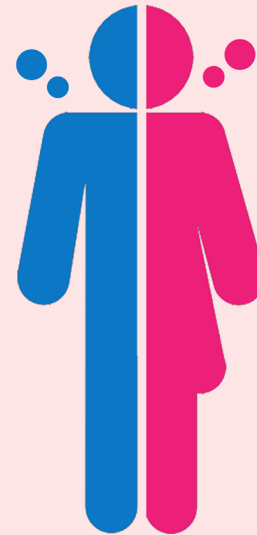
## Male workers' income per month declined

	Pre COVID-19	During
Entertainment	\$ 269	=> \$ 101
Transportation	\$ 340	=> \$ 143
Construction	\$ 307	=> \$ 243
Street vendor	\$ 444	=> \$ 163

## Male workers' income per month impacted



**67%** of construction workers reported their workplaces are impacted.



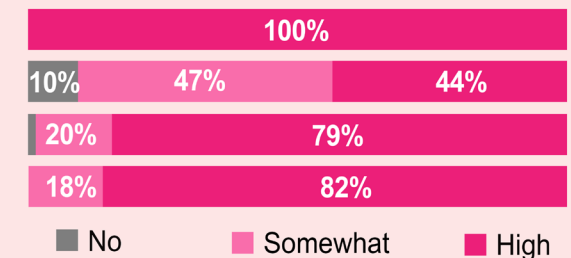
"Covid-19 impacts strongly on business, fewer customers and the price of fruit has gone up. When there are no customers to buy it, it makes it harder to earn income.", said female street vendor

**97%** of female workers in informal sector affected by COVID-19 especially entertainment sector, and their average income decreased from **\$250** to **\$106** while **23%** of them earn less than **\$1.90/day**.

## Female workers' income per month declined

	Pre COVID-19	During
Entertainment	\$ 262	=> \$ 105
Transportation	\$ 249	=> \$ 38
Construction	\$ 140	=> \$ 200
Street vendor	\$ 297	=> \$ 143

## Female workers' income per month impacted



**91%** of entertainment workers reported their workplace are impacted.

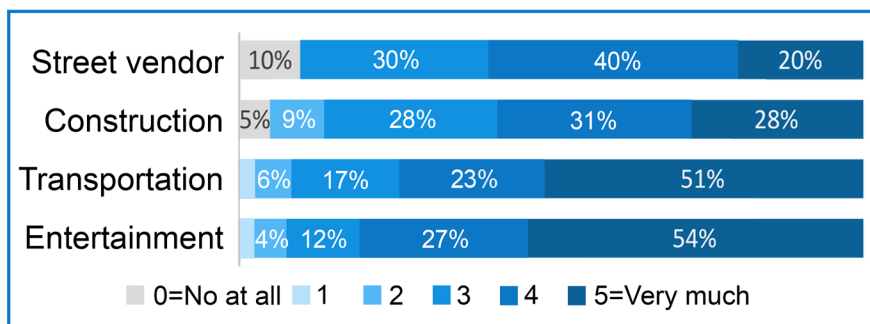
**!!** 55-63% of informal workers reported impact in March and April of 2020. They reported earning less during COVID-19 outbreak if compared to before, and a few mentioned earning none on some days occasionally. Workers on entertainment sectors especially KTV are most affected due to close down of their workplace, and the majority (91%) of them reported that the crisis had impacted their workplaces. Amongst those who are affected, no one received any compensation or benefits from their employers.

# How does COVID-19 impact family's and individual's well-being of workers in informal sector?

Workers in the informal sector reported that they felt unhappy/frustrated, fearful, tense, anxious and bored owing to reduced income physical distancing, inability to move as planned to achieve career path. As the pandemic worsened, especially in March and April 2020, workers in the informal sector reported that their income decreased, and debt increased. This affected the wellbeing of their family to some extent.

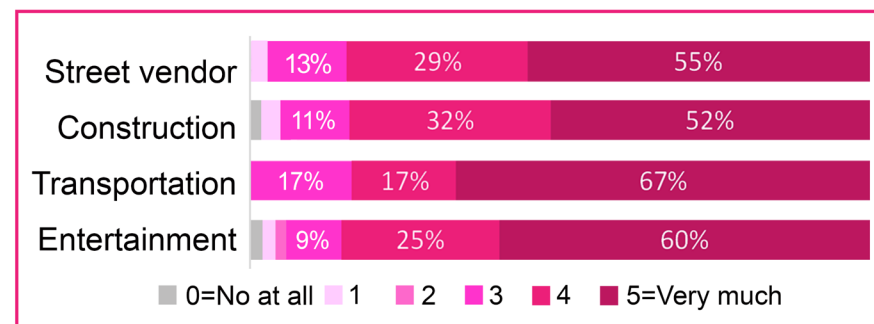
**51-54%** of male workers in transportation and entertainment sectors reported having depression due to the crisis. More than a half of male workers are very concerned about their income and livelihood.

## Level of depression in male workers during COVID-19

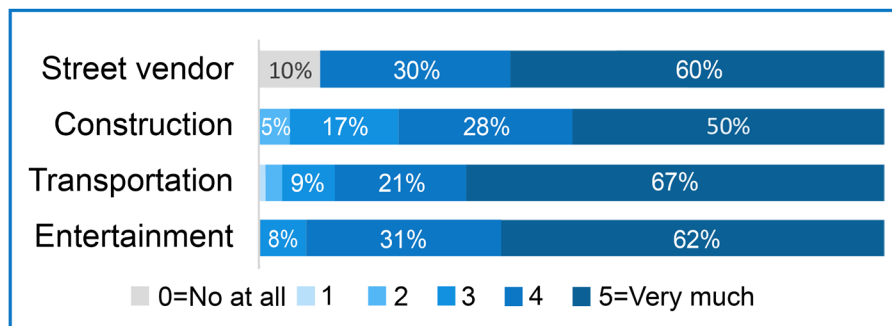


**52-67%** of female workers in informal sector reported having depression due to the crisis. More than third quarter of female workers are very concerned about their income and livelihood especially entertainment and transportation workers.

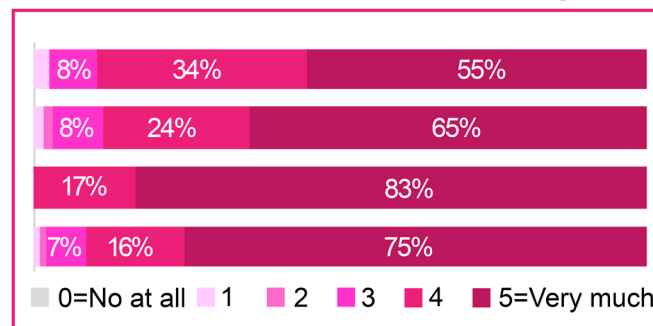
## Level of depression in female workers during COVID-19



## Level of concern of male workers during COVID-19



## Level of concern of female workers during COVID-19



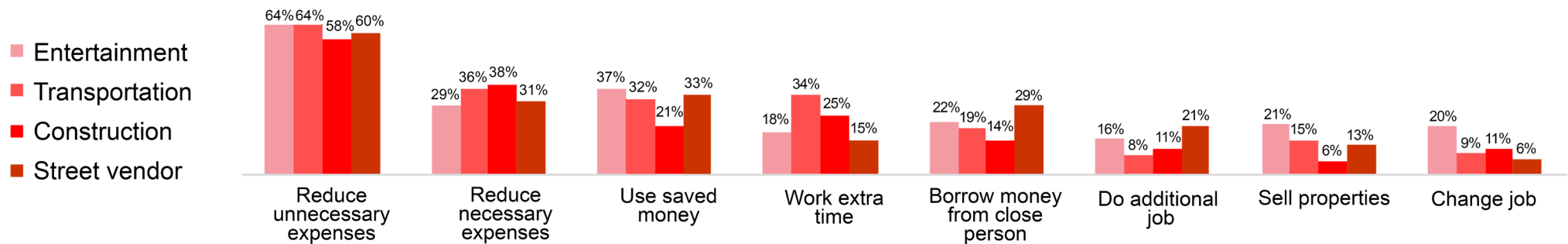
"Due to COVID-19, I dared not to go out, even when my brother had accident and stayed at hospital, I did not get to go to visit and just sent money to him.", said karaoke worker



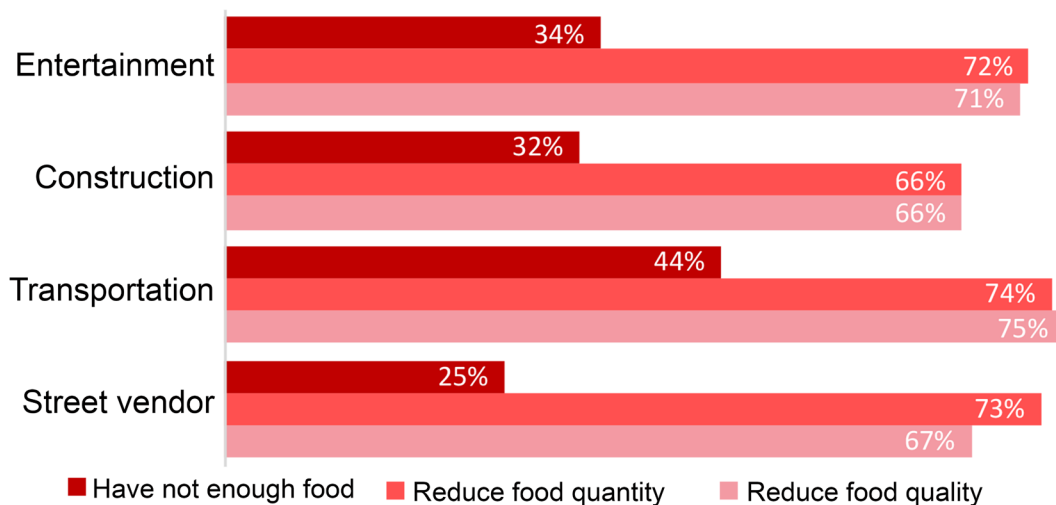
## How do workers in informal sector respond to COVID-19?

Actions on prevention measures have been adopted by workers in the informal sector ranging from washing hands with alcohol/soap frequently, spraying alcohol on customers/guests' hands, wearing masks, keeping distance, having temperature checked (only karaoke workers mentioned this) and having masks for passengers (car taxi drivers). To cope with the income losses, they have tried to find other jobs to supplement income, reduced the quality of food consumed by their families and requested extensions to pay back debts. During this pandemic period, **33%** of workers in informal sector reported that they had reduced their necessary expenses on food, clothing and housing etc. **35%** of workers in informal sectors also disclosed that they had insufficient food for daily consumption. **4/5** have been reducing food quantity and quality, and **58%** of them assumed their food had no/little nutrition.

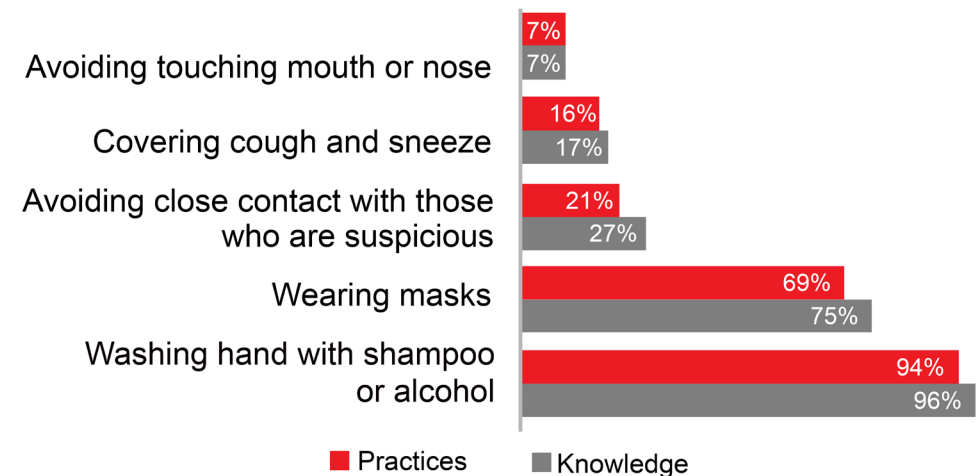
### How have workers in informal sector been doing to respond to economic impacts caused by COVID-19 crisis?



### How does COVID-19 impact their food security?



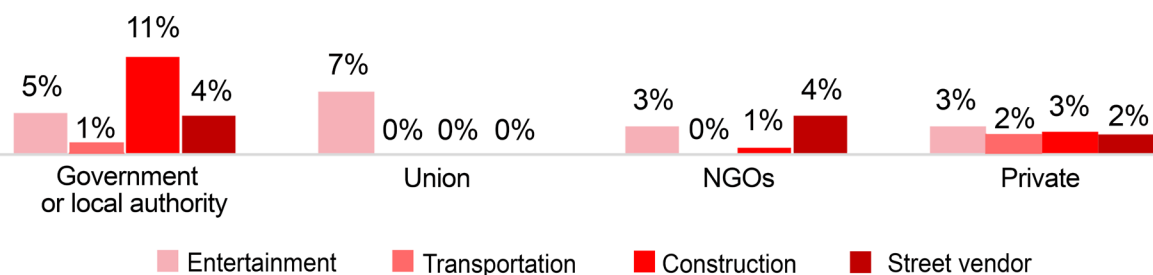
### How do workers personally prevent/respond to COVID-19?



## What responses/interventions do workers in informal sector receive?

Only 1/10 workers in informal sector received support such as food, sanitizer kits or cash from government, NGOs, unions or private sector. 75% of them do not have any social protection (ID poor, NFFS, saving group or other funds) while some of them, particularly entertainment workers, lost its protection (expiry of card) due to closing of workplaces.

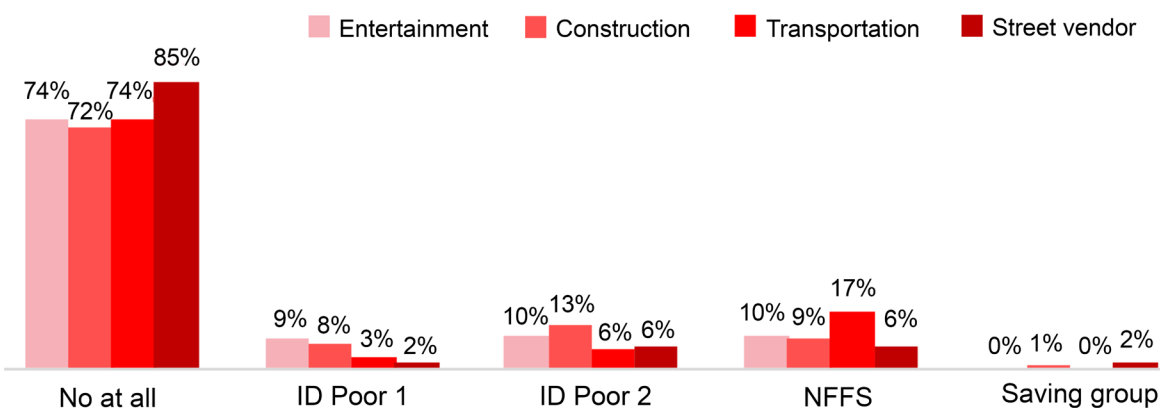
### Received responses by groups of workers in informal sector



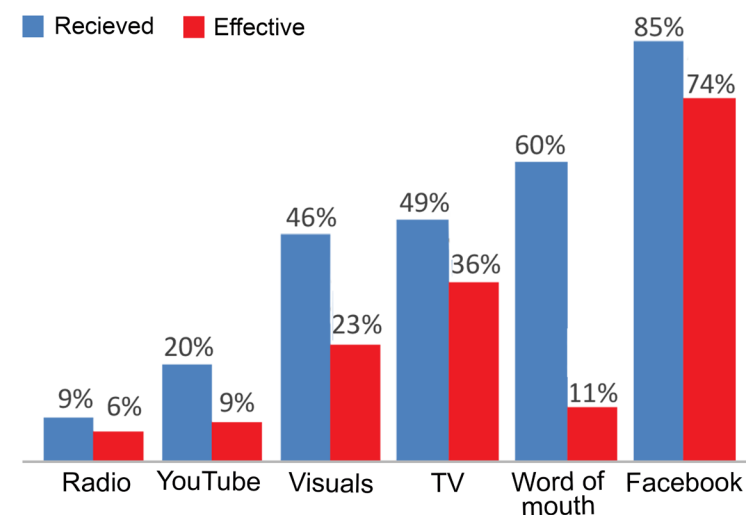
All the actors below were reported as the main sources of COVID-19 information:

- Facebook (Ministry of Health, Fresh News, Bayon Facebook page and other pages that they could not recall)
- Loud microphone – kind of public announcement method in the community, word of mouth, YouTube, TV - CTN, local authorities, ringtones, Tiktok and radio

### Social protection of workers in informal sector, either household or individual



### How do workers receive information of COVID-19 and what channels do they think are effective?



## Key challenges of workers



Everyone strictly followed hygiene practices and media on the topic during the early days of the outbreak but this wasn't continued.



Facebook is an effective ways of communication, but there are challenges with the accuracy and credibility of some of the information that is circulated.



Income of workers in informal sector has decreased whilst debt has increased – this has affected the wellbeing of the family.



Debt had been a concern and worry for most workers in the informal sector even before the outbreak.



Workers in informal sector do not know who and where to seek support from.



“The support I would need to help me and my family recovering from COVID-19 outbreak are the job information on jobs, provision of food aid such as rice as well as some financial assistance.”, said karaoke worker.

### EATING

- Reducing the allocated amount of money to buy food (they said they still had enough food to eat but had to compromise on choice of quality or taste)



### VIOLENCE

- Facing violence when husband gets drunk and arguments occur when they spend more time together (only a few mentioned)



### DEBT

- Using savings/taking loan from relatives
- Doing more jobs
- Requesting to delay in pay back debt
- Using less electricity



### HEALTH CARE

- Feeling normal - all participants along with family members had taken prevention measures for Covid19.
- A few did not go to market - they stored food, and consumed own fishing at hometown.



### EDUCATION

- Students cannot follow lessons through online learning.
- Coping measures included being taught by family members, studying with tutors places and learning from media.



### FUTURE

- Future ambitions/hopes will not be achieved anytime soon-including opening varieties of small-scale businesses with fixed locations, acquiring new skills, and saving for various needs





## Recommendations

### Points to be considered at policy level

- prioritize increasing coverage of and access to social protection schemes to vulnerable workers in the informal sector, and allow space for NGOs, CBOs and labour unions to cooperate with the local authority and the concerned government agencies to fast track the identification and registration process.
- recognize unpaid care work and promote gender-responsive public services (i.e. safe childcare centre, job information and job-seeking assistance) through which women workers would be able to maximize their effort in making incomes as well as contribute to the economic recovery.
- provide information and one-stop service centre to access assistance (cash, vocational training, food, and hygiene kits) and social protection scheme at Sangkat/commune level to the most vulnerable groups
- facilitate the provision of temporary shelters for workers, those who cannot afford rental fees, through reinforcing employer-run and/or state-run social shelters.
- prioritize informal workers in the entertainment sector, transportation sector, and street vendor sector as those who need a vaccine
- promote local agricultural products and increase market access for local products to enable reintegration of workers in the informal sector back to the agriculture sector, which was affected the least by the pandemic.

## Communication to enable action

Media and communication could potentially support workers in the informal sector to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods and well-being. Since workers in this sector need support on building awareness, motivation and skills to improve their health and income as well as to achieve their passion in the face of COVID-19, effective communication which aims to improve their ability to cope with current pressures and prepare for the future long-term, could be helpful.

- They would benefit from networking better with each other to learn how others are coping and surviving – especially as they are so digitally connected. Therefore, bringing them together in online forums to discuss/share ideas or showcase role models could be helpful.
- All of them want to work for themselves in the future, so programmes and content which can assist them with this such as business ideas, financial management and technical/vocational training etc. will motivate them to think further.
- Raising awareness of the risks related to COVID-19 and providing accessible information on preventive measures and health care is still important, especially when people are beginning to be more relaxed around taking such measures. Such content needs to find a way to address the audience in new and innovative ways i.e. some people bored of COVID-19 content or are becoming complacent therefore media and communication content needs to continue to find a new angle which will engage people effectively.
- Communication content for this audience should also aim to support people with the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 i.e. not seeing friends and family, given that many are working away from their hometowns and as a result of lack of employment, are experiencing increased isolation. Therefore, campaigns which help promote a sense of unity/community/fighting loneliness could be effective.
- It is important to note that many respondents' immediate needs are around basic survival i.e. vulnerable groups such as women workers and mobile vendors who are generating daily income to survive and are struggling with a lack of food, rent and debt. Information and communication about where they can access any support services, if available, from NGOs or government could help them cope with the immediate economic effects of COVID-19.

"The COVID19- pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core," warned by the UN. ActionAid Cambodia and BBC Media Action conducted a quantitative and qualitative study to assess the socio-economic impacts of the COVID19- crisis on vulnerable workers in the informal sector in Cambodia to evidentially inform the Royal Government of Cambodia to tailor the response and recovery by ensuring no Cambodian citizen is left behind.

To root our assessment at the grassroots level, ActionAid Cambodia collaborated with Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUFC), Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF) and Independent Democracy of Informal Economic Association (IDEA) to assess the socio-economic impacts of COVID19- crisis on mostly marginalized groups including workers in the entertainment sector, construction, transportation and street vendor. The study focuses on 416 workers in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and the field interviews were conducted in August 2020.

We found these groups have been left behind by most of the existing interventions due to their mobility, working condition, and lack of coverage by a social protection scheme. More than economic impact, they have also experienced fearful uncertainty and family/career plan. Many of them need job, food and cash assistance, childcare, and other social protection/assistance.

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