



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Project Title: Strengthening Public Health Responses to COVID-19 through Explicit Integration of Human Rights and Ethics considerations in designing and implementing Public Health Responses in Uganda

Summary: In response to the threat of COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Uganda implemented restrictive public health measures to limit the importation and wide spread of COVID-19 disease. Despite the initial effectiveness of these measures, there arose mixed attitudes towards some of the measures, especially due to their impact on human rights, social justice (equity), and livelihoods; and how this impacted the public's ability to sustainably comply with the prescribed measures. An initial review of secondary evidence on the ethics and human rights considerations for responses to pandemics found that Uganda's response could have been better. The study aim was 'To strengthen public health responses and salvage social and economic livelihoods through integrating human rights and social justice considerations in designing and implementing interventions/measures against COVID-19 in Uganda.'

Using both secondary and primary data, the study found that for effective pandemic preparedness and response, getting the social science of a pandemic correct is as critical as getting its biological/natural science correct, because community compliance with restrictive measures prescribed by the biological science depends on social, psychological, economic and ethics, etc. dynamics of the communities. Whereas most of the measures adopted by the Government Uganda against COVID-19 got the biological/natural science of the pandemic correct, for the most part their implementation failed the social science, making it difficult for the public to sustainably comply with the prescribed measures. For improvement in current future pandemic responses, more and timely investment is needed in the social science of managing pandemics as a necessary complement of their biological/natural science of the pandemic.

#### Project Team

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. John Barugahare, Ph.D. Department of Philosophy, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and SUSTAIN (Bioethics) Program, College of Health Sciences Makerere University.

#### Investigators

Dr. George Upenyitho, Consultant Public Health (MoH), Commissioner Health Services-Community Health, Ministry of Health.

Dr. Kiguli Juliet, Ph.D. Department of Community Health, School of Public Health, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University

Assoc Prof. Mwaka S. Erisa, MD, Ph.D. School of Biomedical Sciences, College of Health Sciences, and SUSTAIN (Bioethics) Program, College of Health Sciences Makerere University

Assoc. Prof. Ochieng Joseph, MD. School of Biomedical Sciences, College of Health Sciences and SUSTAIN (Bioethics) Program, College of Health Sciences Makerere University.

#### Study Consultants/Advisors

Hon. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, MD., Senior Presidential Advisor on Health & Population, Ministry of Health; Member, African Union Panel of the Wise & Co-Chair FemWise-Africa

Vice President (Emeritus), Republic of Uganda.

Prof. A.B. Rukooko, Department of Philosophy, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Makerere University

***This research is made possible with funding from the Government of the Republic of Uganda through Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (MAK-RIF)***