Support still needed: the failure of Kenya’s pandemic economic relief system and impact on the country’s women

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE IN KENYA

Economic measures
- Tax reductions
- Suspension of loan defaulting reports for those indepted by April 2020
- Pay cuts for some Members of Parliament.

Social measures
- Strict curfews
- No inter-city travel
- Closure of schools

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES
- US Global Gag Rule (GGR)
- UK reduction of foreign aid
- Hospitality, tourism, flower industries suffered with less consumers

"HE USED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE DURING LOCKDOWN BECAUSE HE KNEW I COULD NOT GO ANYWHERE"

Devastating consequences of government neglect: from July 2021, Human Rights Watch have published a series of reports signalling government failures on women in Kenya during isolation, particularly in urban spaces.

DIGITAL FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY AND ASSUMED BENEFITS
- M-Pesa mobile money success, ban on cash.
- Rescue packages kazi mtaani inua jamii
- Systems failed, did not reach many who needed assistance.
- Predatory loan systems used by many in lieu of social support, indebtedness led to additional problems with credit scores.

Platformization
- Shift gig work onto virtual platforms
- Gender bias in roles
- Barriers to entry
- Employers more power
- Hours problematic

RESILIENCE
- Resourcefulness and innovation
- Pressure on government from groups like HRW

Women in Kenya are less likely to operate a business.
- 1% own property, therefore have less loan collateral.
- Struggles with entrepreneurship:
  ◦ Discrimination in business spaces, lack of education, and family pressures.
- More likely to adopt work as roadside vendors or domestic helpers.
- 30.2% of female headed households lived below the poverty line compared to a 26% male counterpart.

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