

**Social and Economic Impacts
of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Vulnerable
Groups (Tuk-Tuk Drivers, Street Vendors and
Domestic Workers) in Phnom Penh City,
Cambodia**

SUMMARY REPORT

Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association

2020

Acknowledgements

Research on the “Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups (Tuk-Tuk Drivers, Domestic Workers and Street Vendors) in Phnom Penh City, Cambodia” was implemented by the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) to collect evidence on the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the government’s strategies to counter the effects of the pandemic on the informal workers in Phnom Penh. Its findings will provide evidence for the advocacy efforts for more efficient policies in supporting informal workers, particularly those working in the informal sector.

The research was led by the Head of IDEA’s Executive Board, with the inputs, participation and data collection gathered from IDEA member organisations. The research design and report received valuable inputs, and financial and technical support from Asia Monitor Resource Center.

The research team would like to convey its special thanks to tuk-tuk drivers, domestic workers and street vendors in Phnom Penh City who spent time participating in the research to share their problems as well as their expectations toward the local authorities and stakeholders.

IDEA expresses its appreciation to the research team and to all those who contributed to this publication.

– President of IDEA

1. Introduction

COVID-19 is affecting the lives, health, work and education of people around the world, with 79.3 million cases and 1.4 dead worldwide according to data accessed on 25 December 2020. The first case identified in Cambodia was a Chinese man on 27 January 2020. By today, there are 263 cases and of these 243 have recovered.

The number of tourists visiting Cambodia has decreased deeply, resulting in serious ramifications for tourism sectors, particularly those who work in the services sector and transportation. In the meantime, the Government of Cambodia has announced many measures to prevent the spread of the virus such as closing of public and private schools, karaoke, that affect millions of informal workers, namely street vendors, tuk-tuk drivers, domestic workers, waste pickers, workers in restaurants, coffee shops, entertainment facilities or part-time cleaners working for offices and homes. Their income was lost partly or completely, and most of them are excluded from social protection services. About 80% of the tuk-tuk drivers, domestic workers and street vendors lost at least 50% of their monthly income.

2. Research Objective

This current research was conducted by IDEA from August to October 2020 with AMRC's technical assistance and funding. The objective of the research is to assess the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tuk-tuk drivers, domestic workers and street vendors in Cambodia in order to provide evidence to policy makers currently developing COVID-19-related relief packages for vulnerable groups including informal workers, and policies related to pandemics and social protection in the future.

3. Methodologies

The literature review was conducted with reports, studies, articles and policies related to COVID-19. Phone interviews were conducted with 604 informal workers (200 tuk-tuk drivers, 200 domestic workers and 204 street vendors). Interview data were inputted into a Google form and results from the Google form were compiled and interpreted to create this report.

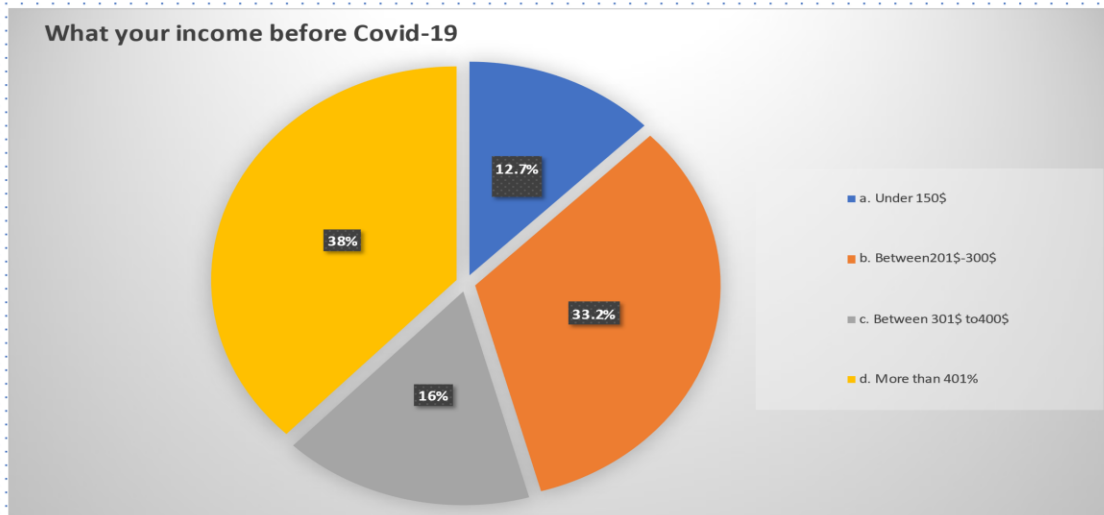
4. Summary of Findings

4.1 Respondents were asked: How much is your monthly income before COVID-19? In response, 38% reported that they earn more than USD\$401, 16.6% said that they earn between \$301 and \$400, 33.2% said that they earn between \$201\$ and \$300, while only 12.7% said that they earn

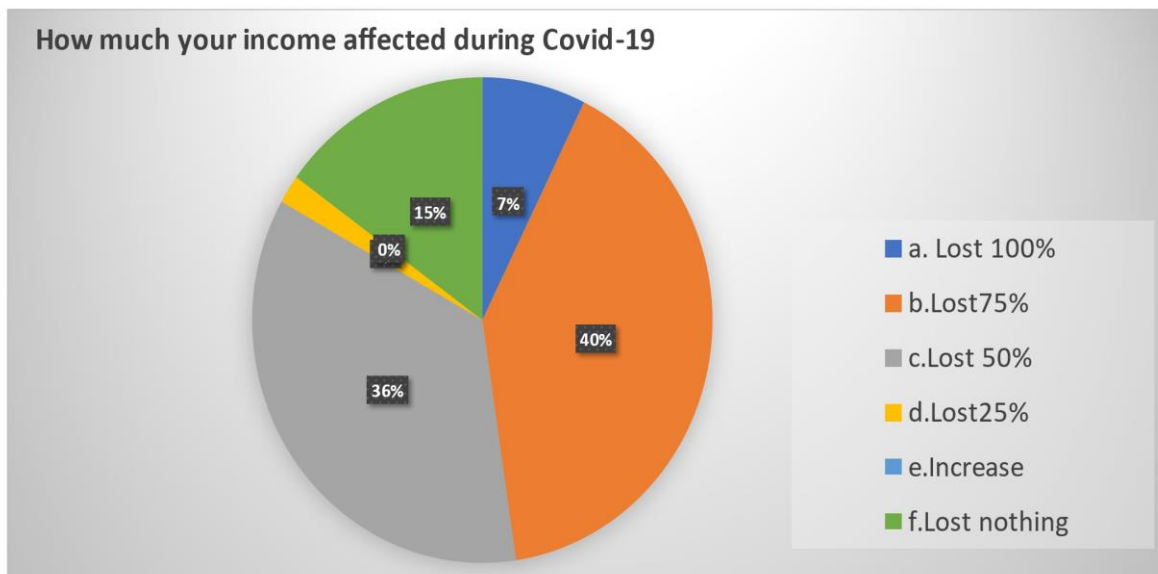
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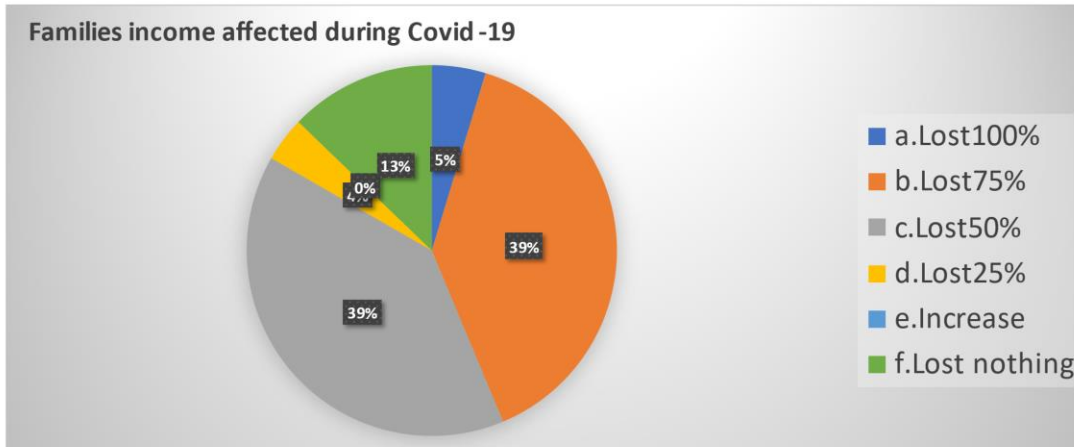
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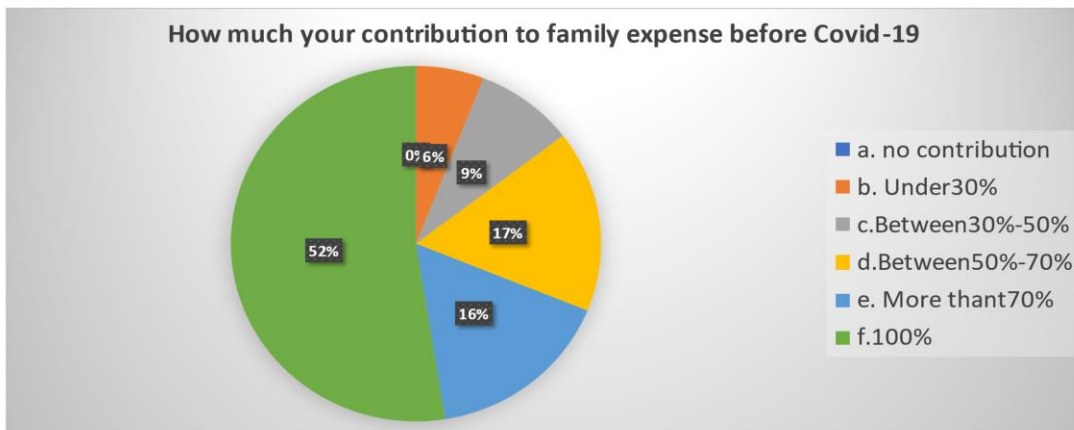
4.2 Respondents were asked: How much was your income affected during the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 7.3% of interviewees reported that they lost 100% of income, 40.4% said they lost 75%, and 35.5% said they lost 50%. However, 1.9% said they lost 25% while only 15% responded that they lost nothing (0%).



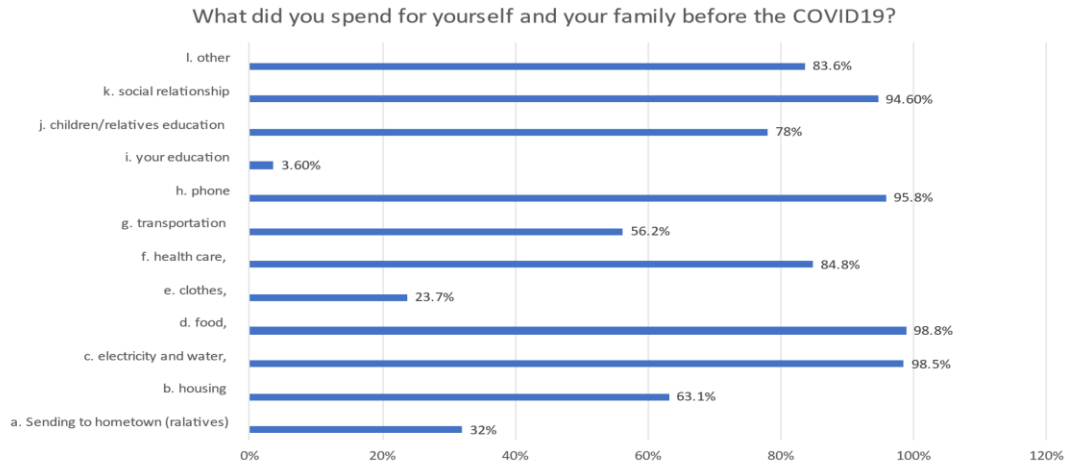
4.3 Respondents were asked: How much was your family’s income affected during the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 83% of workers’ families lost at least 50% of their income during the COVID-19 pandemic, 4% said that they lost 25%, and only 13% said they lost nothing (0%).



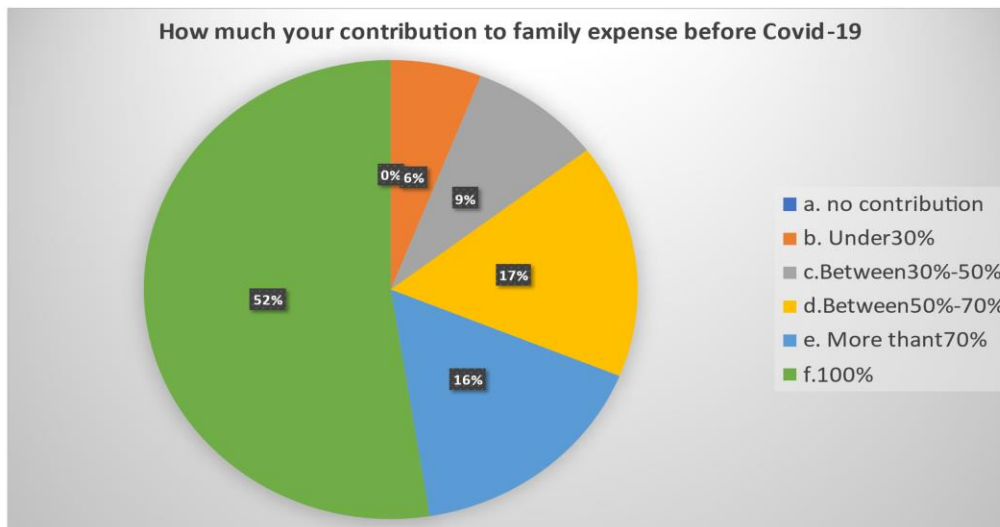
4.4 Respondents were asked: How much was your contribution to family expenses before the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 55% of workers spent more than \$300 per month before the pandemic, 23% spent between \$201 and \$300, 15% spent between \$150 and \$201, and only 8% spent less than \$150.



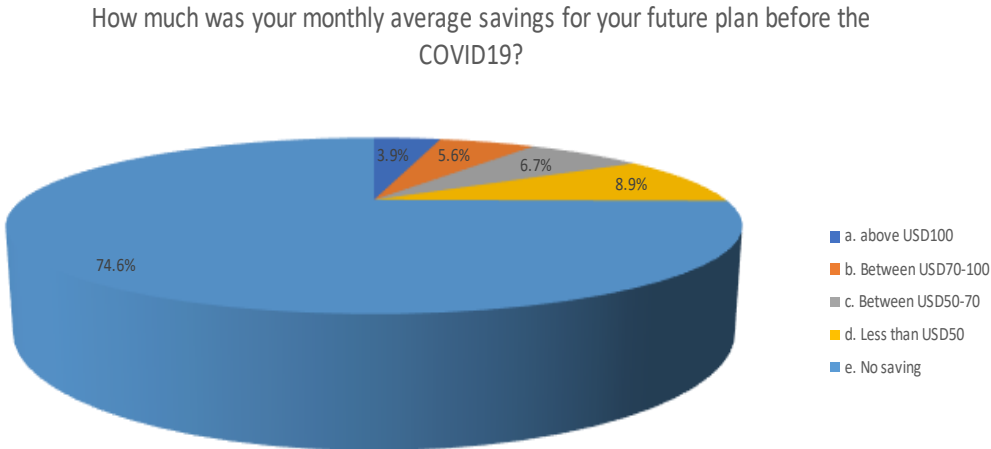
4.5 Respondents were asked: What did you spend money on for yourself and your family before the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 32% of respondents said that they sent money to relatives in the hometown, 63.1% said they spent money on housing, 98.5% said they spent money on their children or relatives' education, 94.6% spent money on social relationships, and 83.6% spent money on other things.



4.6 Respondents were asked: How much was your contribution to family expenses before the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 52% of respondents said they contributed 100%, 16% contributed 70%, 17% contributed 50%–70%, 9% contributed 30%–50%, and 6% contributed less than 30%.



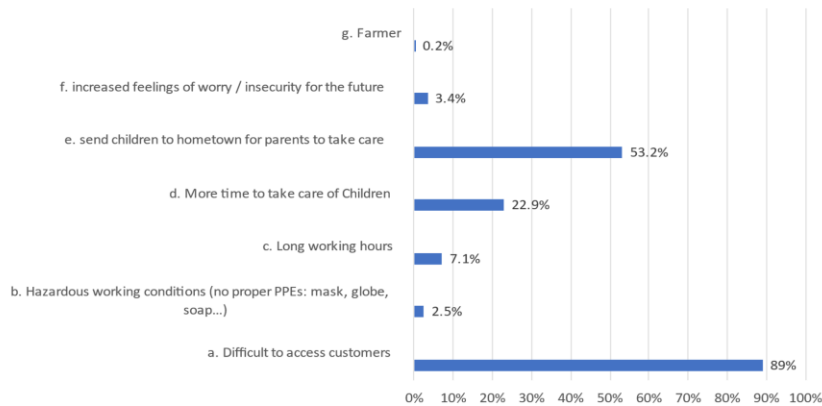
4.7 Respondents were asked: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, how much was your average monthly savings for your future? In response, 3.9% of respondents reported that they saved more than \$100, 5.7% said they saved between \$70 and \$100, 6.7% said that they saved between \$50 and \$70, and 8.9% said that they saved less than \$50, and 74.7% said that they save nothing.



4.8 Respondents were asked: How did your job change due to the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 89% of respondents said that they do the same job (reported no job change), 53.4% said they borrow from other people, 22.8% said the use savings, 7.3% said that they are looking for a job, 3.4% said they went back home, 2.5% said that they have another job, and only 0.2%

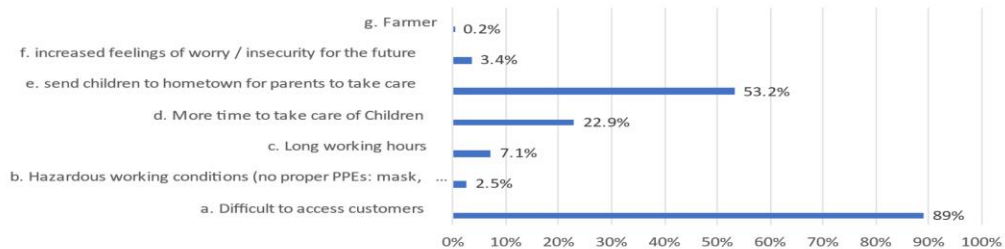
said that they do agricultural work.

What were the challenges in livelihood conditions, earning capacity and caring during the lockdown and social distancing?



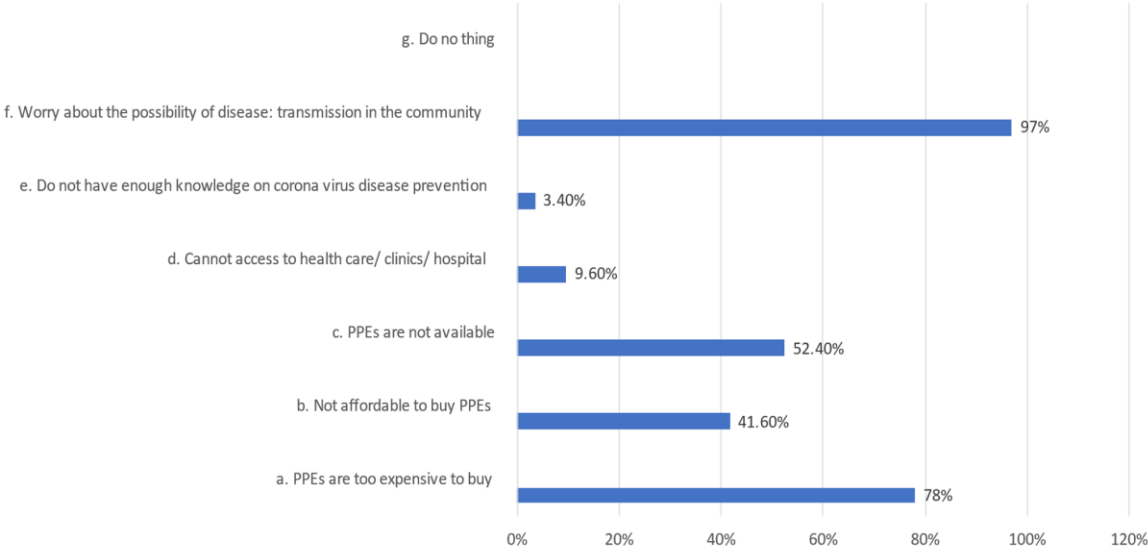
4.9 Respondents were asked: What were the challenges in livelihood conditions, earning capacity and caring during the imposed lockdown and social distancing measures? In response, 89% of workers said that it became difficult to access customers, 53.2% said they sent children to their hometown for parents to care for, 22.9% of workers said that they spent more time taking care of children, and 7.15% said they work longer hours. As well, 3.4% reported increased feelings of worry and insecurity about the future, and 2.5% reported hazardous working conditions.

18. What were the challenges in livelihood conditions, earning capacity and caring during the lockdown and social distancing?



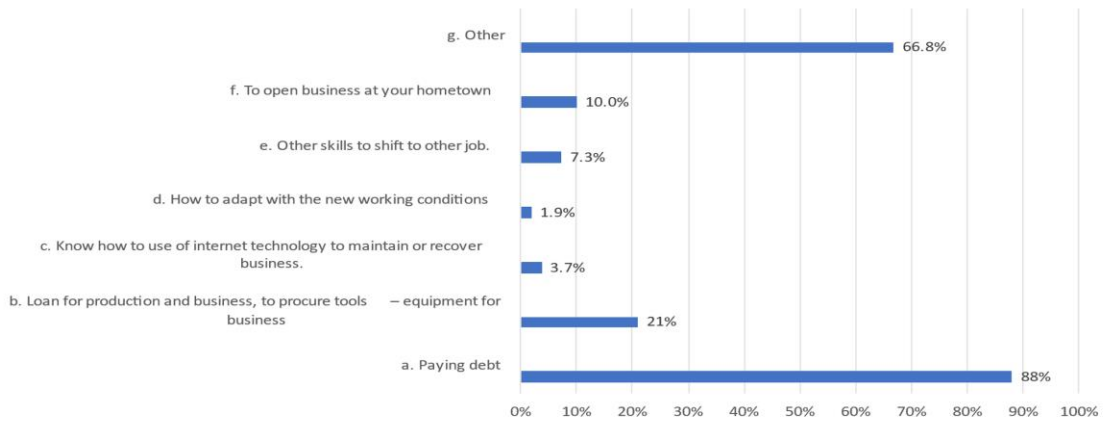
4.10 Respondents were asked: How did you access personal protective equipment (PPE) and basic healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 78% of respondents said that they had no customers during the pandemic, 41.6% said they work with no personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and alcohol, etc. As well, 52.4% said that they work long hours, 97% said that they experienced increased worry about future safety, 9.6% said they need time to take care of children, and 3.4% said they brought kids to their hometown to ask grandparents to take care of them.

How did you access to personal protection equipment (PPE) and basic health care during the COVID19?



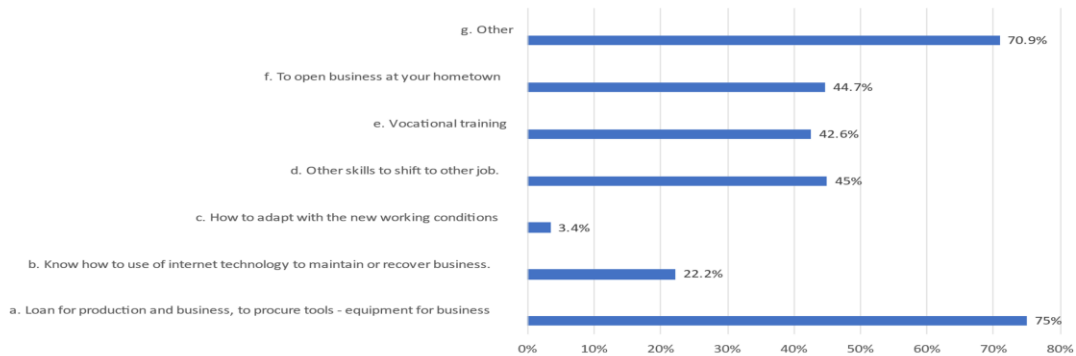
4.11 Respondents were asked: How did you find protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic? In response, 97.3% of respondent said that the protective equipment was too expensive, 98% of respondents expressed they are worried about the spread of the virus in the community, 7.5% said that they can't access a health clinic, 2% said they lack knowledge about protection against the virus, 1.5% said they can't afford to buy protective equipment, and 0.5% said that they did nothing.

At the moment, what are your urgent needs (short term) to recover, maintain or develop household's economic situation?



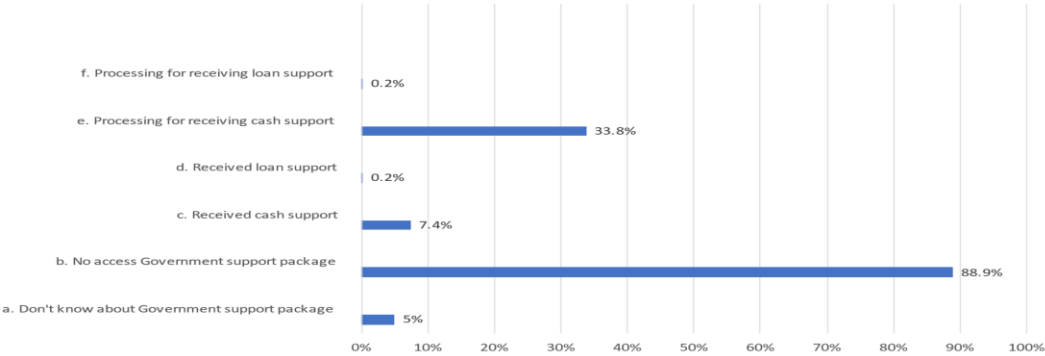
4.12 Respondents were asked: At the moment, what are your urgent needs (short term) to recover, maintain or develop your household's economic situation? In response, 88% of respondents said they have to pay debt, 21% said that they need a loan for production and business to procure tools and equipment, 1.9% said they need to know how to adapt to the new working conditions, 10% said they are looking to open a business in their hometown, 3.7% said they need to know how to use new technology to maintain or recover business, and 7.3% need other skills to shift to another job.

What are your future needs (long term) to recover, maintain or develop household's economic situation?



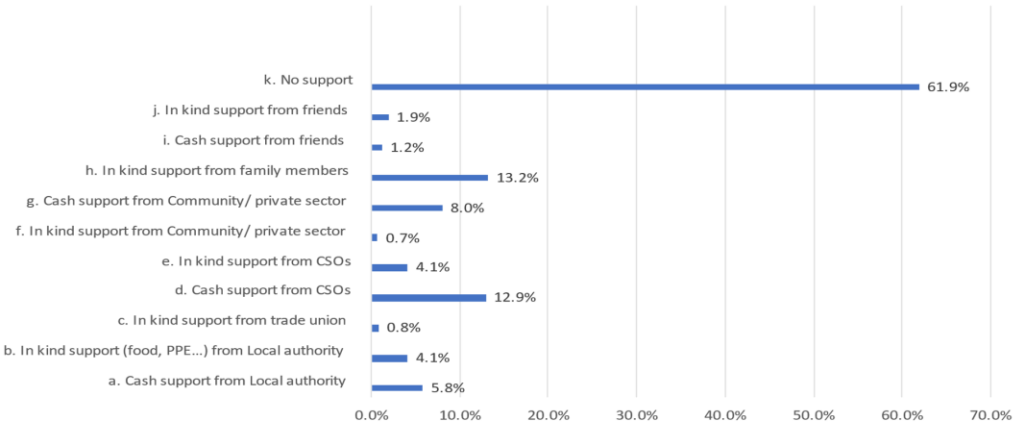
4.13 Respondents were asked: What are your future needs (long term) to recover, maintain or develop your household’s economic situation? In response, 75% of respondents said that they need a loan to buy equipment for running their business, 22.2% said they need to know the basic technology in order to protect and strengthen their business, 3.4% said they need to know how to adapt to resistances to this difficult situation, 42.6% said they need vocational training, 44.7% said that they need to set up their business in their hometown, and 45% said they need other.

Do you access to the support from the Government emergency package



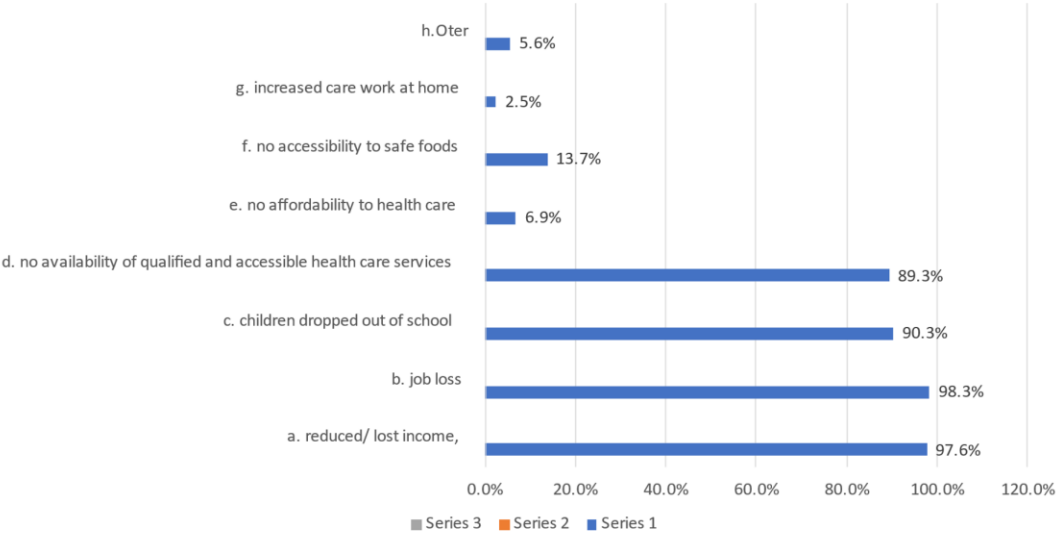
4.14 Respondents were asked: Did you access the support from the government emergency package? In response, 5% of respondents said they don’t know about any support from the government, 88.9% said they didn’t get the support from government, 33.8% said that they are in the process of getting cash support, 0.2% said they are in the process of getting a loan, and only 7.4% said they got in-cash support from government.

Have you received any supports in any kinds since the Covid19 happened? (you can choose more than one option) .



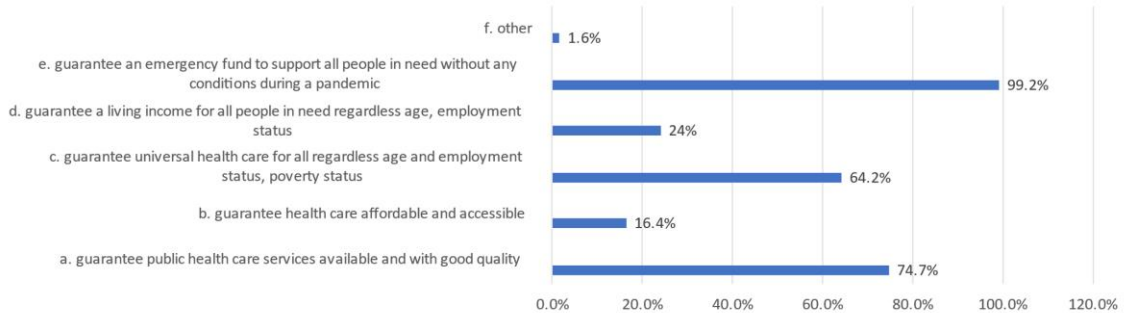
4.15 Respondents were asked: Have you received any support of any kind since the COVID-19 pandemic began? (You can choose more than one option.) In response, 5.8% said that they got in-cash support from local government, 4.1% got in-kind support from local government, 0.8% got in-cash support from the trade union/association, 4.1% said they got in-cash support from local non-governmental organisation (NGO), 8% got in-cash support from community/private sectors, 13.2% got in-kind support from community/private sectors, 1.2% got in-cash support from family members, 1.9% got in-kind support from family members, 0.3% got in-cash support from family, 0.3% got in-kind support from family, while 61.9% of respondents said that they received no support.

if the COVID19 come back or any other pandemics/ crises occurs, what make you more fear/worry about (could be more than one option):



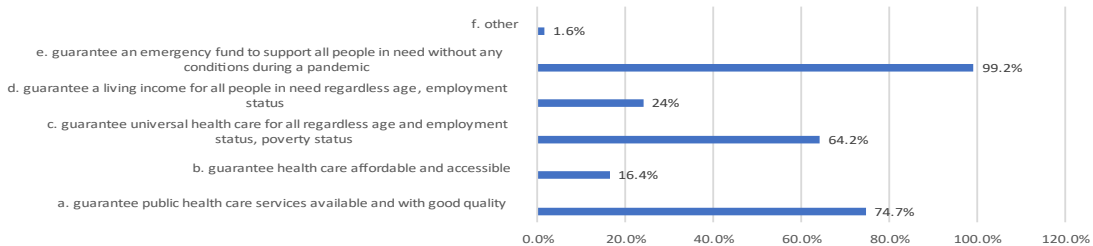
4.16 Respondents were asked: If COVID-19 comes back or another pandemic or crisis occurs, what are you most fearful or worried about? (Can choose more than one option.) In response, 97.6% of respondents said that they fear losing income, 98.3% said that they fear losing their job, 90.3% said they fear their children dropping out of school, 89.3% said that they fear not having access to quality health services, 6.9% said that they fear not having access to healthcare, and 13.7% said they fear not having access to safe food.

27. according to you, to help people to be resilient against any sock/ crisis that may lead to their income loss and inaccessibility to proper health care, the Government should (select the 3 most important to you in the list)



4.17 Respondents were asked: To help people to be resilient against any sickness or crisis that may lead to income loss and inaccessibility to proper healthcare, the government should: (select the three most important to you in the list). In response, 51.4% of respondents said that the government should guarantee public health services, 14.7% said that the government should guarantee access to health services, 72.4% said that the government should guarantee universal healthcare without considering type of employment or poor people, 44.2% of respondents said that the government should guarantee a decent income without considering age or type of employment, and 98% of respondents said that the government should provide urgent support to all citizens.

27. according to you, to help people to be resilient against any sock/ crisis that may lead to their income loss and inaccessibility to proper health care, the Government should (select the 3 most important to you in the list)



5. Recommendations

- The Government of Cambodia should amend the definition of informal workers to ensure that the vulnerable informal workers can get health equity cards from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).
- The Government of Cambodia should provide cash transfer to vulnerable informal workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as with other formal workers in the garment and textile sectors.
- The Government of Cambodia should recognise and register street vendors to ensure that they are able to get support during crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Most street vendors migrated from rural areas and lack citizen documents so that they are unable to get support from the government program. IDEA recommends that the government provide all necessary documents to the poor people such as National Identity card, family record books, and family and resident books.
- The government should increase the national budget for social protection to expand health equity cards to informal workers especially for those who are most vulnerable.
- The government should provide vocational training to marginalised informal workers with enough support for daily living.