

### COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS: FACING THE RISKS TO THE GIRL CHILD

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#### BACKGROUND

1. In March 2020, the first phase of THE COVID-19 lock-down implemented and schools were closed for an indefinite time period.
2. The lock-down restrictions caused increased food insecurity for the rural palliative care families, leaving vulnerable households and children in a bad state.
3. Girls who left their homes in search for food were at a very high risk of rape, early pregnancies and of giving up on their education.

#### OBJECTIVES

To improve and secure livelihoods and safety of school going girls supported by Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja during the COVID-19 lockdown period and beyond



#### METHODS

By March 2020, 126 children (58 girls) were being supported with school fees.

After announcing the lockdown, a plan was drawn to support all the children with:

- Monthly food packs (5 kg maize flour, 2 kg beans , 1 bar soap, sanitary towels as needed.)
- Clothing,
- Monthly counselling sessions,
- Self-study materials, books and assignments in their homes.



#### RESULTS

- Routine monitoring and counselling at home secured the girl child is kept safe and settled with their families.
- Only one girl fell pregnant – all the others are continuing with their education.
- The food helped the whole family meet their needs
- Reading books and other school materials kept the girl child active, revising and ready to return to school.

#### CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions increased food insecurity for already poor families. The girl child was at high risk for early pregnancies and marriage. The comprehensive, holistic RHHJ support programme designed for the 126 children during the COVID-19 school closure proved very successful.

