

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

*Surveys of the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Catholic Parishes in
Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia*

May 2021



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Introduction

This report compiles some of the major findings from five studies that five researchers conducted in their home countries of Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia. The five researchers and the countries where they conducted their surveys are:

- Sister Margaret Mary Dione Ajebe-Sone, SST, M.Ed. conducted the survey in Cameroon
- Sister Bibiana M. Ngundo, LSOSF, Ph.D. conducted the survey in Kenya
- Sister Florence Emurayeveya, EHJ, M.Ed. conducted the survey in Nigeria
- Sister Hellen A. Bandiho, STH, Ed.D. conducted the survey in Tanzania
- Sister Joan Chisala, CSJB, B.Ed. conducted the survey in Zambia

The researchers surveyed priests, religious sisters, and catechists in the parishes in their respective countries. The surveys were distributed both electronically (most often with a link via WhatsApp or email) and using paper versions. They received the following responses:

- Cameroon: 148 respondents
- Kenya: 112 respondents
- Nigeria: 120 respondents
- Tanzania: 161 respondents
- Zambia: 61 respondents

The rest of this report presents the major findings from the closed-ended questions from the five reports produced by the researchers. The full versions of each report can be accessed at:

[Link](#)

Evaluation of Parish Morale and Presence of Staff and Volunteers

Generally, since the pandemic, respondents from Kenya and Tanzania are most likely to report that the morale of the groups measured in the table below has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot.”

Morale at the Parish Decreasing “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Morale of priests overall	40	78	44	67	38
Your morale	–	72	21	–	–
Morale of parishioners overall	51	76	66	72	69
Morale of others you work with	48	80	50	70	56

Leaders in Kenya are most likely to report that the number of staff members working at their parish has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”. Similarly, leaders in Zambia are most likely to report that the number of volunteers at their parish has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”. On the other end of the scale, leaders in Cameroon are least likely to report a decrease in both of the groups measured in the table below.

Number of Staff Members and Volunteers at the Parish Decreasing “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
The number of staff members working at your parish either in-person or online	37	66	39	52	46
The number of people volunteering at the parish to help the needy	30	51	53	55	60

Frequency of People Seeking Parish Support

More than half of the parish leaders in all but one country (Tanzania), report their parishes have seen an increase in the number of people seeking spiritual guidance and counseling. Specifically, Cameroon participants report the greatest increase “somewhat” or “a lot” for the groups measured in the table below.

People Seeking Guidance and Counseling Support Increased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of people seeking spiritual guidance	71	58	55	20	54
Number of people seeking counseling	64	57	50	21	41

Similarly to above, between 47% and 82% of leaders from all countries but Tanzania report that the number of people coming for medical, financial, and food assistance has increased “somewhat” or “a lot”. The country with the greatest increases is Kenya.

Number of People Coming to Parish for Support Increased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of people coming for medical assistance	67	69	50	28	47
Number of people coming for financial assistance	68	78	80	35	82
Number of people coming for food assistance	61	79	82	29	72

Masses, Sacraments and Rites Offered

Of the five countries, parish leaders in Kenya are most likely to report that the number of Masses offered at parishes – both on-site and online – have decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”.

Number of Masses Celebrated in the Parish Decreased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of masses celebrated on site in their parish with parishioners.	23	64	21	26	37
Number of masses celebrated at their parish online.	42	61	33	20	19

Among the other sacraments and rites queried about, leaders in Kenya, once more are most likely to report the greatest decrease in all domains measured. Leaders in Nigeria, Zambia, and Tanzania report a decrease in the number of all but funeral rites.

Number of Sacraments and Rites Decreased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of funerals.	43	64	20	37	28
Number of weddings.	66	92	44	78	60
Number of confirmations.	73	90	57	64	69
Number of First Holy communions.	67	90	55	60	74

Number of Parishioners Participating in Sacraments and Programs

Besides the number of sacraments offered, the survey also asked whether the number of people participating in parish sacraments and programs have increased, decreased, or stayed the same. More than six in ten, leaders from all countries say that the number of people participating in small Christian communities have decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”. Concerning Confession/Reconciliation, with the exception of Nigeria parish leaders, at least six in ten say the number of people coming has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”

Number of Parishioner Participation at Parish Decreased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of people participating in small Christian Communities.	79	93	62	71	79
Number of people coming to Confession/Reconciliation.	60	82	38	63	67

In regards to child enrollment in Catholic schools and other parish classes, leaders in Kenya and Cameroon are most likely to report that the number of children enrolled has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”, as seen in the table below. Leaders in Nigeria are the least likely to report a decrease in child enrollment in Catholic schools or other parish classes.

Child Enrollment and Participation at Parish Decreased “Somewhat” or “A Lot” Combined, by Country of Response					
	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Number enrolled in local Catholic grade schools.	71	91	48	57	55
Number enrolled in local Catholic high schools	78	90	43	60	52
Number enrolled in parish catechetical classes	78	90	44	67	70
Number participating in parish religious education classes	77	91	47	63	75

Financial Health of the Parishes

Donations from parishioners have shrunk for all five countries along with the donations from outside charitable agencies. With more than six in ten leaders saying they have decreased “somewhat” or “a lot”. Parish financial help from their arch/diocese varies with Tanzania and Nigeria leaders least likely to report a decrease in financial support from the arch/diocese.

	Cameroon	Kenya	Nigeria	Tanzania	Zambia
	%	%	%	%	%
Amount of donations from parishioners	81	80	75	71	87
Amount of donations from outside charitable agencies	73	62	72	69	75
Parish financial help from the arch/diocese	60	74	41	38	56

Responses to Open Ended Questions

Below are the responses the parish personnel gave to two open-ended questions on the survey concerning how the pandemic has affected the financial health of the parish and how dioceses or religious institutes have helped parishes during the pandemic.

Q: Please describe how the pandemic has affected the financial health of your parish. In what ways have you tried to address those issues?

Cameroon

- Respondents were asked to describe in writing about the financial health of their parishes, with most respondents saying the pandemic had had a negative impact on their parishes. While the pandemic is a major contributor, some respondents mentioned pre-existing financial challenges, such as the current socio-political crises which have been going on for four years in English Cameroon and which has left many of their parishioners displaced. Others hold that the pandemic is not an issue in their parishes, which are in very remote areas and have always had financial challenges.
- Respondents report that their parishes are especially likely to have minimized their financial challenges by laying off of some parish staff, paying less stipends to all workers, reducing unnecessary costs, and engaging in income generating projects like farming. In spite of the challenges experienced by the parishes, most ministries continued as usual but with caution.

Kenya

- In response to this question, respondents narrate how the pandemic has affected the financial health of their parish. To this, respondents commonly report that the financial health of their parish has been adversely affected. Some respondents say that since the pandemic has led to the loss of jobs, many parishioners that helped the parish financially have become incapacitated. Very few people are giving tithes and the amount of cash given as offertory has also reduced. Some of the parish projects are on a stand off until the situation improves hopefully.
- As a way of addressing the issue of parish financial dilemma during the pandemic, some respondents say that the Church leaders asked Christians to give some donations to the Church. They also provided a pay-bill number so that offertory gifts can be deposited directly to the parish account. To sustain workers, we have had to reach out to well-wishers for financial assistance.

Nigeria

- Respondents were also asked to write in about the financial health of their parishes. Respondents report that the financial health has decreased significantly. While the pandemic is the major contributor, some mentioned pre-existing financial challenges making the situation worse. They also reported that they cut down expenses while others source for funds within and outside the parish and from friends.

- Financial challenges were minimized by reducing unnecessary costs and spending, appealing to parishioners to assist and donate to the parish, and generating funds through the establishment of self-reliant micro projects. In spite of the challenges experienced by the pandemic, most apostolates continued as usual but with caution.

Tanzania

- Respondents were also asked to write in about the financial health of their parishes, reporting that the health has decreased significantly. While the pandemic is the major contributor, some also mentioned pre-existing financial challenges.
- Financial challenges were minimized by laying off of some parish staff, paying less stipends to all workers as well as reducing unnecessary costs. In spite of the challenges experienced by the pandemic, most ministries continued as usual but with caution.

Zambia

- From the qualitative feedback received from respondents, it was reported that the financial health of their parishes has significantly decreased. It was reported that the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the economic activities of members. This caused poor turnover in terms of financial and material donations from members to the parishes. Complementing the adverse effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic, is the fact that the economic environment in the country has also posed a huge financial challenge for households, the church and firms. Most respondents do recognize the impact of the rise in the cost of living for households and cost of doing businesses for firms.
- The COVID-19 pandemic presented financial challenges that called for cost reduction through laying off of some parish staff, paying less stipends to all workers as well as reducing unnecessary costs. With the surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country, the government announced a number of pronouncements that discouraged gathering including churches. This meant that most ministries continued religious activities through a blended approach online and physical services as usual but with caution.

Q: How has your diocese or religious order supported your parish during this time of pandemic? How might your diocese or religious order better support priests/ sisters like yourselves during the pandemic?

Cameroon

- The greatest kinds of support respondents' parishes have received from their Dioceses or Archdioceses is emotional support as well as encouragement. Dioceses are constantly carrying out educative, sensitization and awareness programs on the realities of Covid 19.

Kenya

- Most respondents say that the diocese especially the bishop's office send pastoral letters and other guidelines to parishes. The bishop also called for meetings with the priests. A respondent says "My religious Order has tried to provide foods and other items such as

water tanks to the very needy families”. My religious Order did distribute to different communities of the sisters isolated foodstuffs to supplement their diet. Our religious order has supported the parishioners through online services and giving some food to the poor.

- My religious order supports priests through Mass stipend and pastoral stipend and support social work in the parishes financially.

Nigeria

- The kinds of support most often received from their Dioceses or Archdioceses was palliatives, financial assistance in some Ecclesiastical Provinces, and emotional support and encouragement.

Tanzania

- The most support received from their Dioceses or Archdioceses was emotional support as well as encouragement.

Zambia

- Respondents reported that there was some form of resilience in terms of financial support accruing from their Dioceses or Archdioceses. Furthermore, gestures from diocese or Archdiocese were well received through emotional support, encouragement and sensitization on how to deal with the pandemic.

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This research is funded through a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to further the research of women religious and Catholicism on the continent of Africa.

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