



COMMUNITY RESEARCH ON THE CURRENT STATE OF FOOD AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

*An analysis of Spark communities and the
impact of COVID-19*



May 2020

THE STUDY

This rapid response survey focused on understanding the current state of food and economic security, health, savings, Spark-funded projects and community communication. Additionally, the research sought to understand the current community-led initiatives and ideas for response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AREAS OF INQUIRY



Health



COVID-19
Prevention



Food & Economic
Security



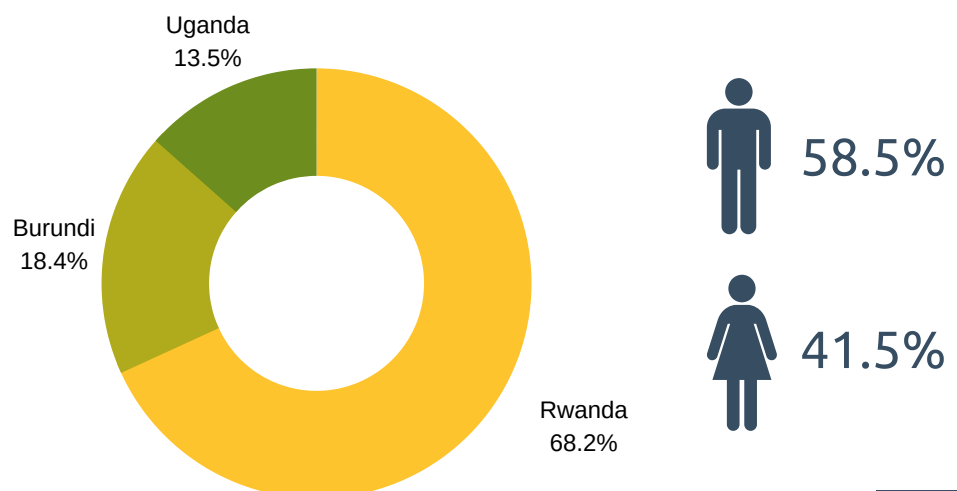
Community-Led
Initiatives

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire guide was administered by Spark Trainers to **446 respondents from Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda**. 41.5 % of respondents were women and 58.5% men (with Rwanda at 45 Percent female respondents and Burundi and Uganda at 35 % and 30% respectively).

Different levels and the changing nature of restrictions during data collection across countries may have influenced how questions were asked and how responses were framed and is a potential weakness in the data.

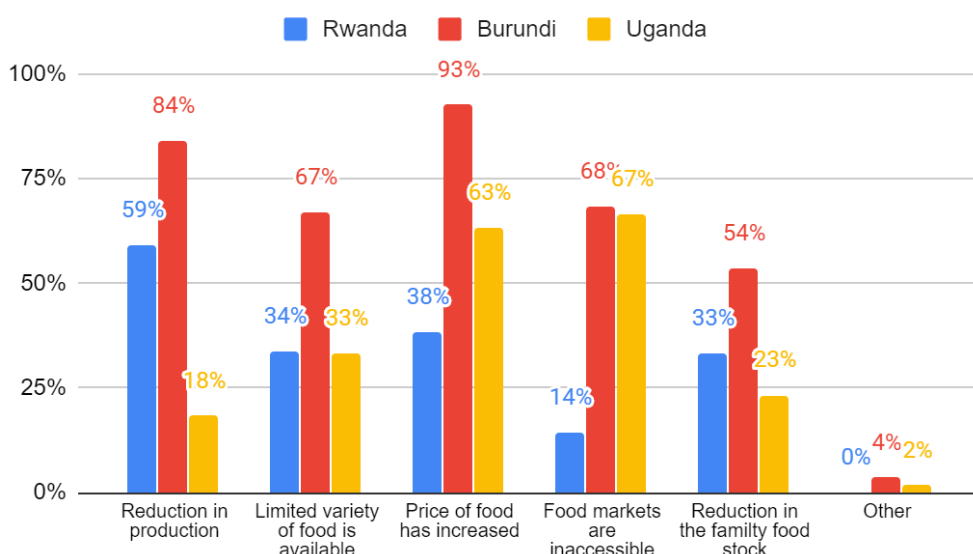
RESPONDENTS



FOOD & ECONOMIC SECURITY

- Overall, **86% of the respondents think that the restrictions caused by COVID 19 is affecting the availability of food and economic opportunities in their communities.** This number peaks in Rwanda, where 94% of respondents reported changes to the availability of food and economic opportunities in their communities. Fewer respondents from Burundi (54%) reported changes to the availability of food and economic opportunities, partly because the government in Burundi had not implemented a complete lock down by the time of the study.
- Overall, **food availability to households is reported to have decreased** - largely because of increased prices, decreases in food production, and challenges accessing markets and certain varieties of food.
- **59% of respondents reported that there were no actions being taken in their communities to support those affected, except for donations of food** - reported slightly more by female than male respondents.
- **38% of the respondents reported that actions are being taken within their communities to support the most vulnerable members in their communities** with food (31%) and other forms of support (7%, including small loans, basic household supplies like salt and soap, and support to plant garden crops). In Rwanda, the government has encouraged donations of food for the neediest families, which partially explains the emphasis on food donations.
- **9% more female than male respondents reported that they or their communities are supporting food provision for needy families**, perhaps highlighting differences within households in terms of supporting neighbors.

How are the restrictions making families have inadequate food for consumption?

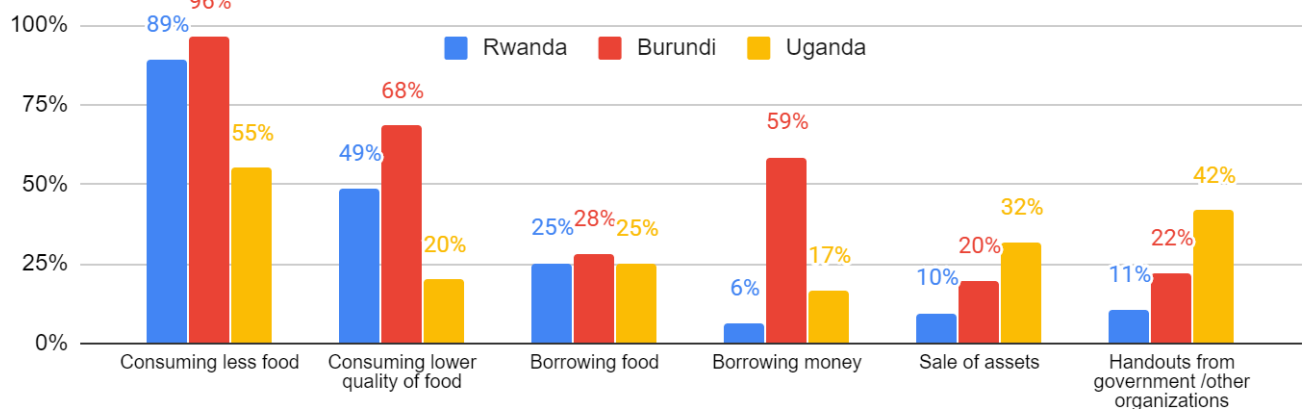


“I cannot afford to support others but if someone comes seeking support, we share the little we have”
Female, Rwanda’

“I can only offer advice because I have no food too”
Male, West Nile, Uganda

- **The majority of respondents reported concerning coping mechanisms being employed by families in facing food shortages** in their communities, including consuming less food (reported by 86% of respondents), consuming lower quality food (48%), borrowing food (26%) borrowing money (17%), receiving handouts from Govt or other organisation (17%), and sale of assets (14%). Given the high levels of poverty before the crisis in these communities, (with most eating one meal per day), these finding likely point to increased food insecurity.

How are families managing the challenge of having inadequate food for their consumption?



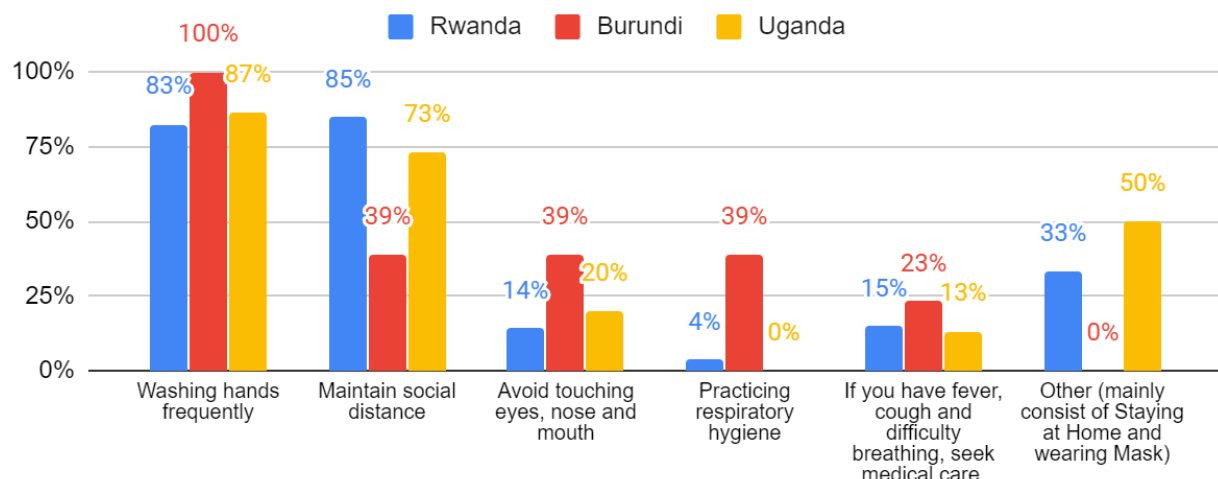
“*We are getting support from our neighbors*”
Female, Rwanda

“*We go without food sometimes, and do casual labour with the natives [Ugandans] to get cassava*”
Male, Refugee, West Nile, Uganda.

COVID-19 PREVENTION

- When asked about measures being employed to prevent contracting COVID-19, **86% of respondents reported washing hands frequently, while 75% said they were maintaining social distancing.** It seems respondents are “less aware” of other methods; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth (20%), respiratory hygiene (10%), seeking medical care when sick (16%).
- Respondents overwhelmingly support respecting government directives for the duration of this crisis.

What are you currently doing to keep yourselves safe from contracting and avoiding the spread of COVID?



COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

- Thinking about the future, respondents highlighted that **efforts within communities to address economic and food insecurity could focus on agriculture (18%), food donation (21%)**, conducting business in line with social distancing guidelines (7%), advocacy to gov't and other NGOs (7%), and helping one another (7%). **16% of respondents said that there was no way to improve the situation or that they didn't know what to do.**
- There is a reasonable appetite for socially distanced face to face meetings within Uganda (48%) and Rwanda (34%).
- Only **20% of respondents in Uganda / Rwanda reported that their communities are using savings group resources to address their immediate needs.** This is despite 92% of respondents being part of savings groups.
- In Burundi, 55% of respondents report that their community is using their savings to address the needs of the most vulnerable. In target communities in Burundi, savings groups are part of 'solidarity groups' which have been established to support more vulnerable members of communities, particularly orphans.

IDEAS FOR JOINT COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES TO COMBAT THE IMPACT OF COVID 19:

"If possible for those one who still have food they must give some to those one who are struggling to get food, but selection of those people should be transparent" - Female, Rwanda

"Coming together and discuss on how we can support those poor ones that are within us" - Female, Rwanda

"Lending food to vulnerable members to be paid back after a successful harvest" - Male, Uganda,

"Collecting food together and distributing to the needy families during this period as a community" -Female, Uganda

COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

- Phone calls and face to face meeting are the most preferred modes on communication among community members

What is the easiest way to keep communicating with other community members during this period?

