

COVID-19 Context Analysis Report



GRADUATING TO RESILIENCE

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Graduating to Resilience is implemented by AVSI Foundation in partnership with



Background

Graduating to Resilience (the Activity) is a USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) funded Activity led by AVSI Foundation in partnership with Trickle Up and IMPAQ International, which seeks to test the Graduation Approach's ability to graduate ultra-poor refugee and host community households in Western Uganda from conditions of food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience. This 7-year Activity will engage 13,200 households (HHs) in two 30-month cohorts in Kamwenge District that are economically active, but chronically unable to meet their basic needs without some form of assistance; fifty percent of participants will be selected from the host community and fifty percent refugees from Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement within the same district. The Activity is testing three variations of the Graduation Approach to identify the most effective and efficient approach to reach ultra-poor refugee and host community populations. The first cohort of implementation was comprised of 3,304 host community households and 3,325 refugee community households;¹ implementation began in January 2019.

To date, 17 months into implementation of Cohort 1, participants have received 12 months of consumption support,² which ended in February 2020, received core technical and core skills trainings (Farmer Field Business School (FFBS) and (Financial

Program Component	ARM 1 – Standard Graduation	ARM 2 – Group Coaching	ARM 3 – Empowerment model
Consumption Support	√	√	√
Core Training and Skills	√	√	√
Savings	√	√	√
Asset Transfer	√	√	X
Coaching	Individual	Group	Individual
Linkages	√	√	√

Figure 1: Overview of RCT by Treatment Arm

Literacy (FL)), engaged in business plan development (Selection, Planning and Management (SPM)), engaged in regular household or group coaching sessions, gained access to savings and loans (Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)) and are beginning their second cycle, have been linked to private sector actors, and an asset transfer was provided to 4,400 participants in August and September 2019 as start-up capital to kick-start their business enterprises.

Objective

In response to the global pandemic, COVID-19, the Government of Uganda (GoU) has acted swiftly to halt the spread of the virus within its borders. This has resulted in significant restrictions to movement on citizens and residents, which has resulted in food price hikes, reduced income, and growing food insecurity. While the situation remains relatively calm and staff have adapted various activities for remote-based interactions, as part of accountability to participants, the Activity carried out several context assessments to better understand participants knowledge of COVID-19 information (Participant Awareness), impact of restrictions on participants lives (Participant Experience), as well as the impact to surrounding markets both from a supply and demand perspective (Market Research).³ Information from

¹ As of March 2020, there were 6,395 active households, representing an approximate drop-out rate of 3.5%.

² <https://www.avsi.org/en/news/2019/01/10/g2r-activity-update-2-graduation-approach/1729/>

³ Developed by adapting the Rapid Assessment of Markets Tool

these surveys will provide the Activity with insight on how participants are coping with this shock and inform longer-term scenario planning.

Methodology

The four assessments were carried out via telephone interviews with the participants between April 18th to 25th and with traders the week of April 27th. Prior to the context analysis surveys, a rapid assessment was conducted to understand current phone ownership among participant households, reaching a total of 4,310 households to ascertain ownership and access. Among those reached 80% of primary participants owned a mobile phone (83% host/77% refugee). Among those indicating that a primary participant did not own a mobile phone, 96% indicated that another household member owned a mobile phone, thus indicating that 99% of primary participants reached either owned or had access to a mobile phone.⁴ Utilizing existing community-based staff, coaches with previously established relationships with participants carried out data collection aimed at participants; this captured a sample of households across the five sub-counties of operation: Bwizi, Biguli, Bihanga, Nkoma, and Nkoma-Katalyeba Town Council. Coaches were randomly assigned either the participant awareness or perception tool and requested to sample all households with phone access under their caseload. The market research data was collected by Program Officers (POs) and community-based trainers (CBTs), capturing information from 106 traders and covering regional and local markets. Due to the length of the market research tool, it was split into two surveys to understand general price fluctuations to better contextualize participants' purchasing power and secondly to understand market functionality from the supply side. POs and CBTs were randomly assigned to one of the market research tools and requested to administer the survey to those traders they had pre-existing relationships with through regular Activity monitoring.

Findings

Participant Awareness of COVID-19

This survey sought to gain insight from participants on the extent to which they and their household members were receiving health and safety prevention and response information on COVID-19, as well as their understanding of public health restrictions the GoU put in place. The Activity will utilize this information to identify gaps in messaging and appropriate communication channels for additional messaging. This survey reached 830 participants; 419 host community (404 female/15 male) and 411 refugee community participants (366 female/45 male).

All respondents interviewed had received a message about COVID-19. The Ministry of Health (MoH) and friends/neighbors were cited as the most common sources of information. Among the host community 60% (n=251) indicated they received COVID-19 information from friends/neighbors, while 48% (n=200) indicated MoH; among the refugee community more participants (65%, n=268) received information from MoH, followed by 53% noting friends/neighbors. Figure 2 highlights additional sources of information among refugee and host community respondents. Among those that selected other, they noted Activity coaches, a Village Health Team (VHT) member, the radio, MTN messages, the hospital, the television, or the newspaper.

⁴ From the gender analysis conducted in January 2019, 64% of female and 78% of male host community participants and 50% female and 68% male refugee participants owned a mobile phone.

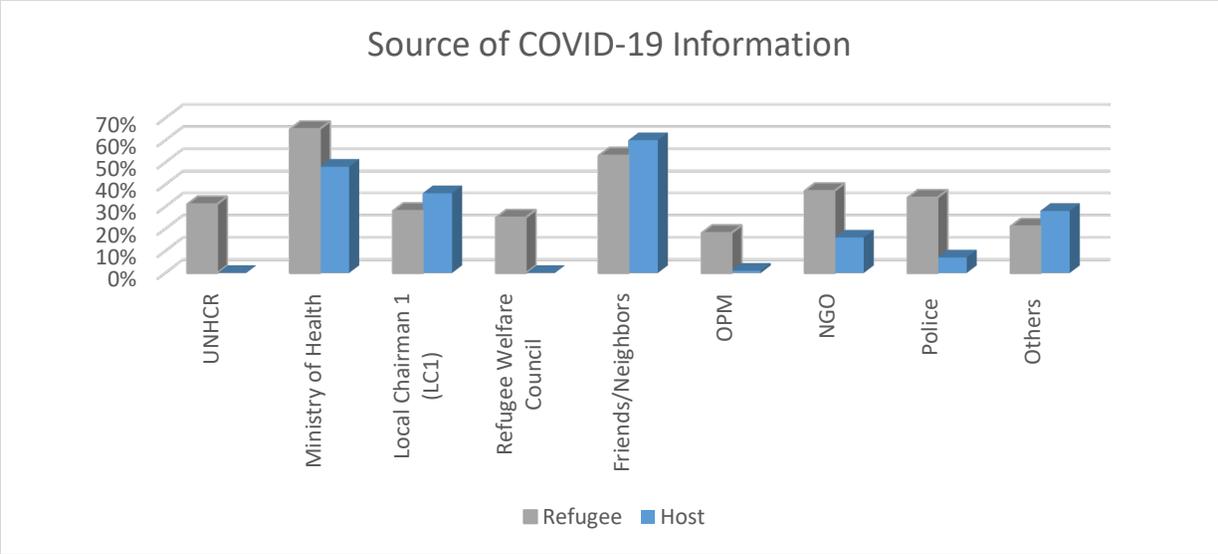


Figure 2: Sources of COVID-19 Information

The most common means to receive information was via the radio, word of mouth, or by SMS. Among the refugee community, 85.2% (n=411) received information via radio, 76.4% (n=314) by word of mouth, and 66.2% (n=272) by SMS, among the host community 88.1% (n=369), 66.1% (n=277) and 58.5% (n=245) received via radio, word of mouth, and SMS respectively. Interestingly, the VHTs appear to be more active among the refugee community than the host community, with 37.5% (n=154) of refugee and 6.2% (n=26) of host community respondents indicating this as the source of COVID-19 information.

When asked about the specific prevention and response messages they had received about COVID-19, major responses included *washing hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water* (94.6%, n=785), *keeping 4 meters from other people* (66.9%, n=555), and the temporary suspension of *churches, mosques, and other gatherings* (66.9%, n=555). While similar responses among refugee and host community respondents, refugee participants appear to have received a wider range of information. This may be due to the close proximity of households in the refugee community and large concentration of implementing partners, as compared to the host community context. Furthermore, the large proportion of refugee and host community participants relying on information from friends/neighbors could increase the spread of misinformation.

It is positive to note that the majority (98.8%, n=820) of participants indicated that they were able to practice the recommendations received in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, some recommendations were noted as more difficult to implement among respondents. While similar responses among refugee and host community members were presented, it is of interest to note that 35.1% (n=142) of refugee respondents indicated difficulty implementing the temporary suspension of non-food markets and non-essential shops, as compared to 21.9% (n=91) of host community respondents. This could be a result of refugees relying more on purchase of food items, while host community relies more heavily on own production; furthermore, the timing of the pandemic occurred shortly after harvest period. Similarly, 37.6% (n=152) of refugee found it more difficult to keep four meters from other people, as compared to 21.4% (n=89) of host community members. This also correlates with more refugees finding it difficult to avoid contact with anyone who has cold or flu like symptoms (14.9%, n=60) as compared to (8.2%, n=34) in the host community. Figure 3 below provides an overview of refugee and host community

responses to types of COVID-19 information received and their response on whether they felt the recommendation was difficult to implement.

While some respondents found it difficult to implement the various recommendations, when asked what was preventing them from implementing the recommendations, very few (13 participants) responded to the question, perhaps indicative of the frustration with the restrictions, rather than an inability to implement measures.

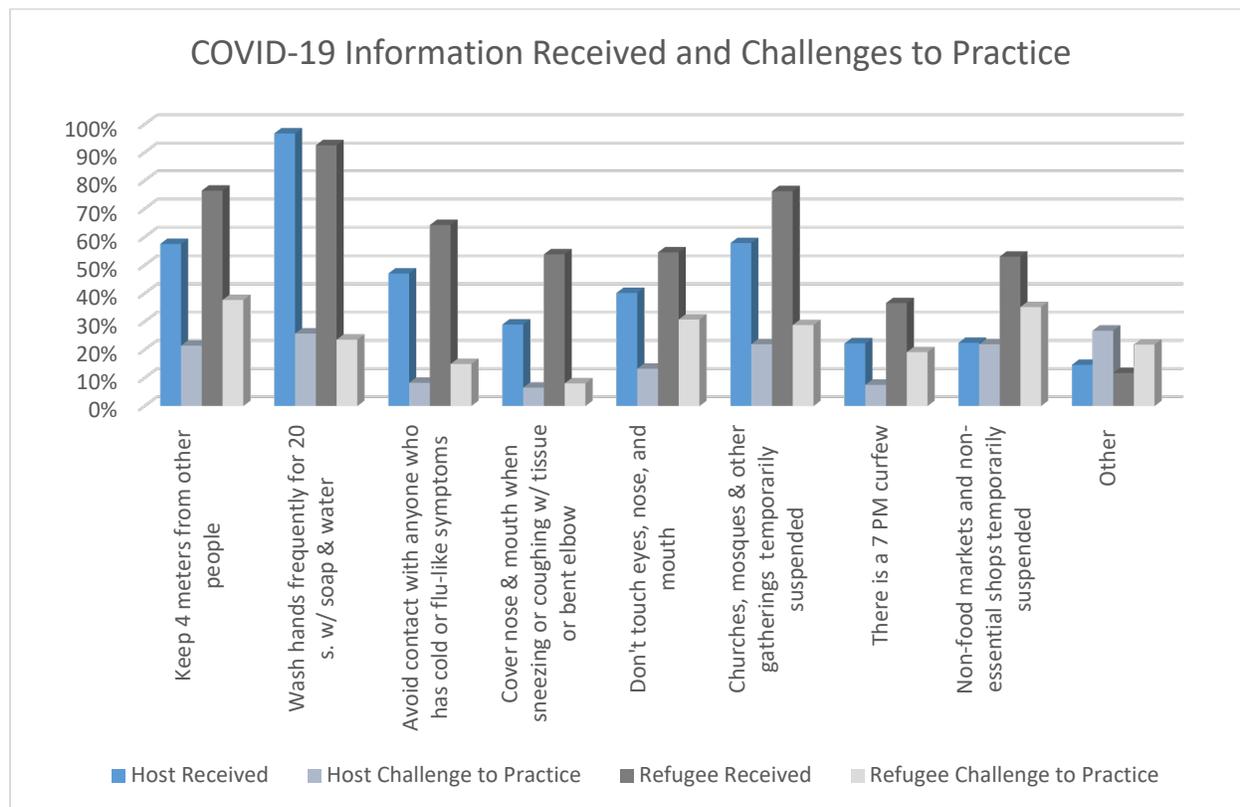


Figure 3: COVID-19 Information Received and Challenge to Practice

To ensure participants were receiving adequate information on the signs of COVID-19, the Activity asked participants to identify key symptoms they had heard were related to the virus. The majority (94%, n=780) of participants indicated cough (95.7% host/92.2% refugee), followed by 89.2% (n=740) indicating fever (85.4% host/92.9% refugee) as signs of COVID-19. Other options chosen were shortness of breath (44.4% host/59.1% refugee), sore throat (40.3% host/52.6% refugee), as well as other (46.1% host/16.1% refugee). A small fraction (1.9%, n=16) of the respondents indicated that they did not know. Further, given the importance of access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) materials and facilities the survey asked specifically about WASH-related responses to COVID-19. In the refugee community, 93.7% (n=385) indicated that additional support was provided in their community to increase access to hand washing as a prevention measure to COVID-19, while only 5.5% (n=23) indicated the same in the host community. These widely varying results could be indicative of the number of actors/service providers targeting refugees as compared to the host community for interventions.⁵ Among the host and refugee community

⁵ ReHope Policy requires implementers working with refugees to engage 30% of the host population to foster social cohesion and coexistence, as well as support long-term solutions by building knowledge, skills and capacities for vulnerable refugee and host populations alike.

that responded affirmatively to increased WASH support in their communities, 84.1% (n=343) indicated that they had received soap, 7.6% (n=31) received information on how to wash their hands or construct a hand washing facility, and 0.5% (n=2) indicated construction of more water points. From Activity monitoring data, 40.5% of households received WASH messaging between January and March, 2020. In the last quarter of 2019, adherence to having water and soap at a hand washing station was 37.1% of household, while in the first quarter of 2020 (January-March) an increase to 97.4% was recorded; the resulting behavior change may or may not be attributed to fear of the spread of COVID-19, as well as distribution of WASH supplies. It will be interesting to monitor adherence over time as restrictions ease.

While all participants have indicated receiving some form of information about COVID-19, 42.2% (n=177) of host and 37.7% (n=155) of refugee community respondents indicated a desire to receive additional information during the public health restrictions. Such information requested included general information about COVID-19, namely how to avoid and protection oneself from contracting COVID-19, vaccination medication, rates of COVID-19 transmission and recovery, signs and symptoms, food security outlook, treatments, differences between COVID-19 and other diseases, how to report suspected cases, updates on lifting of restrictions, and punishments for breaking restrictions. With this insight, there is an opportunity to increase transparency of information to Activity participants, as well as a need to potentially combat misinformation.

Perhaps indicative of the strong relationship established between coaches and Activity participants, among those that felt they needed more information, 69% (n=107) of refugee and 38.4% (n=68) of host community respondents felt they could go to their coach to seek such information. While coaches remain in regular weekly contact with their households via phone, additional modalities can be considered for regularly relaying COVID-19 information to participants. Radios provide such an alternative, with 72.3% (n=112) of refugees and 56.5% (n=100) of host community respondents indicating they would listen to the radio for additional information and updates. Community structures were also cited as sources of additional information, in the refugee community 31.6% (n=49) noted they would go to the RWC for additional information and 17.4% (n=27) noted the LC1. In the host community 28.8% (n=51) noted they would go to the LC1 for additional information; highlighting the importance of collaboration with such structures to ensure they also have up-to-date information. Relationships with friends/family/neighbors were also sources of support, with 23.2% (n=41) of host and 34.8% (n=54) of refugee community respondents noting they could turn to this network for additional information. While it is positive that participants felt they had channels to support them in obtaining information, safety measures in such engagements should be stressed to avoid the potential spread of COVID-19.

Participant Experience

This section details the extent to which participants' businesses have been affected by the pandemic, coping strategies they are utilizing, changes to market access and price of goods, changes to gender-based violence (GBV) in the community, as well as information on access to support. This data is extrapolated from 396 host community (385 female/11 male) and 411 refugee community participants (386 female/25 male).

Business Activity

At the time of this data collection, 96.2% (n=381) of host and 95.9% (n=394) of refugee community⁶ respondents indicated that they had started a business since participating in Graduating to Resilience. Slight fluctuations across treatment arms were highlighted, with 98.2% of arm 1, 96.3% of arm 2, and 93.5% of arm 3 respondents indicating that they had started a business. Of the businesses started, 15% (n=116) of respondents started off-farm crop (produce/retail/grocery shop, etc.), 30.5% (n=236) off-farm (non-food shop, selling second hand clothes, bakery/food restaurant, salon, etc.), 9.4% (n=73) off-farm livestock (buying and selling livestock), 16.5% (n=128) on-farm crop (cultivation of maize, beans, irish potato, groundnuts, etc.) and 28.6% (n=222) on-farm livestock (raising pigs, goats, chickens, etc.) businesses.⁷ Figure 4 below provides an overview of responses by refugee and host community participants. There is a notable difference among refugee community participants starting off-farm businesses, while host community were more likely to start an on-farm business; this could be due to limited land access and grazing rules/limitations within the settlement, especially in wetland areas.

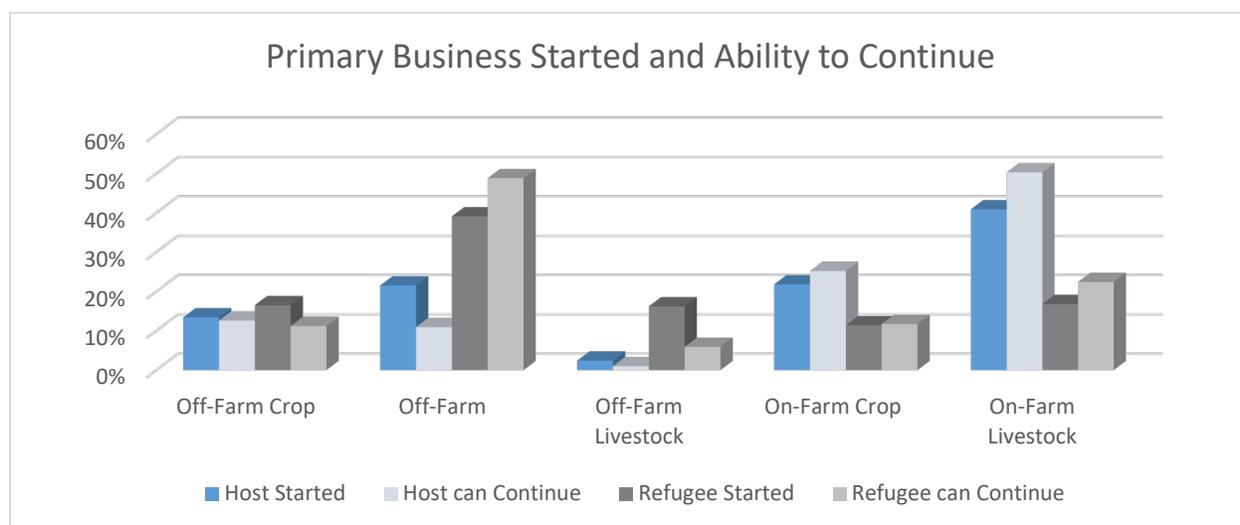


Figure 4: Primary Business Started and Ability to Continue

When asked if they were able to continue the primary business they started with the COVID-19 restrictions, 77.2% (n=381) of host community respondents indicated that they were able to continue their primary business, as compared with 52% (n=394) of refugee respondents indicating the same. In line with global evidence, data from the Activity highlights that refugees and those in peri-urban areas may be more affected than rural locations. As mentioned above 52% of refugees respondents indicated they were able to continue with their primary business activities, while 68.1% (n=47) in Nkoma-Katalyeba Town Council indicated they were able to continue, as compared to more rural locations, with 74% (n=37) in Nkoma, 74.3% (n=84) in Bihanga, 80.5% (n=95) in Bwizi, and 100% (n=31) in Biguli sub-counties noting they are able to continue with their primary businesses. Additionally, farming was among the activities

⁶ This is a slight increase from a baseline assessment collected in November 2019, post asset transfer that indicated 84% (n=4,909) participants owned a business. This increase is likely due to VSLA share-out which took place in December 2019 and January 2020, as many participants in the baseline assessment indicated that they were waiting for this pool of funds to kick-start their businesses, especially those in Arm 3 who did not receive an asset transfer.

⁷ For comparison, from the baseline assessment collected in November 2019 the breakdown was as follows: 5% off-farm crop, 7% off-farm, 5% off-farm livestock, 47% on-farm crop, and 36% on-farm livestock.

that were able to continue amidst the restrictions, and usually takes place in more rural areas, while peri-urban areas have more off-farm business ventures.

Further, it is of interest to note that the ability to continue with a primary business was largely similar across treatment arms. Among refugee and host community respondents, 69.1% in arm 1, 59.8% in arm 2 and 63.9% in arm 3 were able to continue with their primary businesses. Of those businesses that could continue in the host community on-farm businesses were more likely recognized as being able to continue, with 50.3% (n=148) continuing their on-farm livestock and 25.2% (n=74) continuing on-farm crop businesses. Among the host community, 57.5% (n=) noted they were not able to continue their off-farm primary business. However, in the refugee community, off-farm businesses⁸ were noted as being more able to continue during the COVID-19 restrictions, with 48.8% (n=100) noting off-farm business activities and 22.4% (n=46) on-farm livestock continuing. Of note, is that many refugees still had trouble continuing their off-farm businesses with 28.6% (n=54) whom were not able to continue their primary businesses noting it was an off-farm activity, 27.5% (n=52) off-farm livestock, and 22.2% (n=42) off-farm crop business.

Of those businesses affected by the COVID-19 restrictions and affecting the participants' ability to run the business, the most cited responses from refugee and host community members were that they could not sell goods/produce because markets are closed (46.4%, n=128) and cannot conduct business because of restrictions on movement/transport (42.4%, n=117). It is interesting to note that more refugee respondents (30.2%, n=57) noted that they cannot sell livestock because markets are closed, as compared to 9.2% (n=8) of host community respondents due to more refugees engaging in livestock-related businesses at outset. 22.8% (n=43) of refugee and 14.9% (n=13) of host community respondents also cited a reduction in customers, thus noting the business was no longer profitable. Further, many participants noted fear of getting COVID-19 during business activities preventing them from running their businesses, with 22.8% (n=43) of refugee and 37.9% (n=33) of host community respondents indicating this. It is positive to note that very few respondents, 1.1% (n=2) of refugee and 3.4% (n=3) host respondents indicated that they had to sell productive assets to meet their basic needs, thus no longer had the necessary assets to continue their business; this could be indicative of participants ability to absorb⁹ this shock.

To ascertain wider effects on the community landscape due to the public health restrictions, participants were asked to choose various effects, in line with the above, the most cited effects among refugee and host community participants were reduced demand/less customers (52.5%, n=262) and transport problems (47.5%, n=237). Figure 5 highlights additional effects noted, as well as provides an overview of those effects noted by refugees and host community members based on their experiences. It is of interest to note that 17.3% (n=51) of host and 11.7% (n=24) of refugee respondents indicated security problems as an effect of the restrictions.

⁸ Off-farm business are all businesses that are not conducted on-farm and are not involving crops or livestock. These are separate from off-farm livestock and off-farm crops and generally include enterprise such as salon, restaurant, shop, tailoring, etc.

⁹ Absorptive capacity is the ability to minimize exposure to shocks and stresses through preventative measures and appropriate coping strategies to avoid permanent, negative impacts.

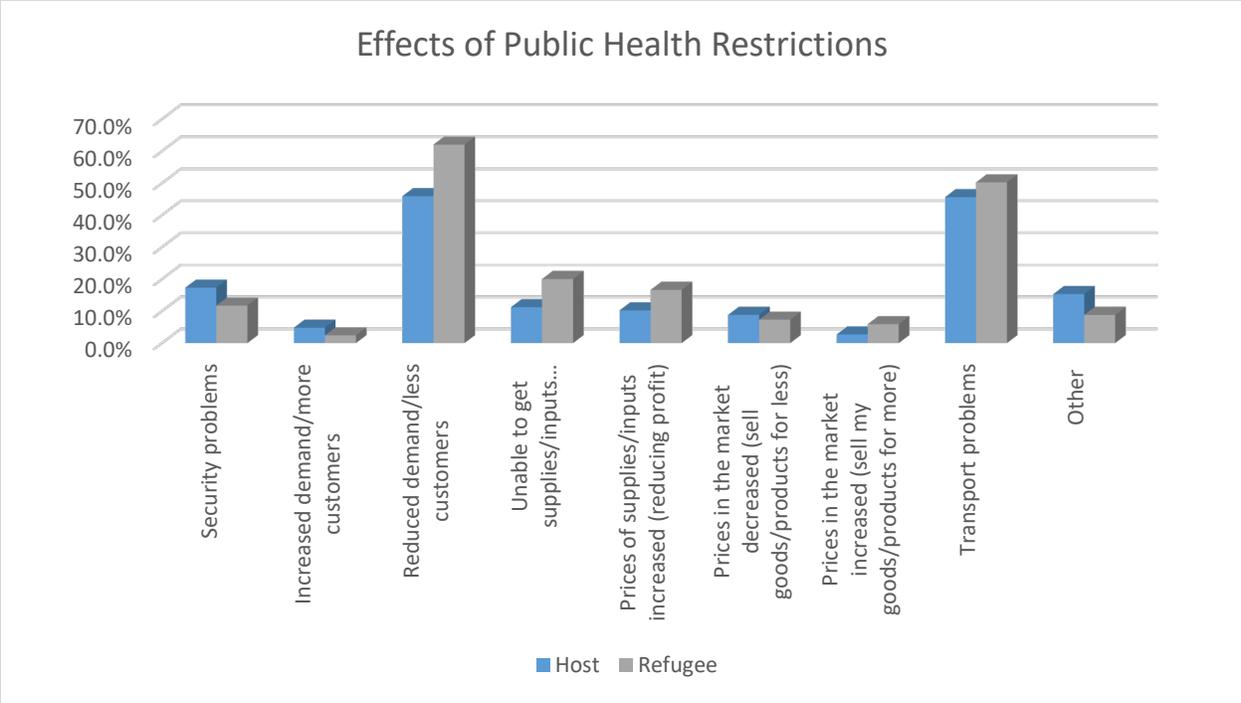


Figure 5: Effects of Public Health Restrictions

Coping Strategies and Food Security

Another factor that hints at a household’s ability to absorb a shock are the coping strategies utilized. As such, the Activity asked participants about various coping strategies they and family are using during the public health restrictions. Positively, 37.1% (n=147) of host and 30.4% (n=125) of refugee respondents indicated that they or their family had another business that is able to support the family. Livelihood diversification is widely recognized as a variable to increase a household’s resilience to shocks and this is a positive finding. Indicative of troubling coping strategies, 33% (n=269) of refugee and host community respondents are reducing the amount of food at each meal or the number of meals per day, while 27.8% (n=224) are resorting to consuming less expensive or lower quality food as a coping strategy, this can have serious implications for food and nutrition security. This survey was collected in the 5th week after the government imposed “lock down” movement restrictions. Among the most worrying for long-term resilience and self-reliance is that 7.8% (n=63) of refugee and host community respondents indicated that they had to sell livestock or other productive assets to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 restrictions. Notable is refugees (42.1%, n=173) increased dependency on aid from donors. Additionally, among other options noted was relying on own production, depending on savings, engaging in casual labor, relying on previous season of food in storage. Of note is that more host community respondents indicated other, with unique responses from the host community including the sale of home-grown bananas and selling their home, while a unique refugee response was utilizing money from WFP to purchase food. Figure 6 below, highlights coping strategies utilized by refugee and host community respondents.

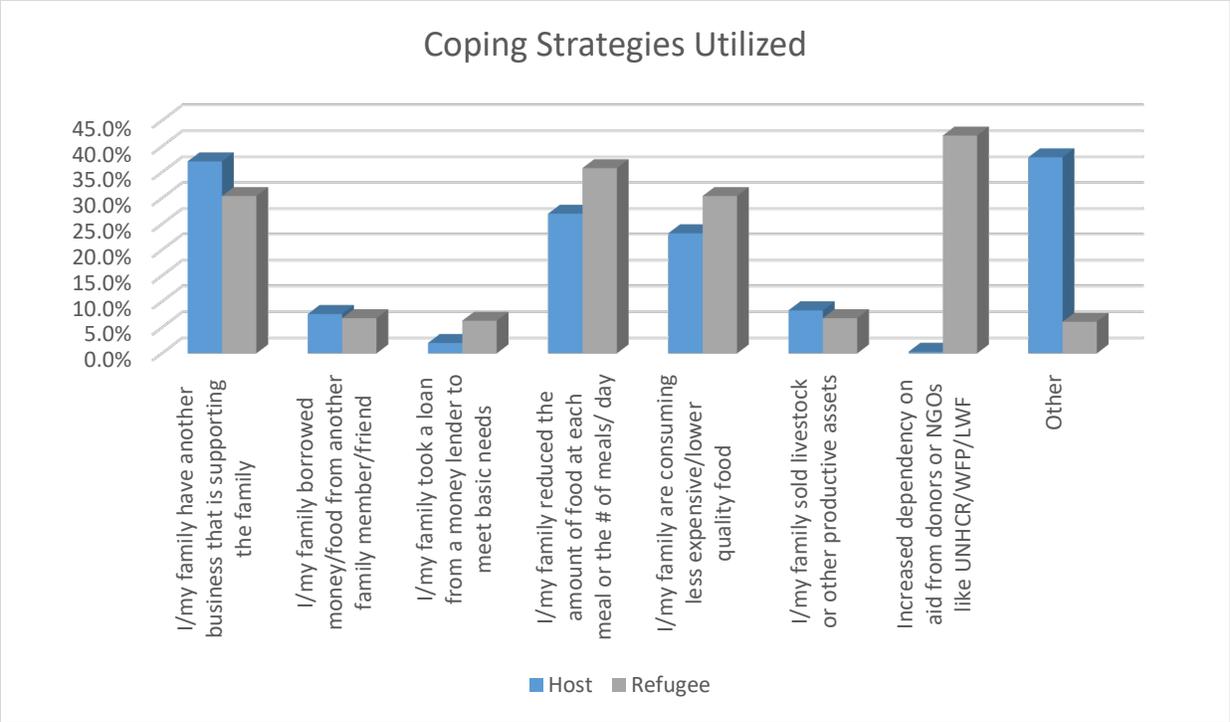


Figure 6: Coping Strategies Utilized

Depending on the length and nature of restrictions, depletion of productive assets is likely to continue if households are not able to adapt to restrictions to earn enough income or receive outside support to meet their basic needs. For example, at the time of the survey, 1.9% (n=15) of refugee and host community respondents had enough food stored to support their family for 1 day, 15% (n=121) for 2-6 days, and 18.3% (n=148) for 7-14 days; worrying is that 3.2% (n=26) (mostly refugees) did not have any food currently stored to support their families. If sufficient income is not being generated in these households or outside support is given, these families are likely to lose gains made in their upward mobility out of extreme poverty. On the other hand, it is important to note that 36.2% (n=292) of refugee and host indicated that they had enough food to support their families for more than 30 days. From Figure 7 below, it appears that refugee participants may experience higher levels of food insecurity. While refugees continue to receive rations,¹⁰ predominantly in the form of cash transfers in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, the shock of COVID-19 on business activities, may be too great for them to manage, even with existing support. Additionally, with little notice, refugees were informed that as of April 1st, rations country-wide in Uganda were to be cut by 30% due to funding deficits. Host communities may be more able to cope with COVID-19 related shocks due to their businesses being predominantly on-farm, which could be a result of their increased access to land within the country. Currently refugees are provided a 50 meter by 50-meter plot of land. Due to plot sizes, some refugees rent land for farming and the public health movement restrictions could have reduced their ability to reach that land for their livelihood activities.

¹⁰ Utilized baseline data from IPA, the Activity identified consumption gaps within the refugee and host community based on wealth quintiles, ultimately the Activity pegged consumption support to reach the 10th quintile, indicating that the WFP transfer value may not be adequate. For further insight: <https://avsi-usa.org/determining-cash-transfer-amount-to-meet-consumption-needs/>

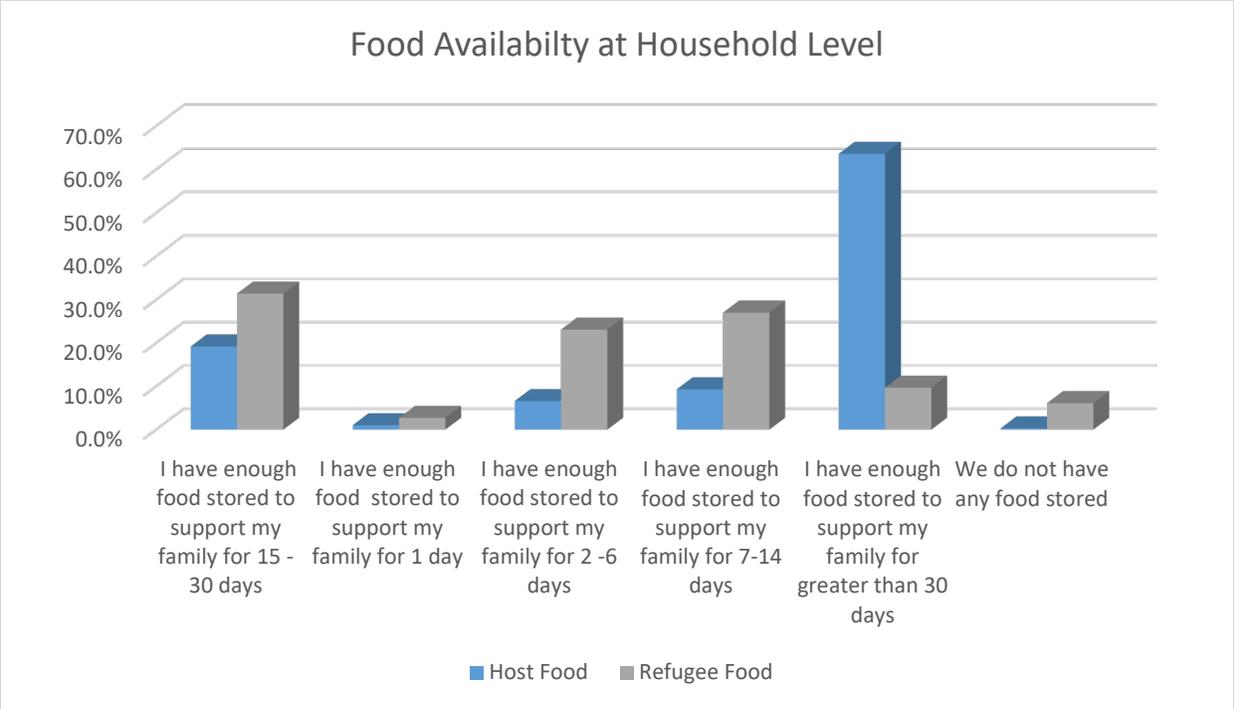


Figure 7: Food Availability at Household Level

To understand if access to goods were affected due to COVID-19 restrictions, participants were asked about the availability and price changes to commonly found and used goods. Responses among refugee and host community members were similar with no major challenges findings the goods asked about. Overall 98.3% (n=793) indicated that they could find soap, 95.4% (n=770) posho, and 98.4% (n=794) salt. For 62.8% (n=258) of refugees and 44.7% (n=177) of host respondents the price of soap per bar was said to have increased, while 98.3% (n=404) of refugee and 80.6% (n=319) of host respondents noted the price per kilo of posho had increased, and 90.8% (n=373) of refugee and 96% (n=380) of host respondents noted the price of salt per kilo has increased as a result of COVID-19 related restrictions. This indicates that for most participants with reduced incomes, the value of that shilling is now further challenged by the inflation of the cost of goods, which will reduce their purchasing power; this appears to be especially true within the refugee community with 91% (n=411) of refugee and 71.2% (n=396) of host indicating price increases for certain commodities since public health restrictions. However, while prices have increased for some goods, it is positive to note that a World Food Program, market update bulletin indicated that the general food assistance basket price in Rwamwanja was below the cash transfer value, indicative that refugee households should have enough funds to meet basic needs, as well as have a small balance.¹¹

In line with the laws of supply and demand, goods may be in shorter supply, which could affect price points, as well as food security and dietary diversity. More will be learned from changes to market activities in the next section, but it is worth noting that 49.1% (n=411) of refugees and 41.9% (n=396) of host community respondents noted that there were commodities that they previously could find in the shops or market before public health restrictions that they could no longer find. Of the items noted, they included food stuff (sugar, eggplant, onions, mukene (silver fish), rice, beans, groundnuts, meat, posho flour, fruits, and irish potatoes, milk, butter, ghee), stationary (books, pencils, pens, etc.), mobile phones,

¹¹ WFP (May 2020). Food Security Analysis “Market Update week 1, May 2020”

livestock (cows, goats, sheep, pigs, etc.), poultry (chickens, ducks), utensils (saucepans, cups, plates, etc.), building materials (iron sheets, cement, etc.), match boxes, medicine (for humans and animals), as well as clothing, shoes, and bedding.

Access to Savings

In addition to understanding access to food and other needed items, the Activity also sought to understand participants access to savings. The last group face-to-face VSLA activities among participants took place on March 19th, with no advance warning to plan for movement restrictions to ensure continued to have access to funds. As such, it is not surprising that only 28% (n=111) of host and 31.1% (n=128) of refugees indicated that they were able to access their savings. Interestingly, those participants residing in the peri-urban area of Nkoma-Katalyeba Town Council had a higher rate of access to their savings, with 59.2% (n=42) indicating a positive response. The most common cited challenge of refugees and host community participants who could not access their savings (94.9%, n=539) was that VSLA was not operating, followed by 24.6% (n=140) whom were afraid of contracting COVID-19 while accessing savings and 1.9% (n=11) that did not have transport to the bank/SACCO.

When asked how much they had in savings in relation to their ability to support their family in the coming days, 26.8% (n=216) of refugee and host community respondents indicated they had enough savings to support their family for greater than 30 days, 22.3% (n=180) enough for 15-30 days, and 17.6% (n=142) indicated they did not have any savings. Figure 8 below provides an overview of savings by refugee and host community participants.

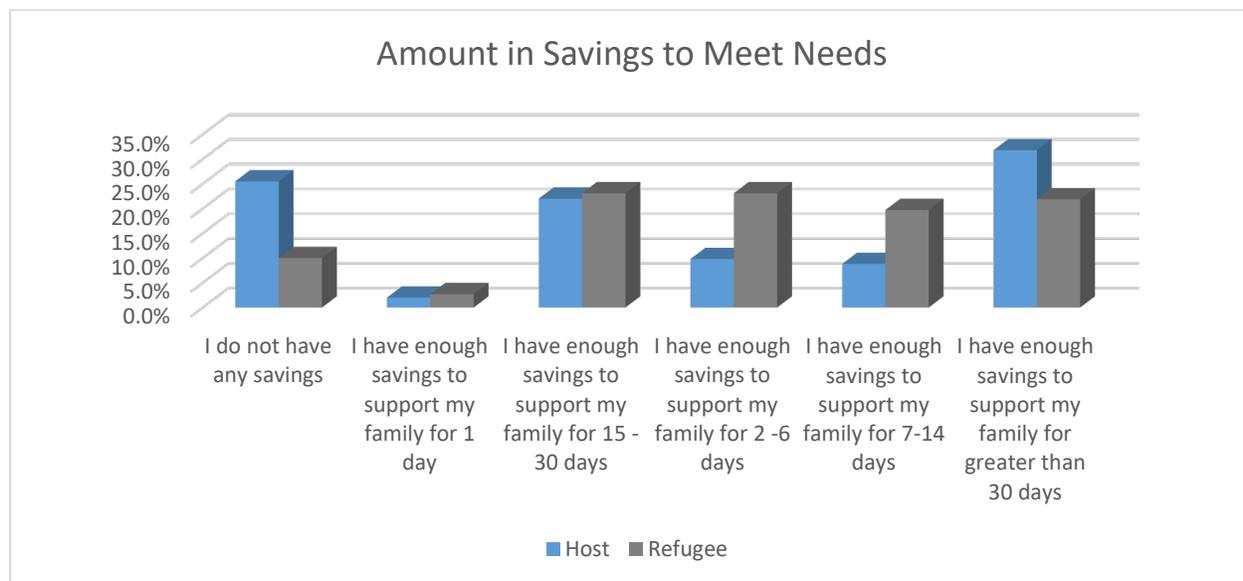


Figure 8: Amount in Savings to Meet Basic Needs

Social Networks

Social networks are also a significant asset to rely on in the times of crisis and unexpected shock, as such the Activity sought to understand whom households felt they could rely on for support and if these support networks have changes during COVID-19. Among host and refugee respondents, pre-COVID-19, in the event of a problem, the networks more commonly mentioned for getting support, were VSLA (57.7%, n=466), friends (54.2%, n=437), and family members (34.2%, n=276). The mention of VSLA is of

importance and highlights that the secondary network engagement function of this group, outside of financial inclusion, is largely working; additional insight could be gleaned from the nearly double response rate among host community members (74.5%, n=295) than refugee (37%, n=152) indicated this source of support. Nearly double refugee respondents indicated religious groups (17.8%, n=73) compared to host (9.6%, n=38) and similarly among police with refugees noting 15.3% (n=63) and host respondents indicating 7.3% (n=29). Amidst COVID-19, 68.6% (n=282) of refugees and 38.9% (n=154) of host community respondents felt that they could still turn to these people or groups for support during challenges faced from COVID-19. Figure 9 below details sources of support pre-COVID against those that noted difficulty in accessing that same source of supporting during COVID-19.

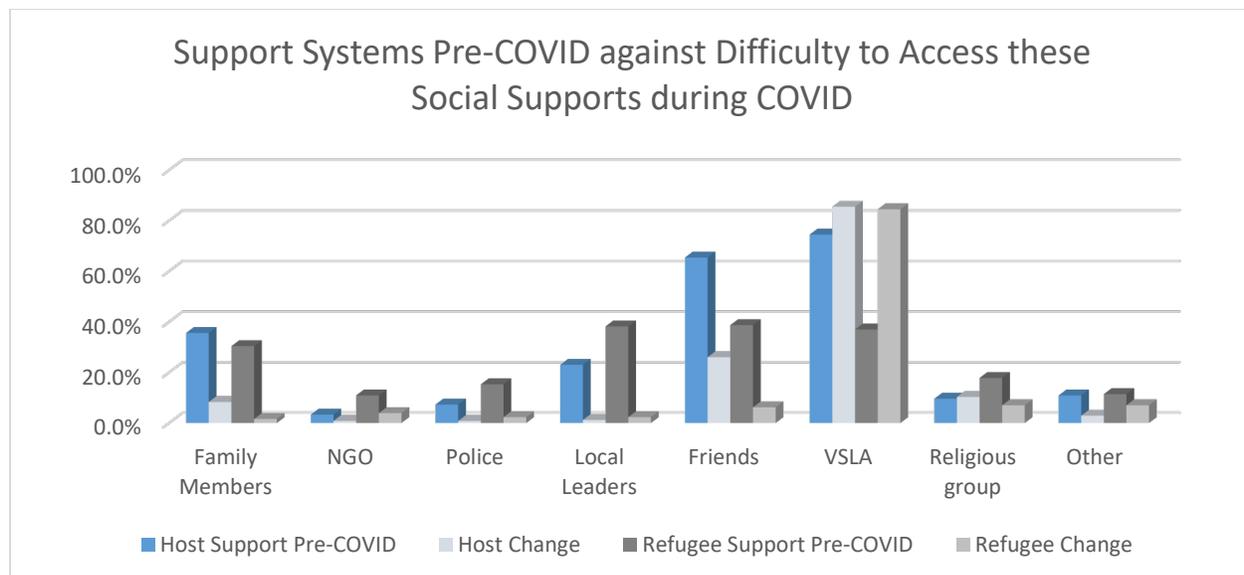


Figure 9: Support Systems Pre-COVID against Difficulty to Access these Social Supports during COVID

89.5% (n=332) of participants that noted they could not turn to previous groups or people during COVID-19 referenced the VSLA group, followed by 19.4% (n=72) indicating friends. When asked why they were unable to ask for support from the various groups mentioned, many cited the stay at home order, the lack (and cost) of public transportation, fear of getting COVID-19, closure of activities (VSLA, church). Further, while many previously relied on friends and family, many noted that they are also struggling to make ends meet due to restrictions, while some live far away.

Health

As access to healthcare can be disrupted during time of crisis, the Activity wanted to understand more about household experiences and contexts. Among refugee participants, 14.1% (n=58) indicated that a pregnant woman was living in the household, with 8.8% (n=35) of host community respondents indicating the same. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, 91.4% (n=53) of refugees with pregnant woman in their household and 88.6% (n=31) of host respondents noted that the woman was receiving antenatal care (ANC) at the health center. Interestingly, more woman cited being able to continue to receive ANC at the health center during the public health crisis, with 100% (n=53) refugees and 90.3% (n=28) indicating yes. This could be due to renewed efforts by health care providers and village health teams (VHTs) during COVID-19 health messaging. The few (3 persons) that were not able to continue with ANC visits cited transport issues, permission for movement from LC1/RWC, fear of getting COVID-19, no time due to

children being home from school, fear that healthcare workers will be focused on COVID-19 response and may not have time for ANC visits, fear of community stigma for going out, and fear of being beaten by authorities enforcing the restrictions.

Gender Based Violence

There has been growing evidence of spikes in GBV due to stay at home orders in many countries and communities across the globe. Among Graduating to Resilience, 58.8% (n=233) host and 47.9% (n=197) of refugee participants felt that instances of GBV in their community stayed the same, while 15.4% (n=61) of host and 12.9% (n=53) of refugee respondents felt incidents had increased. Interestingly, 27.5% (n=113) of refugee and 16.4% (n=65) of host community respondents felt that incidents had decreased. More can be learned from those households that felt incidents had decreased to better understand the conditions that may contribute to GBV reduction. In the event of GBV within their household, 94.2% (n=760) of refugee and host community respondents indicated that they knew who to contact in such an instance.

Market Research

To better understand how markets have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions the team set out to understand positive and negative effects of COVID-19 restrictions on traders' businesses, as well as any potential changes to participants purchasing power, as well as trader's ability to keep supply. Note that specific changes to market prices for goods were not included in the context analysis surveys, rather this data is collected during bi-monthly market price data collection. Due to the length of the survey, purchasing power questions were asked to 36 traders, while the supply questions were asked to 70 traders.

Effect on Trader's Businesses

To understand effects from COVID-19 on trader's businesses, 106 traders were interviewed in both regional (upstream) and local (intervention) markets by phone from the following locations, Biguli (6), Bisozzi (6), Fort Portal (3), Kabundaire (7), Kamwenge Town—including Central Market (13), Katalyeba (7), Kyempango (2), Kyenjojo (11), Kyakaitaba (5), Lyakahungu (9), Mubende (11), Mahega (2), Mpanga (6), Ntenungi (6), Ntonwa (7), Kabingo (5), and Nkoma (1); capturing both local and regional markets.

When asked how the public health measures for COVID-19 have affected their businesses, 88.7% (n=94) indicated their businesses were negatively affected due to reduced demand/less customers, 68.9% (n=73) cited transport problems, while 60.4% (n=64) were unable to get supplies and inputs due to supply chains being interrupted. A further 45.3% (n=48) noted their businesses have been negatively affected as they must pay increased prices for supplies/inputs and 23.6% (n=25) noted security problems. Among traders interviewed, 12.3% (n=13) noted that they had to close their shops. Reasons cited for closing their shop, included restrictions closing the markets (53.8%, n=7), not profitable because of less customers (30.8%, n=4), and inability to get inputs/supplies because of supply chain disruptions (23.1%, n=3). However, the thirteen traders were confident that they would be able to reopen their shop once restrictions are lifted.

Of those traders able to continue their business, when asked why they think the number of people coming to their shop has decreased, 37.5% (n=35) of traders felt that customers lacked enough money to buy commodities and 33% (n=31) felt that people coming to their shop has decreased because of public health movement restrictions/lack of transport. A further 22.3% (n=21) of traders felt fewer people were coming to their businesses since COVID-19 as there are reduced number of people in town as people went to the villages. A few (less than 5%), mentioned closure of weekly markets/non-food shops, high prices of

commodities, priorities of customers on essential stocks (posho, beans, etc.), fear of getting COVID-19, and fear of being beaten by security as reasons for less people coming to their shops.

Positive effects to business cited by those traders that are continuing to operate, included increasing prices for products (19.4%, n=18), increased sales and more demand for products (5.4%, n=5), and (80.6%, n=75) stating other (for example farmers selling cheaper or noting no positive effect). The five traders that noted increased sales stated this could be because people are spending more time at home, people need daily consumer goods in the COVID-19 crisis, and people were coming to buy food.

Purchasing Power and Customer Demand

While participant perception has already indicated price fluctuations in the market place, the Activity sought to also understand price fluctuations from the trader point of view in both regional and local markets to better understand purchasing power and purchasing behavior of participants.

Among 36 traders interviewed for this segment of the market research, 41.7% (n=15) noted that customers purchasing soap remained the same during COVID-19, while 33% (n=12) indicated an increase and 25% (n=9) noted a decrease in the purchase of soap. Most traders attributed the change in demand (less purchasing) for soap due to people buying stock at the beginning of lock down, a reduction in the number of people in town due to going to the village and lack of money to buy commodities, while one felt villagers were not concerned with handwashing. For those indicating an increase, 83.3% (n=10) attributed it to apply COVID-19 preventative measures, while one trader each noted fear of getting COVID-19 and fear of continued restrictions. Figure 9 below captures trader’s perception of changes to purchasing of posho and salt by customers as well, highlighting just over a 50% increase in demand for posho as reported by traders. 52.6% (n=10) of those traders noting an increase in purchase of posho, stated this was due to stocking due to lock down. Others noted the increase could be due to increased number of household members, as children are home from school, lack of money to buy other items, and as a donation to the Kamwenge District COVID-19 Task Force.

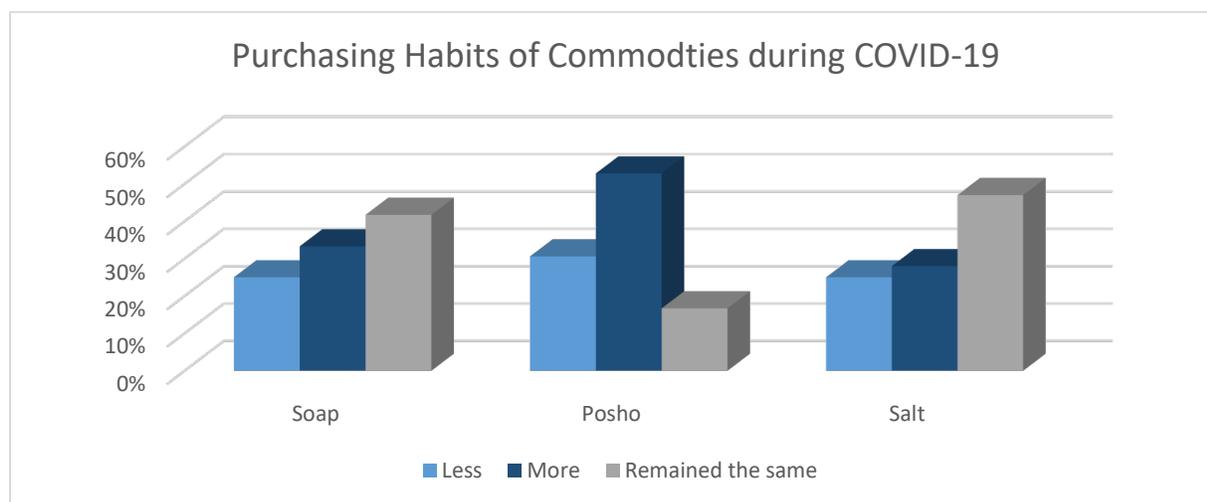


Figure 10: Purchasing Habits of Commodities during COVID-19

On the supply side, 63.9% (n=23) of traders noted that the supply of soap since the COVID-19 restrictions has remains the same, while 19.4% (n=7) noted that it was about half the pre-COVID-19 restrictions. Similarly, 50% (n=18) of traders noted that posho supplies remained the same, while 27.8% (n=10) noted

it was more than half the pre-COVID-19 restrictions and 16.7% (n=6) estimated it was about half the supply since the restrictions. For salt, 55.6% (n=20) of traders noted that the supply was the same before restrictions and 22.2% (n=8) felt it was about half the supply since COVID-19 restrictions. While limited sample size, this may indicate limited disruptions in supply commodities.

While few supply disruptions were noted for the commodities examined, 58.3% (n=21) of traders stated that key commodities had experienced particularly large price increases since the public health restrictions put in place to contain COVID-19, while 41.7% (n=15) felt there were not large price increases. Among the traders that noted price increases, 38.1% (n=8) noted salt, 19% (n=4) posho, 14.3% (n=3) respectively noted beans and rice, 9.5% (n=2) soap, and 4.8% (n=1) respectively stated milk and cooking oil. Participant accounts of price increases against trader accounts may indicate that increased cost of goods is being passed onto the consumer, as 53.9% (n=435) of refugee and host combined noted an increase in the price of a bar of soap, 89.6% (n=723) an increase in posho, and 93.3% (n=753) an increase in salt. Of note for the Activity is the perceived price increase of beans, as this is a key on-farm Activity promoted in the FFBS and for which many participants started or expanded businesses in. A few traders (4) noted that there have been price decreases for certain commodities, with one trader each noting the following, clothing, eggs, salt and soda. They attributed the decreases to most people buying essential goods only, presidential directives to stop price hikes, and supply being high, yet few people purchasing the perishable items.

Overall, among the traders, 41.7% (n=15) felt that customers were purchasing less than before COVID-19 restrictions, 33.3% (n=12) noting they were purchasing more of certain items and less of others, and 13.9% (n=5) stating that customers were purchasing different items than before COVID-19 restrictions. As the majority of traders do not feel customers are purchasing less, this could suggest that markets remain active. Among those traders that noted customers were purchasing more of some items and less of others, 91.7% (n=11) stated that customers were buying more food stuff (posho, beans, rice, etc.), 50% (n=6) noted other food stuff (cooking oil, sugar, etc.) and 25% (n=3) non-food items, such as soap. Among the items that traders noted customers were purchasing less of during COVID-19, 41.7% (n=5) noted items such as sugar, bread, soda, and sweets, while 33.3% (n=4) noted meat, rice, and baking flours. From this insight, it would appear that most households are focusing on basic essential food items to sustain their households during the crisis. This likely not by choice, but due to constrained resources.

Retail Supply

To better understand the full market picture, the Activity also interviewed 70 of the traders to better understand supply-side changes since the COVID-19 restrictions. Among the 70 traders interviewed, 85.7% (n=60) noted that the number of retailers supplying key commodities in the marketplace had decreased since restrictions, while 11.4% (n=8) felt it remained the same and 2.9% (n=2) felt it increased. Of the two that felt the number of retail suppliers had increased it was due to availability of transport to reach the business and over production. On the contrary, those traders that felt it decreased, 40% (n=24) noted it was due to transport/movement restrictions, 13.3% (n=8) noted a decrease in demand, and 11.7% (n=7) respectively noted that it was due to supply markets being closed and shops being closed.

Among those interviewed, only 28.6% (n=20) noted that they sold soap, posho, and salt. Of those selling soap, 75% (n=15) noted that they were still able to purchase soap from their usual suppliers since restrictions. Similarly, 80% (n=16) of traders noted that they were able to purchase posho from their usual suppliers and 70% (n=14) were still able to purchase salt from usual suppliers since restrictions. Regarding

other commodities, 61.4% (n=43) of traders noted that they were having difficulty stocking items since the public health restrictions. Of significance to the market landscape, is that about 20-30% of traders have experienced supply chain disruptions among various goods. Figure 10 provides an overview of commodities traders noted difficulty in supplying. Among non-food items, items included batteries, shoes, clothing, umbrellas, cosmetics, baby diapers, sanitary pads, pesticides and farming tools.



Figure 11: Items Traders are Having Difficulty Stocking

Customer Credit

To understand customer and trader relations, as well as purchasing modalities, the Activity asked traders about changes in providing goods on credit prior to and currently during COVID-19 restrictions. Prior to COVID-19, 81.4% (n=57) of traders indicated that they sold goods to their customers on credit. However, during the current restrictions only 54.3% (n=38) of traders noted that they sell to their customers on credit, this may further restrict participants abilities to meet their basic needs. This change could be perhaps due to the decreased incomes for most due to restrictions and subsequent increased risk of default or longer repayment for items.

Conclusions and Recommendation

While many Graduating to Resilience participants are able to adequately absorb the shock of COVID-19, the uncertainty on the length of continued restrictions makes it difficult to assess from the data in the report alone, whether or not participants will be able to continue absorbing the shock. As such, the Activity will carry out this survey in short form to participants once per month until restrictions are lifted.

True to the Graduation Approach, many participants are exhibiting signs of resiliency during this extreme shock. Of mention are the 77.2% of host community and 52% of refugee participants that were able to continue their businesses during restrictions, with 37.1% of host and 30.4% of refugee participants indicating that their diversified livelihoods allowed them to meet their family's needs during this time. Additionally, 63.6% of host and 9.7% of refugee participants had enough food stored to support their

families for more than 30 days. A further 26.8% of refugee and host community participants indicated that they had enough savings to support their families for over 30 days.

Despite the successes of some participants to weather the COVID-19 restrictions, many are also exhibiting signs of poor coping and may need additional support. It is worrying that 33% of refugee and host community members were reducing the amount of food or number of meals per day at the time of the survey, nearly one month ago, and 7.8% had to sell productive assets to cope. Furthermore, among participants 3.2% did not have any food stored and a further 35.2% had enough food stored for 1 to 14 days. Coupled with 57.5% of host participants and 48.4% of refugees being unable to continue with their primary on-farm businesses, the reduction in income to households to meet their basic needs is likely. Furthermore, 17.6% of participants noted having zero savings. Given the above, it is clear some participants are struggling more than others and actions will be needed across the board, but also potentially for targeted subsets of participants. Below are some initial recommendations that the Activity is exploring from this initial round of context analysis data.

- The Activity is exploring partnerships to send messages (SMS/IVR) to participants via their mobile phones, factoring literacy rates into the modality. While SMS or IVR direct to participants can provide additional assurances of information being received, the Activity should explore radio communications given this was the most cited source of information. Such modalities will consider the RCT implications.
- The Activity should develop targeted responses to both populations to ensure livelihood continuity for households to absorb the shock of COVID-19. It is likely that restrictive measures of some sort will continue for many months as the caseload peaks is anticipated to peak in mid-September 2020 according to UNICEF modelling documents. As such, more can be learned from refugees who are able to continue on-farm and on-farm livestock activities, as well as the few able to continue with off-farm crop and on-farm crop. Similarly, among the host community, the Activity can learn more about the variables that are allowing participants to continue with off-farm activities, and to a lesser extent on-farm crop and off-farm crop activities. This may be able to be achieved by a follow up survey to those households with the ability to continue, noting that as the restrictions continue, this may also change over time.
- AVSI is an active member of the Rwamwanja Settlement COVID-19 Task Force, which is also represented in the Kamwenge District COVID-19 Task Force. To ensure accountability to participants for their time and efforts to respond to these surveys, AVSI will share leading issues with the Task Force to support their approach to support citizens to meet their needs during this difficult time.
- Given the food and nutrition security focus of the Activity, as well as long-term livelihoods approach, given the size of businesses affected and looming food insecurity, the Activity should consider providing or linking those most affected by the COVID-19 restrictions to targeted social protection support to ensure that productive assets are able to be retained, so that their businesses and income flows can begin again once restrictions are lifted (either completely or in a phase approach). If provision of direct support, it should be clear to participants and the community the criteria selected beforehand for transparency. The Activity could leverage existing cash transfer platforms and relationships to support remote social protection supports.
- As access to savings is a key safety net to support households in the event of an unexpected shock, the Activity should identify solutions to allow savings group activities to continue amid restrictions. While loans are likely not in the benefit of the groups due to high risk of default,

access to existing savings can assist households to absorb the shock and continue to meet their basic needs.

- It was noted that among non-food items that traders are having difficulty stocking were children's diapers and sanitary pads. Pre-COVID, the Activity was in dialogues with private sector actors to explore reusable sanitary pads and reusable children's diapers. While more sustainable and cost-effective, these items may require dialogue for behavior change among the target population.



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