



**FOOD FOR
THE HUNGRY**

BUKIENDE, UGANDA

YEAR END REPORT

DECEMBER 2020

PREPARED BY

**Food for the Hungry (FH) Uganda
& Food for the Hungry (FH) Canada**

INTRODUCTION



“It is joyful and wonderful to successfully complete fiscal year 2020 amidst the difficult time of COVID-19.”

— Stella Aleper, **Program Area Manager**

-  **Communities: Bumutsopa, Bushiangi, Bungwaanyi, Burukuru**
-  **3,196 Households**
-  **14,830 People**
-  **Graduation Target Date: September 2029 (Started Oct 2019)**

In October 2019, FH Uganda began a 10 year partnership with the four communities Burukuru, Bushiangi, Bumutsopa, and Bungwaanyi in Bukiende sub-county of Mbale District. A wonderful team was recruited and trained. The major goal for Bukiende is for families in its communities to be able to meet their household needs in a sustainable way. This will be pursued together through FH’s Child Focused Community Transformation (CFCT) development model with activities focused in the areas of education, health, livelihoods, and leadership training.

The Food for the Hungry (FH) team has gained experience and deepened their relationships with the community, leaders, and children throughout the course of 2020. New opportunities and challenges have been presented during this “new normal.”

COVID-19 UPDATE

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the implementation of activities this last year, many of which were not completed according to plan. Government-mandated lockdowns affected the communities too: schools were closed, movement restricted, and large public gatherings banned. The team pivoted, adapting their activities, using creative strategies to disseminate COVID-19 prevention messages to the community, and distributing supplies when needed.

“When I move around the trading centres I see the handwashing facilities which has helped to control the spread of COVID-19 in our village. Since the outbreak, our village has not had any case.”

— Grace, **Uganda**

FH Uganda participated in district-level task force meetings with government officials. Realizing that there was misinformation about COVID-19 in the communities, FH worked closely with administrative officials to build their capacity to spread helpful information. FH trained leaders from Bukende and neighbouring areas, including political leaders, technical leaders, and police. They were trained on knowing the signs and symptoms of the virus, measures to be taken, and their roles and responsibilities. FH also provided authorities with supplies and equipment to support their efforts.

ACTIVITIES

46 handwashing stations installed in schools, markets, and public places

10 megaphones donated to Village Health Teams (VHTs)



17,500

people receiving COVID messages via the health centre

*FH supported messaging for neighbouring communities as well



VHTs attend training.

Handover of assorted items to district task force.

EDUCATION

Children in Uganda will miss nearly an entire school year due to COVID-19, which will significantly impact educational gains across the country. FH is deepening the scope of work in the education sector in order to move beyond access to education to also address quality. FH Uganda is completing an evaluation of key education indicators. That report should be available in the next few months and the data will guide the team in targeting their activities. In the meantime, the team in Bukienye continued to conduct meetings for community leaders emphasizing the importance of education. They were able to conduct these meetings safely, following COVID-19 safety guidelines this year.

SCHOOL CLUBS

Before the COVID-19 lockdown, the team was able to work with the four partnered schools (Burukuru, Bumutsopa, Bumaliro, and Nabukhoma Primary) and establish student-led clubs in each, supported by the school administration. A human rights club was formed in each school consisting of six leaders each, made up of girl and boy leaders. Also formed was a health and hygiene club in each school, each with 12 members—half girls, half boys—to promote healthy practices among all students. These clubs provide important information for kids but also promote student leadership. They will commence meeting as soon as schools reopen, which is in process now.

DEWORMING MEDICATION

FH Canada facilitated a donation to Mbale District of 12,300 tablets of Albendazole and 40,000 doses of Vitamin A. Studies have shown that low-cost deworming for school children can make an important difference in their educational outcomes because it improves attendance. Due to COVID-19, the full program was not completed, but the Mbale District Health Office has restarted the program now that lockdowns have eased.



Before pandemic physical distancing measures were in place, FH began signing up families and their children into the Child Sponsorship program. Help from sponsors is a cornerstone to supporting all the work done in the community.



“The [students] learning will greatly be enhanced. Learning materials will be displayed on the new walls of the new classrooms. This will save teachers a lot of inconveniences carrying materials with them all the time. Incidental learning will take place.”

— Solome, **Teacher, Bukiende**

SPECIAL UPDATE ON CONSTRUCTION

The classroom building and latrine building construction could not be completed this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. The community leaders are supportive and have committed materials such as rocks as their contribution. The latrine construction will begin this year, but the classroom building may take more time given the current situation.

ACTIVITIES



8

clubs formed in schools

965

children received deworming medication and vitamin A



Clean water remains an issue for many families in the region. Children received deworming medication in an effort to keep water-borne diseases from hindering their ability to attend school.



VILLAGE HEALTH TEAMS

In Uganda, the national health structure includes Village Health Teams (VHT) who are volunteers that support the implementation of health programs at the community level. **Studies have shown that they have a positive impact in improving health outcomes, and they conduct important activities** such as training communities on health messages, promoting the use and construction of latrines as well as rubbish pits and tippy taps, handling minor cases of malaria, referring people to the health centre, and supporting the government in collecting data of health indicators at the household level. However, as they are not well-supported in these tasks, FH partners with the health teams in a number of ways. This year, in collaboration with the local health authority, FH conducted refresher training on their roles and responsibilities.

Health teams in the entire Bukende sub-county and the neighbouring sub-counties were trained on COVID-19 signs and symptoms, measures to be taken, and government directives. The training was facilitated by the health unit in charge and health inspectors under the supervision of the district health office as well as World Health Organization (WHO) staff. The health teams were provided with face masks and the necessary materials to conduct home-to-home community sensitization of the coronavirus. This included training on how to construct and use a tippy tap for improved handwashing at home.

CASCADE GROUPS

As planned, 16 Cascade Groups were formed consisting of 12 women's care groups and four Male Change Agents groups. These groups have a total of 192 (48 males and 144 females) volunteers. These volunteers will be trained by FH staff and then "cascade" the training to their neighbour circles. Each of the volunteers will connect with 11 neighbour circle members, reaching 2,112 people with messages on health, livelihoods, education, and disaster risk reduction. The training of these groups has been delayed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, with the eased restrictions, training began in October 2020.

The flipcharts for the first module (Essential Care to Mother and Newborn) were translated into the local language of Lumasaaba and printed. The flipcharts are pictorial for easy understanding by the community since there is a high illiteracy level, and are used by the volunteer mothers to reach their neighbourhoods.



Volunteers gather to be trained on implementing health programs within the community. Their manpower, relationships with neighbours, and understanding of local culture is vital to improving local health.



“The training of our local leaders, and the distribution of hand washing facilities and soap detergents have been important in empowering the community of Bukiende to fight against COVID-19. Thank you for staying with us during this very trying moment, together we will come out stronger.”

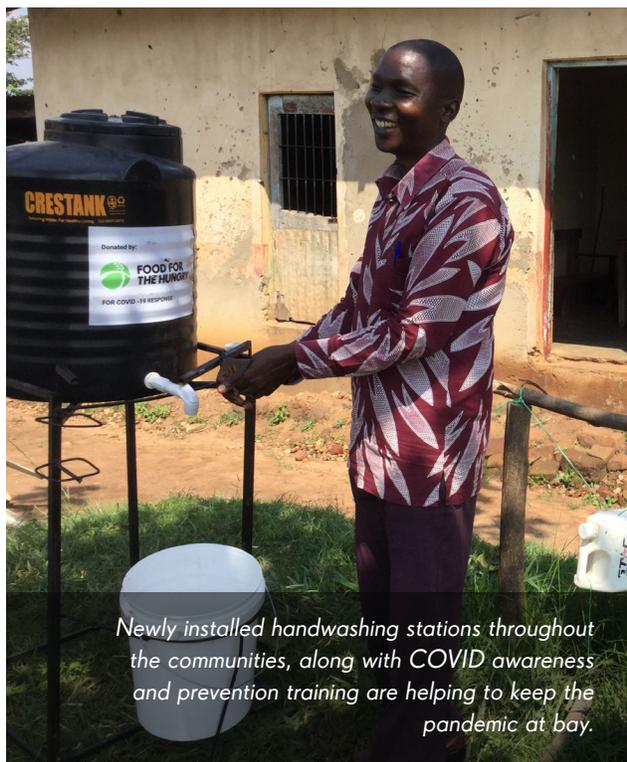
— Fred, **Bukiende**

ACTIVITIES

- 16 Cascade Groups formed (including 4 Male Change Agent groups)
- 77 individuals (35 men and 42 women) participated in VHT refresher training
- 413 families constructed tippy taps (925 were trained how to do it)
- 298 flipcharts on Essential Care to Mother and Newborn printed



1996 families receiving COVID information via VHTs



Newly installed handwashing stations throughout the communities, along with COVID awareness and prevention training are helping to keep the pandemic at bay.



VHTs training on COVID.



LIVELIHOODS

SAVINGS AND LOANS GROUPS

Following the information campaign about Savings and Loans groups, 16 savings groups were established—four per community. In total, 448 people (181 males and 267 females) are participating. The groups started saving in mid-August and they were able to accumulate 4,376,000 Ugandan shillings (\$1,554 Canadian dollars) in total savings. The savings have been loaned by some group members to support income generating activities. The formation of these savings groups were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing restricted movements and bans on public gathering, however due to the ease of these measures, the team mobilized the communities, formed groups, and encouraged them to start saving.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

More than 90 percent of families in Bukiende rely on agricultural activities such as small-scale food production, dairy farming, poultry, and backyard gardening as a source of income while simultaneously meeting their household food needs. Because of the importance of food and farming to these communities, FH is helping families to improve crop production, create access to buyers for selling produce, reduce the prevalence of disease through nutrient-dense farming, and increase knowledge on climate-smart agriculture practices.



“I adopted new agriculture techniques and both my dairy and crop farming benefit from each other. I use the animal’s waste to make manure and I feed my cows with remains of crops like maize straw, banana peels, and leaves. I have been taught to mulch and intercrop in my farming hence the increase in my yields.”

— Fred, **Bukiende**

This year families in Bukiende learned about good agronomic practices, benefitting 900 family members (441 men and 459 women) with knowledge and skills on growing healthy, organic, disease-fighting foods and plants, such as artemisia which helps combat malaria. This was started by training six “lead farmers” who were trained by Thrive for Good [keep reading to learn more about Thrive!], who in turn cascaded the Thrive training to 30 more farmers, each with support from FH staff. This training empowered farming families to establish nutritious gardens, improve their health, and earn extra income. As a result, six demonstration plots were established and 180 families set up similar plots at their homes. These families have reported having enough vegetables to feed their households and surplus which they sold to buy essential items like soap and salt. Training was interrupted by COVID-19, hence fewer families were reached compared to the target, but training has now resumed.

A second group of 200 families were similarly trained on how to establish nutrient-dense kitchen gardens and make compost for their gardens. The participants started kitchen gardens and are now growing a variety of vegetables like spinach, collard greens, cow peas, amaranth, onions, cabbages, tomatoes, and more. These vegetables provide essential nutrients to the families which help fight malnutrition in the community especially among children below five years, and pregnant and lactating mothers. The gardens can be easily managed by people living with disabilities or able bodied persons since they are not labour intensive.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THRIVE FOR GOOD



FH is excited to partner with Thrive for Good, a not-for-profit that provides organic agricultural and nutrition training through development programs around the world. They train communities to grow high nutrient, disease-fighting foods and herbs all year round, with scarce rainfall, and utilizing small land plots available to rural communities.

Thrive works with partners like Food for the Hungry, who are developing solutions for the global problem of 'hidden hunger'. Thrive offers support to communities and leaders to learn a sustainable model for growing these life-giving gardens. They

learn to cascade the same methods so that this low-cost, organic solution can exponentially spread from community to community.

To date, Thrive has developed over 750 community garden projects, supporting more than 40,000 people. With their focus on natural disease-fighting plants and foods, like artemisia, these communities have had an over 75 percent reduction in malaria incidences. In total, these communities are growing approximately 4 million healthy and nutritious meals each year.



ACTIVITIES

6 Lead Farmers trained + 180 farmers trained in growing healthy, organic, disease fighting foods
16 savings groups formed, with 571 participants total
\$1,554 CAD saved



900 people benefit from gardens

200 families established kitchen gardens



LEADERSHIP

In addition to working with local and regional leaders on COVID-19 prevention and response, the FH team continues to work with church and local leaders in their journey from stuck to thriving. Relationship building meetings were conducted with various church leaders to encourage them in their role in community development. Community leaders also participated in meetings to understand FH's program model and their role in the transformation of Bukende, and pledged to support the journey.

ACTIVITIES

6 leadership meetings

43 churches in Bukende

320 Bukende and neighbouring leaders outside of Bukende informed about COVID



93 leaders (70 men and 23 women) attended meetings



A council member stands to give feedback during a regular gathering of community leaders.



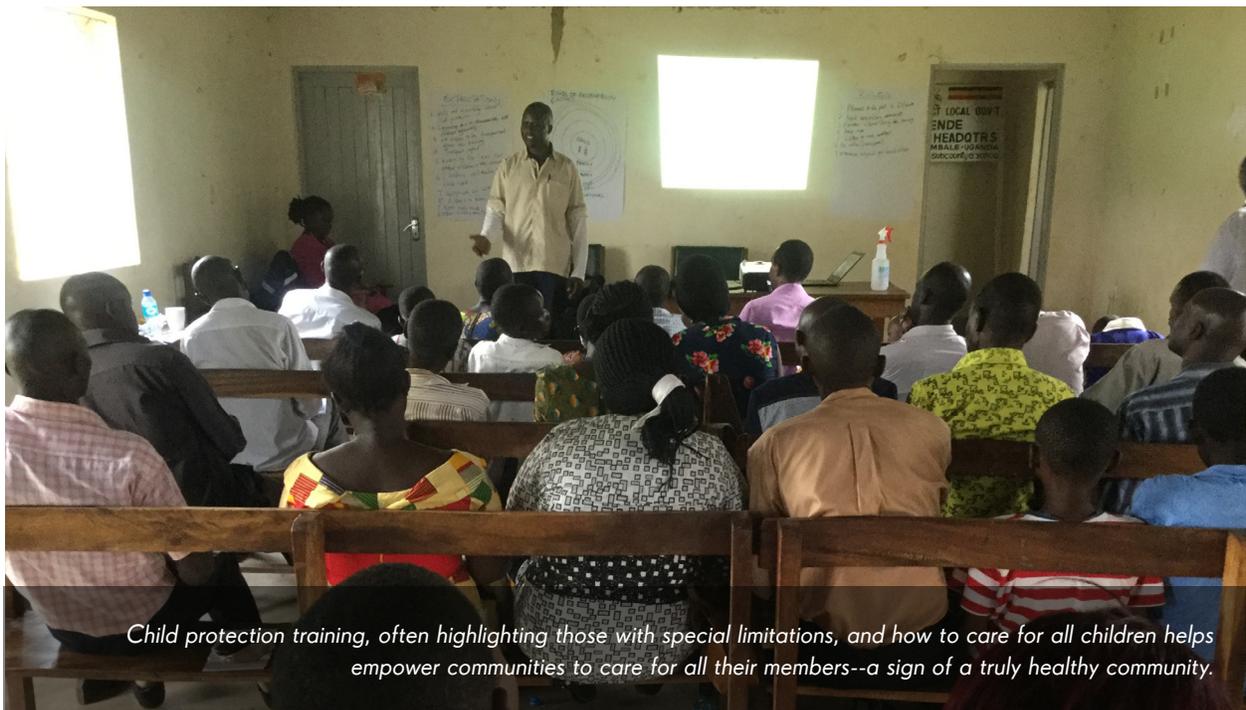
“Personally, I have been encouraged to work harder as a leader and to inspire others in the community. God willing, by the end of the 10 years of our collaboration, I want to have a big testimony physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.”

— Michael, **Uganda**

LIFTING UP THE MOST VULNERABLE

Harmful cultural norms and practices in Bukienye prevent the most vulnerable from thriving. This problem area cuts across all sectors and the team has a plan in place to address it. The plan includes addressing gender inequality, protecting the rights of children, and enabling those living with disabilities. Although this work is just beginning, some progress was made this year.

- Discussion groups with 68 men to discuss empowering and promoting women
- Training for 40 people on child protection and reporting abuse
- Meetings in each community to discuss the needs of children living with disabilities (there are 504 children in Bukienye living with disabilities)



Child protection training, often highlighting those with special limitations, and how to care for all children helps empower communities to care for all their members--a sign of a truly healthy community.

“It gives me hope that my children will have a bright future.”

— Grace, **Uganda**

Grace and her husband Augustine are a typical, hard-working family in the rural village of Nasinge, Burukuru. They do small scale farming to feed their children – beans, maize, potatoes, and coffee. Augustine also sells onions and leafy greens in the local markets to earn a little income to support them. They live without any margin for crises.

So when their daughter was diagnosed with cancer, it was a huge blow. The local hospital was able to remove her eye, but the healing process was painful and complicated. Grace’s daughter passed away, but her family was not alone. “I was emotionally tortured. Some people in the village started talking of witchcraft.... Due to constant visits by FH staff to pray with us, we are encouraged,” Grace testifies.

FH Uganda began a partnership with Bukiende in 2019. Grace was among the first parents to enroll her children in the child sponsorship program. “This was a very important step for the future of my children,” Grace shares. It laid the foundation of support she and Augustine needed to walk through cancer with their daughter, and to encourage all of their children. “I have never seen any organization coming to support needy families like mine,” says Grace. “I feel good when FH staff come to check on my children, carrying letters from their sponsors to them. It gives me hope that my children will have a bright future.”

After just two years of walking together, Grace’s children are already reaping the benefits of FH’s presence in their community. “Since FH started working in this community, many people now see the value of education, so they ensure that children attend school every day. I thank God that at least three of my children have been enrolled in the FH sponsorship program. My children receive school uniforms from FH which will lift their self-esteem and I will be able to save some money to buy a goat or any animal and keep it for the future of my family,” Grace explains.

Through partnership with FH, Grace recently joined a Cascade health group for women where she gains access to health and hygiene information critical to keeping her family healthy. In addition, village health teams regularly visit Grace and her neighbours to encourage

them in new practices that will produce a brighter, healthier future.

But overcoming poverty isn’t exclusively about meeting material needs; it’s also about reconciling relationships. To this end, FH staff not only check in on children, but also mentor parents. “I was so harsh to my children before...Community development facilitators [FH staff] have shown love to our children.” Grace shares that their example inspired her to change her own parenting style: “Now I am like a role model for the parents.” Grace has since become a “Lead Mother” in her village and volunteers in the sponsorship program.

“Is it possible that at least some time you can come, and we have a meal together?” Grace asks with a twinkle in her eye. “Even Jesus visited some homes and they shared the meal!” she laughs.



Thank You

FH Canada, FH Uganda, and the families of Bukiende thank you for your powerful support of their fledgling journey. With only two years of activities under their belt, the communities were hit by COVID-19 lockdowns and disruptions. Your continued support was the lifeline and hope they needed to continue pushing forward. Thank you!