

## Root Foundation's covid-19 Response Report

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### Overview

This report outlines the actions taken by Root Foundation between March and June 2020 to respond to the challenges which resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and discusses the post-lockdown crisis response plan.

Beginning March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Root Foundation introduced a series of workshops for children and the community on COVID-19, and enforced preventive measures of constant hand washing and Safe Greetings at the center. After the first Corona Virus case was reported in Kigali-Rwanda on March 15<sup>th</sup>, considering that the center receives over 300 children, Root Foundation decided to close the children's center to enforce the prevention measures. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, the Rwandan government ordered a total lockdown. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, all Rwandans started the memorial week of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. This is normally a tough week but was even more difficult for many families during the lockdown and the rain floods that hit all parts of the country.

### Challenge 1: Starvation and depression during lockdown & rain floods

**Response:** *Foods Distribution during the lock down & Home Assistance during floods*

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#### ***I. Foods Distribution during the lock down***



The lockdown period lasted 7 weeks and was extremely difficult for hundreds of families in our community who live from hand to mouth, earning little money to get by, including many of the mothers who make jewelry from Root Foundation's center to earn a living to feed their children. We identified 64 hardest hit families from both our existing beneficiaries. As we were entering the 26<sup>th</sup> Memorial of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, we also identified 36 more families of the 1994 Genocide victims, in partnership with the local government. To these 100 families, Root Foundation volunteers distributed 4,310 kilograms of food supplies with

sanitary equipment throughout the lockdown period (March 21<sup>st</sup> – May 18<sup>th</sup>).



## ***II. Floods and heavy rains emergency***

We have worked and continue to work closely with the government to make sure that the affected families by the heavy rains since mid-April, are given the necessary assistance. Root Foundation particularly intervened for one of the hardest hit families who completely lost their house. We assisted with food and rented a new house for them while simultaneously engaging with the community leaders to rebuild the destroyed house.

### **Challenge 2: More vulnerable children are at a higher risk to go to streets as schools remain closed until September.**

**Response Plan:** *Academic Assistance and Extension of personal development services (June – December 2020)*

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All schools in Rwanda will be closed until September 2020. This puts hundreds of vulnerable children in a very difficult situation which will last for 5 months and its consequences probably for a lifetime. One of the big risks of this 5-month break is that many children might end up going to the streets because of financial difficulties, increase of domestic violence (physical and sexual abuse), and other reasons.

Another risk is that children will slip away from study habits and when September comes, their academic preparedness will be extremely poor. The majority of their parents cannot read or write and their home environment cannot help them concentrate for studying. *Root Foundation has developed an Academic Assistance program to provide these children an opportunity to learn that they would not get at home.*

*Although we continue to focus on our Batsinda center for now, local leaders from different parts of the country have called Root Foundation to duplicate our programs in their communities. We have conducted a need assessment survey with a help of 172 friends of Root Foundation who are residents in all 30 Rwandan districts, and the Rwanda National Commission data. Observations show that the Root Foundation's programs are more urgently needed in Huye District in the south, Rwamagana district in the west, Rubavu in the East, and Musanze in the Northern Province.*

*We continue to inform ourselves and welcome input from friends and partners before we take initial steps towards this important path to transforming more lives of vulnerable children.*

#### **Challenge 4: How to help many vulnerable families recover from a financial depression.**

**Response Plan:** *Creation of more income generating opportunities and peer counseling for 100 mothers. (June 2020 – June 2021)*

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We have registered more than two hundred families who came to Root Foundation to seek support to be able to get back on their feet in this post-lockdown crisis.

In our scholarship program, we also pay lunch for children while they are attending school. The schools feeding program was a refugee from hunger for thousands of children and made it easy for the parents. Now that school has stopped until September, it is extremely difficult for a family of 6 to live on \$3 per day.

Root Foundation has initiated two projects to support these families through empowering the mothers, income generating skills development, and peer counseling.



#### **Income generating skills development:**

Groups of 14 mothers are given a teacher in sewing and crafts-making classes. Each mother in the program learns how to use a sewing machine, make jewelry, and start and manage a small business. The initiative aims to add 13 more machines and train 100 mothers by June 2021. After their graduation, each mother will have a choice to start their independent small businesses or to continue working through the cooperative.

**Peer counseling:** Mothers come together after classes to discuss the experiences they are going through in their homes, and to learn the best practices in parenting,

academic assistance to children, and other domestic challenges from each other. Experts visit the groups at the center twice a month to facilitate and offer necessary emotional and mental support.

### Needed resources to implement the post-lockdown crisis response plan

	Item	Item cost overview	Cost (RWF).	Cost (USD)
<b>Income generating skills development</b> (100 mothers)	Mothers cooperative working space.	Center restructuring and space renting.	<b>2,400,000</b>	<b>2540</b>
	Sewing program	Cost of buying 13 new machines, paying teacher and operating costs (Materials ...).	<b>2,630,000</b>	<b>2783</b>
	Arts & Crafts making program	Cost of teaching enrolled new mothers.	<b>432,000</b>	<b>457</b>
	Soap-making program	Mixing machine costs plus operating costs (materials, trainings...).	<b>450,000.</b>	<b>476</b>
<b>Peer counseling</b> (100 mothers)	Experts sessions	Reimbursing transportation cost.	<b>480,000</b>	<b>508</b>
	Emergency intervention fund	Supporting particular needs for the mothers within the program.	<b>400,000</b>	<b>423</b>
<i>Academic Assistance program</i> (309 children)	Trainers facilitations	Reimbursing transportation cost and other costs used when providing this service.	<b>540,000.</b>	<b>571</b>
	Reinforcing measures set to avoid the spread of covid-19.	Buying materials (face masks, hand washing station, soap...) to help us in coping with the measures set to avoid spread of covid-19.	<b>800,000</b>	<b>846</b>
Personal Development Activities (309 children)	Rent for the Children Center	Center restructuring.	<b>1,800,000</b>	<b>1905</b>
	Volunteers transportation	Reimbursing transportation used.	<b>270,000</b>	<b>286</b>
	Reinforcing measures set to avoid the spread of covid-19.	Buying materials (Hand was station, soap...) to help us in coping with the measures set to avoid spread of covid-19.	<b>Covered above.</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>10,215,000</b>	<b>\$10,795</b>