

Graduated Communities Sustainability Study - 2019

Background

Since 2010, Spark Microgrants has partnered with 323 communities to participate in the **Facilitated Collective Action Process (FCAP)** - a 3 year process where communities democratically elect an inclusive leadership committee, establish a village savings account, and decide a project of their choice, then implementing the project with an \$8,000 microgrant. Each community receives an additional two years of management support and facilitation from Spark and our partners with a focus on sustainability and capacity building on advocacy and future envisioning, so communities can continue their own development beyond their partnership with Spark.

A study was conducted in 2019 to assess whether FCAP community projects and meetings were still sustaining one year after graduating from the process, and to ascertain which parts of the FCAP are still sustaining. In this study, surveys were conducted in 38 Spark communities in Uganda, and 35 in Rwanda, 1 year after FCAP graduation.

Methodology

This study aimed to quantify the sustainability of the outcomes of the FCAP, primarily assessing if community projects were sustaining and whether community meetings were still occurring. In addition, it looked into the prevalence of savings groups and whether any other aspects of the FCAP were still sustaining. Alongside an understanding of the presence of savings groups within a community and whether any other aspects of the process are still sustaining.

The study was conducted within communities across Rwanda and Uganda that had completed their FCAP process from one year and more.

This resulted in a sample of 73 communities, 38 in Uganda and 35 in Rwanda. Data collection was done using the Random Walk Approach and a minimum of 15-20 surveys were collected in each community. Leading to over 1,200 surveys completed and a statistical significance of 95%±3

It was conducted by Spark internal staff with all methodologies and data collection tools developed by the Spark research, evaluation and learning team and data collected through volunteer data collectors.

A limit of this methodology is the lack of differentiation between communities that were 1 year out of finishing the FCAP process to communities that were over 3 years. These results therefore generate an average. Future research will be focused on disaggregating results by length of time since community completion of the FCAP process.

“ For me, what changed is the idea of self-reliance. Instead of relying on the government, the community feels they can help themselves, and create change themselves. In the beginning, there was no community participation and now the community feels they can express their ideas and speak up. ”

-Nubahimana Daniel

Community member and facilitator in Gatare, Rwanda

(September, 2019)

Results

81%

Grant Projects: 81% of the communities in this sample are reported to have sustaining primary projects. The most commonly cited reason for the primary projects sustaining is the benefits that the community members get out of the project. Other reasons include, the sense of unity they get out of being within the group, as well as the good quality of training they received as part of the Spark process.

85%

Meetings: 85% of the communities are reported to have sustaining meetings. The most frequently cited meeting type in Rwanda are community meetings with local government (51%) whereas in Uganda, the majority (22%) meet for purposes of conflict resolution. The majority (48%) of the respondents say that meetings are still happening because of activities that have to do with the project.

92%

Savings Groups: When asked whether their community has a communal savings group, 92% of the communities continued to have active savings groups. Communities set up savings group as their FCAP process to improve access to finances. The remaining respondents mentioned independent initiatives such as communal support funds, increased skills as well as a sense of unity within the community members are still happening.

Overall, these findings suggest that both community projects and meetings sustain after the community has graduated from the process. Communal savings groups still exist within most communities, and 20% of the respondents reported other parts of the FCAP sustaining as well, such as collaboration and the outcomes of projects.

Sustainability in Ayugi, Uganda

Ayugi community, in Northern Uganda, implemented an ox-plough project to improve their agricultural practices. A follow up with the community after completing the process, revealed they are still using the ploughs to increase their harvest and household income, as well as utilizing the knowledge acquired in Spark trainings to carry-out prompt disease control among the oxen, effectively manage the ploughs, and work together to increase their income.

The community savings group formed in the process is still active, and they have saved a cumulative amount of \$370. Community members have used these funds to pay for school fees, and start micro-enterprises including setting up a tomato selling business, soap selling business, and a small scale shop. The savings group is also acting as a loan system that is more accessible for community members to use funds and reduce financial burden.

Next Steps

Opportunities for Further Study

Spark intends to:

- Further study how to track sustainability over time.
- Expand research to measure sustainability of impact of the FCAP on civic engagement, social cohesion, and livelihoods as well as the correlation between sustainability indicators.