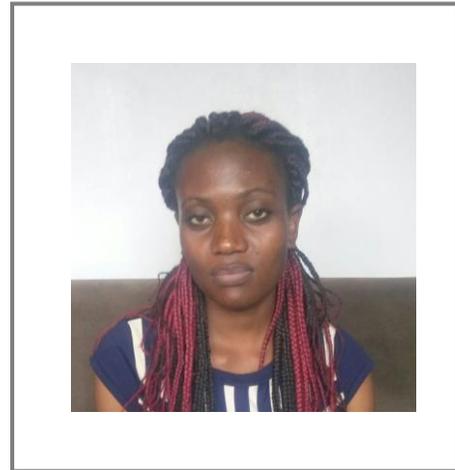


EMBRACING BACK YARD FARMING IN URBAN AND PERI- URBAN AREAS DURING COVID 19 TIMES, A SOLUTION FOR FOOD INSECURITY IN URBAN AND PERI UBARN SETTINGS

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Urban Agriculture is practiced worldwide in cities of developed and developing countries alike. The contributions of urban agriculture to urban food security, urban economy and city ecology that have been identified by the urban agriculture practitioners from various parts of the world cannot be underestimated. This is a time where urban agriculture makes more sense. The total lock down due to COVID 19 has affected a number of businesses in urban and rural areas. Over 90% of businesses have been closed down and also very many people have been laid off from their jobs thus increased poverty, unemployment, domestic violence to mention but a few. Despite government's efforts to provide food reliefs, many Urban dwellers didn't receive this food since they were not categories as the vulnerable poor and for those who received, It was not enough to sustain them for more than three weeks. In addition hundreds of those who received that food complained that it was of very poor quality especially the beans that were full of chuff and stones. A case in point are the residents of Nansana and Bwaise suburbs of Kampala. This meant that majority of people now have to rely on their savings for survival for it is important to have food and other essential basic needs whether people are working or not. Many of urban dwellers rely on buying food but in this incidence where every single coin is of a high value, people have to resort to urban agriculture that will technically sustain them with food in order to save that money that would be spent on buying food for the family or for precautionary motives since it is not very clear when normal business life will resume.

It is interesting that the routine food needed in households can be grown in small kitchen gardens on small plots of land around homes and yet they provide sufficient food for small house holds found in urban and peri- urban centers.

Ages considered, a local NGO with operations in Wakiso has demonstrated some sample kitchen gardens through urban agriculture models to teach households in Mende sub county Wakiso district how to utilize small plots of land and plant sufficient food for the entire family.

Talking to one of the participants said that she focused on planting vegetables e.g onions, eggplant, tomatoes, and green paper. She explained that these are often used in every meal for her family of four members. This therefore enables her to save a lot of money that she would have spent in buying these crucial ingredients.

Urban agriculture contributes to: reduction of urban poverty, reduce urban waste by turning it into productive resource such as compost or animal feed, can green urban environment where spaces can be turned into green zones with positive impacts on the micro-climate (shade, temperature, sequestration of carbondioxide)

It's not yet too late for everyone to embrace back yard farming (kitchen gardening) for it requires limited capital, easy to start up, monitor and utilizes a small space. We also encourage the government through projects like Operation Wealth Creation and development partners to embrace this approach by supporting small households in urban and peri urban areas for it is a quick remedy to food insecurity also for city/town councils to pass ordinances pro urban farming.

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