

**Annual Report for the Isle of Man International Development Committee:
Reducing Poverty and Malnutrition for 210 families in Burundi and Rwanda**

SG 010.14 Send a Cow, November 2015 to November 2016

Project Summary:

The project has improved the livelihoods of 210 vulnerable farming families in Burundi and Rwanda by supporting them to sustainably increase production from their land. Men and women, girls and boys, disabled people and those living with HIV/AIDS are all targeted beneficiaries of this project. During the course of the project year, malnutrition has been reduced and additional household income generated. Increased farm productivity has not only given families enough to eat, but has also created a surplus which can be sold for income. Beneficiaries have diversified their income sources for long term security, begun to access savings and loans schemes and set up small businesses, generating employment for themselves and other community members. The project has opened up employment opportunities in the informal sector for people marginalised from formal employment. As a result of gender training, beneficiaries have seen significant improvements in equality and their relationships. These improvements made and the numbers of indirect beneficiaries are multiplying thanks to the passing on of gifts and skills.



Crops being harvested from a kitchen garden,
Nyaruguru, Rwanda.



Training in savings and loan schemes,
Rwanda

Comparison of outcomes against initial aims

This project **'Reducing poverty and malnutrition for 210 families in Burundi and Rwanda'** focused on helping vulnerable families develop food security and sustainable livelihoods through integrated agriculture, the establishment of nursery gardens and demonstration farms, improved animal management, learning exchange visits and study tours.

This report has been compiled over the project year by comparing baseline data, analysing training attendance forms, reviewing farmer feedback, and looking at group leader feedback. This information is captured by the project facilitators and trainers. Monthly meetings allow groups to feedback on project progress. Quarterly reviews provide qualitative and quantitative data which is then processed and analysed to provide clear data to inform progress against key project objectives.

Progress against objectives:

- **Objective 1 – 210 smallholder farmer families (1,050 people) (60% women) trained and supported to become food secure**

Training in Sustainable Agriculture (SA)

"It used to be a dream that I could eat vegetables. Now I have enough vegetables. Every day I eat vegetables and I use the money from the surplus to pay for my health insurance payment." Farmer from Nyaruguru, Rwanda.

The project has promoted simple, locally appropriate agricultural techniques to increase crop production, help soil and water conservation and manage natural resources. Training has been delivered to 210 small holder farmers and has included: making organic pesticides; composting and liquid manure production; farming as a business; vegetable garden establishment; and tree planting for environmental and soil protection. In this project, improved agricultural practices such as kitchen gardens have proven successful for vegetable growing, and agroforestry has helped soil protection. These sustainable agricultural techniques have helped to maximize land potential. Send a Cow's extension workers have been able to introduce new agricultural technologies and innovations which have been adopted by farmers.

All 210 of the smallholder farmer families we worked with in this project have established nursery/kitchen gardens and learnt skills and techniques for maximising vegetable production. Send a Cow Rwanda (SACR) has also set up a seed nursery within the community and planted seeds for agroforestry, fruit trees and fodder trees. Once the plants were ready the farmers removed the plants for their own use and then during Umuganda (monthly community public works) and invited other community members to the nursery to take the remaining seedlings.

A recent quarterly review (monitoring data collected July - September 2015) indicates that 45.2% of target beneficiary farmers are already food secure, against the baseline of 2% and ahead of the target of 33% which was set for March 2016.

Training in Improved Animal Management (IAM)

The project has also exceeded its target for training in improved animal management and placement, with 210 farmers acquiring skills in animal health, breeding, feeding and housing. Proper animal sheds enable manure collection that improves soil fertility and, in turn, improves crop

production. All farmers pass on livestock offspring to other beneficiaries. This increases the impact of the project, develops community solidarity chains, and promotes sustainability. SACR has trained a total of 60 volunteer Animal Health Workers to provide long-term free support.

Training of trainers

Beneficiaries who excel after training and who demonstrate a desire to support their peers and communities, are provided with additional training to become Peer Farmers and community Animal Health Workers. Peer farmer trainers encourage others to adopt new activities, working peer to peer, and ensure that the techniques and skills learnt by the project beneficiaries are embedded, increasing the sustainability of the project.



Volunteer animal health workers receive training in animal handling during treatment, Rwanda



Volunteer animal health workers receive training in animal care during treatment, Burundi

Peer Farmers and extension workers have been trained, and smallholder farmers were trained in advance of animal placement. Over the course of this project, 6 groups comprising 210 beneficiaries (126 women and 84 men) received training in animal management including zero grazing, livestock shed construction, optimised feeding and animal health.

The Vice-Mayor of Economic Affairs, Nyaruguru, Rwanda expressed particular support for the Send a Cow model, recognising the importance of the training to ensure the full impact of livestock placement is realised and sustainable: ***“Send a Cow are supporting the districts very well. Firstly as they are getting people in groups and they are getting training which is very important before any other support. I appreciate the way Send a Cow prepares farmers before they are receiving an animal.”***

Provision of livestock

Project beneficiaries received appropriate livestock such as cows, goats, pigs, rabbits and hens. The type of livestock which a beneficiary received depended on their capacity, e.g. land availability, to care for the animal in the long-term. The manure from livestock feeds the land which increases soil protection and production, providing food to eat and surplus crops for sale. Cattle and dairy goats provide a source of milk for nutrition and for sale. The smaller livestock, e.g. hens and rabbits, reproduce quickly and therefore provide opportunities for developing small agri-businesses and relatively quick generation of income. Pigs are also popular in Burundi and good for breeding.



Placement of pigs in both Bujumbura and Mwaro Province, Burundi



Exchange visits and study tours

The beneficiaries visited previous Send a Cow projects, community demonstration farms and small agri-business projects.

Farmers from Nyanza and Nyaruguru Districts in Rwanda visited previous Send a Cow beneficiaries in Rwamagana to learn about the techniques which they have implemented to improve their resilience to climate change, including terracing to protect against soil erosion and water harvesting techniques. Having seen that many households in Rwamagana use household biogas digesters to provide cooking fuel, the farmers spoke with their own district authorities and an agreement was reached that the district would support farmers with access to household biogas digesters by providing grants of 300,000RWF (Rwandan Francs) if the farmers contribute 100,000RWF towards the technology. To date eight farmers are taking part in the scheme.

Peer farmers from Rwanda also visited Rubona Farm to see the process of mushroom production supported by the Rwandan Agriculture Board. Here they learnt lessons about small business development, value addition and post-harvest storage.

The beneficiaries in Burundi also visited previous Send a Cow projects. Farmers from Bujumbura and Mwaro visited Makebuko training centre in Gitega province. This centre is created to help farmers develop their skills in agriculture, livestock management and value addition for small agri-business projects. They also learnt about the techniques they have



Peer farmers learn about mushroom production at Rubona Farm, agri-business

implemented to improve their resilience to climate change including terracing to protect against soil erosion and water harvesting techniques. They learnt that it is possible to plant bananas in home compound. As one group member from Mwaro province said: ***“Without the study tour we would not fully understand what we learned during training, but we are now able to implement all that we have learned because it becomes automatic.”***

- **Objective 2 – 210 smallholder farmer families (1,050 people) (60% women) have increased income and savings**

The training and inputs described under Objective 1 have helped to increase yields and improved post-harvest storage, including drying racks, use of natural pesticides and government crop stores where available. This has allowed farmers to maximize yields and profit.

All groups have also received training in business development, financial management and record keeping. They have made links with formal savings and credit institutions to access loans and to promote saving. This can then be reinvested in their farms and businesses.

In Rwanda, all beneficiaries received income generation training, and all groups opened bank accounts or invested in savings and credit schemes to which individuals have access. Training has been well received by the beneficiaries. Traditionally the farmers found it very difficult to save but by organising saving efforts as a group even the poorest have seen that it is possible to save. By providing loans to the farmers to help with shed construction, farmers have also come to understand loan schemes and to become more confident in accessing these. After accessing the group saving schemes some have gone on to use finance from more formalised structures e.g. Savings and Credit Cooperatives or opened up individual savings accounts, demonstrating their commitment and desire to improve their situation themselves.



Group work as part of participatory savings training in Nyaruguru, Rwanda.

In Burundi, beneficiaries received training in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), with the aim of creating community-managed savings and loan groups. The activities of VSLA run in cycles of about one year, after which the accumulated savings and profits from interest are shared out among the members according to the amount they have saved.

The quarterly review findings show that over 70% of target farmers were able to earn more than £1.50 per day – this has far exceeded the milestone target that was set at £0.80. The remaining 30% have been able to increase their incomes from an average of 20p per day to over £1. Many of these farmers choose to reinvest back into their business or purchase household assets. This has helped to reduce poverty, and make positive and sustainable changes to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in these communities who are actively choosing to invest in their futures. In Burundi for example, the majority of beneficiaries now have energy saving stoves, 19 have bicycles, 25 have wheelbarrows, 98 have a mattress, and 196 have radios. All of these are indicators of being lifted out of poverty.

- **Objective 3 – Women and men living in target areas have increased awareness of gender equality contributing to changes in attitude towards women at the household and community level**

Training in Gender and Social Development encompasses the promotion of gender equity and equality, group solidarity, behaviour change, nutrition, health and hygiene advice. Households were organised into groups to facilitate training and to build strong communities. These groups have been supported to develop a clear vision and mission, leadership skills and democratically elected governing committees.

Household surveys at midpoint through the project (July-September 2016) show that in Rwanda 34% of women beneficiaries currently influence decisions at community level,



and 52% of women beneficiaries influence decisions at household level.

In Burundi, 20% of women report increased confidence to participate in decision-making. This indicates that after training in leadership, gender equity and conflict prevention (which includes conflict management and conflict resolution) women have increased confidence to participate in decision-making and influence formal and informal leaders at household and community level. Female group members have been elected into responsible positions in local government. In the 20 existing associations in Bujumbura, women participate in committees and many are seen as leaders in groups. Women beneficiaries are even starting to defend the rights of other women in their community.

In Burundi, 59% of women are already acting as group chairpersons or members of a committee in external groups which form part of local government administration. More specifically 24% are chairpersons in these groups, and 35% are on the committee of their local government administration.

Christine Nyabenda presents the group's progress to other members of the Send a Cow group 'Tuzamurane-Jari'



Gender and Social Development training, Burundi

I. Comparison of predicted and actual expenditure

Budget Line	Budget Nov 14 - Nov 15 £	Expenditure Dec 14 – Dec 15 £	Variance Nov 14 - Nov 15 £
TRAINING			
Farmer Training: Gender and Social Development	3,632	4,188	(556)

Farmer Training: Improved Animal Management	4,960	5,935	(975)
Farmer Training: Sustainable Agriculture	4,366	6,130	(1,764)
Farmer Training: Post Harvest Management	331	-	331
Farmer Training: Income Generation	3,881	2,839	1,042
Peer Farmer Trainer training	2,836	2,076	760
Community Animal Healthcare Worker training	1,052	928	124
Farmer study tours and exchange visits	828	1,153	(325)
Sub Total	21,886	23,249	(1,363)
AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK			
Agricultural inputs	1,469	3,656	(2,188)
Livestock	30,755	19,370	11,385
Livestock inputs	8,487	13,584	(5,097)
Sub Total	40,711	36,610	4,100
Extension services	3,797	4,798	(1,001)
Transport costs	2,337	2,367	(30)
Salaries & Administration			
Salaries	3,572	3,593	(21)
Overheads	1,707	1,986	(279)
Sub total	5,279	5,579	(300)
Monitoring, evaluation and lesson learning	4,240	5,657	(1,417)
TOTAL	£78,250	£ 78,260	(£10)

Explanation on any variance in expenditure

The overall expenditure was in the line with budget, although there were some variances on individual budget lines. The most significant variance was in relation to livestock purchase in response to altered preferences of beneficiaries and local leaders. We had originally budgeted for dairy goats as there was interest in goat's milk, but beneficiaries asked instead for meat goats as there is a stronger local market for meat. Since meat goats are cheaper to buy than dairy goats the cost of purchasing livestock packages for all beneficiaries was lower than planned. The budget was used for agricultural and livestock inputs, training for beneficiaries in improved animal management, and to pay for increased costs of shed materials, fodder seeds for growing food for goats, acaricide spray for the control of tick-borne diseases and mineral blocks. These additional inputs and training ensured beneficiaries have the knowledge and resources they need to maintain animal health and well-being in the long-term.

Details of any contribution by the local community

Farmers who received livestock set aside a portion of their land to cultivate fodder, demonstrating long-term commitment to the welfare of their animal. They also contributed materials and labour for livestock shed and kitchen garden construction. Community group members gave their time and energy to meet together in groups to plan activities, learn from each other and share with the wider community. Some were elected to positions of leadership in their group, including Chairperson, Vice-chair, Treasurer and Secretary, and took on the responsibilities associated with their role. The commitment of the members was important to ensuring success of the project and fostered ownership and strong, lasting bonds between them. Group members also organised training venues, offering their homes or negotiating with local schools, churches and owners of other buildings to ensure training activities could take place. Beneficiaries who received livestock signed a commitment to passing on the equivalent gift to another trained farmer so that in the future, others will also benefit.

Any unexpected successes or challenges

Successes:

During this fiscal year 2015 the key factors that have contributed positively to progress are:

1. The Community Based approach and Gender and Social Development training contributed to beneficiaries' involvement, understanding and enthusiasm towards the project resulting in strong uptake of ideas.
2. The involvement of local leaders from district to village level ensured project ownership by the beneficiaries and therefore strong support at all levels.
3. The project responded to the priorities of the local district authorities and linked in to government work, ensuring the support of district leaders and government extension staff as the project complimented their existing work.
4. Hard-working and committed project staff in Rwanda and Burundi kept the project on track and maintained the momentum of success.

One unintended benefit of the changes to livestock is that thanks to their lower price, more beneficiaries have been able to receive local goats and more households will benefit, demonstrating good value for money.

In Burundi, after the Gender and Social Development training beneficiaries opened bank accounts in Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) and begun making monthly contributions. This was not expected within the first few months of the project and it demonstrates the beneficiaries' immediate commitment. In Burundi, 11% of beneficiaries have also already begun small businesses and farmers were passing their skills on to others by setting up kitchen gardens after just a few months of training and experience.

In Rwanda, 21 beneficiaries have begun very small businesses, which are operating well and generating some income. Peer farmers and the Animal Health Workers have set up Agrivet Shops in 3 groups. In Rwanda, farmers in many groups earned sufficient income to purchase small animals including hens and rabbits. These changes are happening more rapidly than expected, and farmers told us that they "learn in the morning and apply in the afternoon". This is a clear demonstration of the rapid adoption of Send a Cow techniques and the enthusiasm of the beneficiaries' engagement.

Challenges:

The process of recruiting beneficiaries took longer than expected. In Rwanda beneficiaries are chosen in collaboration with local leaders utilising the government ‘Ubudehe’ categories to identify the most vulnerable people within the community, who would benefit most from participation in the programme. This process took longer than anticipated but ensures Send a Cow projects work in harmony with government programmes.

The political situation in Burundi was unstable during this reporting period with the election creating unrest in Bujumbura city and restricting travel. Whilst the focus of the work did not change, increased risks and insecurity in the capital Bujumbura meant extra precautions were taken by staff to ensure their safety. Extension workers designed weekly work plans to ensure that they could continue their work in safety. Working with local authorities and using UN updates helped to ensure project delivery without taking undue risks which would have put staff in danger. An internal security plan is also in place in Burundi to mitigate any potential threats to personal security, provide advice on appropriate behaviour, and to outline procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency.



Conclusion on the effectiveness and sustainability of the project

The group leadership, cohesion and cornerstone training has ensured that the community groups have learned skills which will enable them to remain strong, self-reliant, support structures for their members after the project's completion. The envisioning process has helped groups to set plans and goals for their own development that can and will be continued, and has ensured ownership of the project. Exit strategies have been discussed well before completion and groups have included these in their plans so that they will be ready to continue to work together to reach their goals and set new ones after the project finishes. Gender and Social Development training lays the ground work for sustainability by strengthening communities and farming groups so that they continue to work together in an equitable and empowering way.

Send a Cow has begun the process of empowering community members and building the capacity of community groups so that they are in a stronger position to lobby for other locally available services. Group income generating activities will encourage the groups to continue working together and ensure sustainability.

Training in agricultural techniques has been a key focus of the project. All taught agricultural techniques are environmentally sustainable and help build resilience to climate change and ensure that the initial impacts from increases in production are sustainable. The techniques are also

economically sustainable as they do not require expensive inputs for example organic pesticide is cheaper than the synthetic alternative and rainwater harvest systems utilise cheap and locally available materials that farmers will be able to repair without additional external financial support.

The Peer Farmer trainers and community Animal Health Workers are valuable community based resources who will continue to support with facilitating the pass on of livestock which falls outside of the 12 month funded period. The trained Animal Health Workers will continue to support their neighbours in simple cases of animal health so the benefits continue long after the project ends. The peer farmer trainers trained by Send a Cow will go on to train others. They train their own groups voluntarily and receive a small per diem for transport to undertake training of nearby groups, or where they have particular expertise in an area. Peer Farmers sometimes generate income from providing advice, support or training to wealthier farmers in the area. In addition, the project will also leave behind community demonstration farms that will provide an indefinite resource for learning. In order to support Peer Farmers and to encourage them to remain active, Send a Cow Rwanda will help to develop peer farmer forums for mutual support.

Send a Cow research shows that for any direct beneficiary supported by Send a Cow an additional 10 families also benefit. Livestock will continue to be distributed through the pass on system where the first born female livestock is passed on to another group member (this is the principle of passing on the gift). Informal multiplication we have seen in other projects includes copy farming, sharing of crops with vulnerable members of the community and new services and product availability due to increased productivity of beneficiary farmers. Anecdotal evidence from beneficiaries shows that techniques taught by Send a Cow staff are being implemented by their neighbours, demonstrating a multiplier effect. The initial activities focus on the direct beneficiaries but, as the project progresses, both the formal and the informal multiplication process takes place and a wider number of beneficiaries are reached.

By engaging with local authorities throughout the project life-cycle we ensure buy-in and understanding which encourages the continuation of their support after the end of the funding period. Involving local leaders and government staff in training has also provided them with skills that they can use in the future and an in-depth understanding of the aims of the groups, widening the project's impact. Government staff at local level will also continue supporting peer farmers as they are seen as a key asset within the community.

II. Possible future developments

The Send a Cow model which provides Gender and Social Development training together with extensive Improved Animal Management and Sustainable Agriculture training alongside livestock placement, has proved very successful in the projects areas. The improvements in nutrition and dietary diversity demonstrate the impact of the approach. There is still considerable need in these areas and thanks to the success of this project, local leaders have requested expansion of the work to neighbouring areas within the districts, therefore there is potential to replicate this project model in other areas of Rwanda and Burundi and scale up the work in the two countries.