

International Development Partnership Funding Stream

ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT – Year 1

Implementing Partners: COCOCA (The Cooperatives Consortium), The Council for Education and Development (COPED), Mother's Union, and AgriBusiness Services (ABS)

Project name: Sustainable Livelihoods through Cooperatives, Renewable Energy and Gender Empowerment in Burundi

Reference: IDP015.18IDP

Project Reporting Period: July 2018 – October 2019



1. Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the project is to increase the incomes and financial security of 6,394 small-scale farmers in Kayanza, Kirundo, Muyinga, Ngozi and Rumonge districts. This project is working across three key agricultural value chains (coffee, sustainable palm oil and sunflower oil) and will increase the incomes of poor, rural farmers by addressing SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy and SDG15 Life on Land, while championing SDG5 Gender Equality across all project activities.

The project has three key objectives:

Outcome 1: Empowered coffee farmers are better linked to remunerative markets through strengthened coffee cooperatives, increased quality of the Horamama Women Brand and investment in renewable energy processors

Outcome 2: Small scale female sustainable palm oil processors are fully aware of their roles in reversing environmental degradation through the use of flexi biogas systems as a source of green energy and fertiliser

Outcome 3: Marginalised women and girls are socially empowered through community health resilience and economically strengthened through the creation of a women's sunflower producers organisation, and have better access to finance for renewable energy powered enterprises

2. Project Status

This interim report covers the first 15 months (July 2018 – October 2019) of this project. From 1st October 2018 – 5th December 2018, Christian Aid Burundi was unable to operate due to a temporary suspension of all NGOs operating in Burundi. During this time, we were unable to deliver any grant activities or charge expenditure to the grant. Project implementation was significantly delayed due to these challenges and the Isle of Man Government were made aware at the time. In January 2019, a no cost extension was granted to allow the Year One activities more time to be implemented. These have been completed and Year Two activity will now begin. The project is expected to be completed by October 2020 in line with the agreed project extension period.

Despite the setback, good progress has been made during 2019 in terms of implementing the planned activities. This report will highlight the progress of these activities to date, and lay out the plans for the final year of the project. The project has already brought about significant change: women coffee farmers are empowered; they are better linked to markets through strengthened coffee cooperatives; and the quality of the Horamama Women Brand coffee has increased due to the investment in renewable energy, provision of a coffee roaster, and cupping laboratory equipment.

3. Project Activities

OUTCOME 1: Empowered Coffee farmers are better linked to remunerative markets through strengthened coffee cooperatives and increased quality of the Horamama Women Brand through investment in renewable-energy based assets.

Activity 1.1: Provision of Assets (mini cupping laboratory/roaster for Horamama coffee and cupping equipment for the existing 18 coffee cooperatives)

This activity began with the purchase of a plot of land for construction, located in Bujumbura, Kanyosha Nyabugete quarter (Plot n° K2591^b). The construction is now nearing completion; the official launch and opening of the cupping laboratory is planned for the week commencing 2nd December 2019. This will be an exciting time for COCOCA and the cooperatives as they will start processing the coffee in-country for the first time. This activity will also support the promotion and

consumption of the women farmers' coffee within Burundi. The COCOCA union is proud to be a promoter of the local consumption of roasted and ground coffee produced by women farmers in the community.

Construction of the roaster processing building

- ▶ The building construction started in June 2019 and is 90% complete. This began after a period of architectural design of the building and technical studies of the structure, electrical installations, the photovoltaic system, sanitary installations and equipment.

Supplying equipment for the cooperatives and roasting unit

- ▶ The supply, commissioning and training contract for users of the roasting line was signed between COCOCA and DITCO, who will import and supply the laboratory equipment by the end of November 2019.
- ▶ The coffee drying tables have been supplied to the YAGIKAWA, KAZOZA N'IKAWA and TWARANYUZWE RANGO womens cooperatives and were gratefully received at a small event hosted by delegates from the COCOCA union and Christian Aid.

Installation of sustainable energy sources

- ▶ The installation of solar panels will save the cooperatives from high energy bills, whilst also providing a sustainable source of energy for processing and other activities. The contract has been signed with the service provider and the company will begin installing the solar equipment in early November 2019, after the building construction is complete.

Activity 1.2: Capacity building and training for 1,623 female coffee farmers and Enhancement of Organic Certification

The partner ABS (Agribusiness Services) has successfully developed a training module on coffee quality, good agricultural practices and organic certification requirements. These training materials are being used in a cascade model to reach more coffee farmers. ABS have provided training on these topics for 350 female women farmers from 10 cooperatives across the districts. These female leaders will now go onto train other women in their communities and cooperatives. As the project continues we will be monitoring female farmers increase of yields and the average selling price of their coffee crops after the harvest next year. We will continue to work towards the Organic and Fairtrade Certification which will be assessed by an external certification organisation. The first assessment phase will take place in April/May 2020.

We have worked with the Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU) to research potential high-value crops which female coffee farmers can introduce to their land. This will increase their year-round earning potential, therefore providing a sustainable income in the future for the women farmers and their families. At the time of application, we suggested that a possible crop to introduce would be vanilla, however from ISABU's research we now know that this would be the first instance of vanilla being introduced to Burundi. The introduction of any new crop must get government approval from the relevant Technical Ministry and it could take up to three years to progress to crop homologation. Unfortunately, it is no longer viable to propose the introduction of vanilla during this two-year project. However, we have identified macadamia nuts as an alternative cash crop and this links strongly to the local context as the Government of Burundi is promoting macadamia in the national development plan. We are supporting the diversification of farmers crop portfolios by providing seeds for macadamia and relevant agricultural training.

Activity 1.3: Coaching support to COCOCA (umbrella organisation of the cooperatives), the coffee marketing union and CNAC (coffee farmers national confederation) to fully own and upscale the development of cooperatives

In the first year, a training module has been developed on Cooperative Governance and we have rolled out training on good governance for key committee members of nine Cooperatives, COCOCA and local administrative representatives. The 20 trainers who have been trained, will now replicate the same trainings for all cooperative members to cascade the learning.

In Year 2, we build on this by providing mentoring to key COCOCA representatives and training on commercialisation, branding and marketing. Through this work we aim to increase the marketability and sale price of the coffee, identify possible growth areas and promote single origin blends. This work will enable the cooperatives to be sustainable and demonstrate the effectiveness of fairly priced, sustainability processed coffee at a national level.

OUTCOME 2: Small scale women sustainable palm oil processors are fully aware of their roles in reversing environmental degradation through the use of flexi biogas system as source of green energy and organic fertiliser

Activity 2.1: Provision of flexi biogas system in the palm oil processing cycle

This activity will be implemented during Year 2 of the project. However, we have identified the beneficiaries in the first year to enable their involvement in the training on climate change effects and climate smart farming (Activity 2.3). Two women-led palm oil processors associations have been formed and the process of legal registration is ongoing. The two associations have a combined total of 150 members (132 women and 18 men).

Activity 2.2: Produce organic fertiliser from biogas system and establish renewable energy-powered micro enterprises by female palm oil processors

This activity will also be implemented during Year 2 of the project. However, some preparation activities have been completed to avoid any delays. We have identified two plots of land and COPED has started the process of recruitment for the engineer who will oversee the biogas system constructions.

Activity 2.3: Train women farmers groups and associations on climate change effects and climate smart farming

We have delivered two training modules for women farmers groups and associations in Rumonge. The two modules have been delivered using a train the trainer cascade model and address the topics of climate change resilience of climate smart farming. The 45 participants were cooperative leaders and members, along with religious leaders, local administration, private business actors operating in the palm oil industries and media. The training is now being cascaded and a further 145 cooperative members (Rema Association and Imboneza Associations) have been trained.

These activities introduce the participants to the impact of climate change and how to initiate entrepreneurial activities which are sustainable and have minimal impacts on the environment. The training also highlighted current household and industrial practices which damage the environment and presented topics for discussion such as biodiversity destruction and global warming.

Participants are now more aware about their practices which pollute the environment. Following the training, owners of the palm oil processing units have committed to changing their current methods for disposing of waste and residues from palm oil production. This is currently disposed into local rivers leading to water contamination and pollution of Lake Tanganyika.

Farmers who attended the sessions pledged to abandon practices which are harmful to the environment and have also made changes at home as well. Before the training many farmers weren't mindful when disposing of water used in their households, which contain different sorts of waste, and were inadvertently polluting the water table. Instead they have now created designated waste water spaces where sand will help to retain the waste would have otherwise polluted the groundwater.

OUTCOME 3: Marginalised women and girls are socially empowered through community health resilience and economically strengthened through creation of viable sunflower producers' organisations, and better access to finance for "renewable-based" revenue diversification activities

Activity 3.1: Sensitise marginalised women and girls on Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Nutrition

Mothers' Union have led on the activities to sensitise marginalised women and girls, on reproductive health, family planning and nutrition, within Matongo commune in Kayanza Province and Rumonge commune in Rumonge Province. Mothers' Union uses a holistic approach that focuses on family and community; recognising that women and girls play a key role in their families, especially in terms of unpaid work and income generation. Their health needs to be prioritized and improved to achieve better outcomes for the whole family. However, the lack of knowledge about reproductive health, family planning and nutrition remains a challenge in the areas targeted by the project.

Sessions on reproductive health, family planning and nutrition has been delivered to 3,240 women (796 in Matongo and 2,444 in Rumonge) by 30 community health volunteers. The community health training will continue throughout Year 2 of the project. We are currently procuring robust portable projectors which can be powered by solar and used to display the Thare Machi Education training materials during health training sessions with groups of women and girls. The Community Health Volunteers will continue to use the bicycles supplied by the project to reach remote communities. We will be distributing the remaining bicycles to volunteers in early 2020 to enable the roll out of this community health training and delivery of health messaging across both communes.

The topics which were covered during the trainings included:

Reproductive health and family planning:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Maternity including prenatal consultation, assisted delivery and post-natal consultation
- Family planning, contraceptive methods
- Sexually and transmitted infections
- Sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people
- Sexual violence

Nutrition:

- Balanced diet, including local porridge demonstration
- Soy milk and demonstration

Activity 3.2: Coaching and support in the formation of women's sunflower producer cooperative union in Rumonge

With support from COPED, this activity has supported the establishment of six women's sunflower cooperatives which will benefit farmers in Rumonge. As part of a cooperative they will be better able to secure fair prices and access to markets to sell their products. An identification process was undertaken to select 450 marginalised women: 150 from Kizuka zone, Mwanze Colline 150 women from Gatete zone, Gatete Colline, 75 women from Kigwena zone, Cabara Colline and a further 75 women from Kigwena zone, Mayengo Colline. They have been supported to form associations, including writing constitutions and registering at commune level. The process of legal registration as cooperatives is ongoing and COPED have provided training to the members about cooperative movements and good governance.

When the project began the prime planting season for sunflowers had already passed and the cooperatives decided not to plant out all the fields in the first year. They chose to collaborate and plant in 8 Farmer Field Schools to learn about good agricultural practices for sunflower crops. From October 2019 each farmer will plant in their own land and take forward what they have learnt over the past year from the Farmer Field Schools.

An unexpected result of this project has been that all cooperatives have started Villages Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and this has been supported by COPED. For this first year of the project, each cooperative has started created one VSLA group with 75 members. The plan is that by the second year of the VSLA cycle, they will create smaller VSLA groups with 25 members each (3 VSLAs groups within each cooperative). Currently 233 loans are agreed among members of sunflower cooperatives and 95 loans are agreed among the palm oil-biogas cooperatives. The farmers who have received loans have started small businesses such as selling dried fish, donuts, vegetables, or establishing small handicraft businesses.

Activity 3.3: Enabling access to finance for female coffee farmers through creation of renewable-based enterprises

The project has improved access to affordable finance for 2,675 women so far. We have reached 107 women's Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA), each with an average of 25 female members. Every VSLA has received training on Business Plan Development and subsequently 41 VSLAs have submitted business plans to CECABU Microfinance for consideration. These business plans aim to diversify the farmers' incomes by establishing sustainable micro enterprises, such as solar powered processing of maize or establishing a solar bakery. After accessing the applications, 28 women farmers have received loans totalling 27,217,00 BIF. These loans are paid back using a repayment system where COCOCA deduct the regular repayments from the farmers saving group contribution.

4. Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of the project activities so far have been 3,519 individuals, of which 91% are female. The project has intentionally aimed to reach marginalised and vulnerable low-income farmers including widows, people living with disability, female headed households and women who may have left by their spouses. The beneficiary data below is disaggregated by gender and by age where this data is available:

	Age						Male	Female	Other	Total	No. of people with disabilities
	0-5	6-18	19-35	36-59	60-79	80+					
DIRECT	0	25	1184	1825	479	6	313	3206		3,519	1
INDIRECT	763	1591	456	221	31	1	2247	2716		4,963	
TOTAL										8,482	

5. Impact

After the first year of the project, the overall impact is not yet visible as we still have project activities to complete under each key objective. However, we have already been able to capture some key outcomes of the activities so far:

- More women understand the importance of pre-and post –natal consultations, and the significance of birth spacing. During the focus group sessions conducted with the community it was reported that there has been an increase in the number of women attending consultations at the health centre.
- The construction of the coffee roastery and cupping laboratory has created 30 construction jobs. In addition, around the construction site, there has been an increase in job creation as small restaurants have been developed to feed the construction workers.
- The construction site has encouraged women to join the workforce and two women have learnt masonry skills and are working towards apprenticeship qualifications.
- Small businesses have been created by members of the sunflower cooperative and palm oil-biogas cooperatives; as a result, they have increased incomes to support their families.
- Due to an increased awareness about climate change, members of the sunflower cooperatives and palm oil-biogas cooperatives have moved away from practices which pollute the environment (such as agricultural burning.) Instead they have adopted good practices in line with climate change resilience and adaptation methods.

As we come to the end of the first year, we have received feedback from community leaders and beneficiaries that they are happy with the results achieved so far. Families now have access to savings and credit system (VSLA's), creating income generating activities, but also have access to investment credit through CECABU microfinance. Households can afford lighting at home from renewable energy sources (solar panels), and micro enterprises such as sewing workshops, hairdressers, food shops and mobile phone charging booths generate further income for families.

6. Lessons Learned

During the project we have captured key learnings and reflections which are outlined briefly below:

- The project is aligned with the Burundi National Development Plan and is responding to key concerns outlined in the plan. Therefore, the project implementation has not met any significant barriers at community or government level.
- By building and maintaining strong relationships with the administrative authorities and the environmental services, we have been able to swiftly resolve problems which arose during the implementation of the activities. For example, these local government bodies were supportive when we were struggling to secure land for the palm oil processing unit due to be constructed in Year 2.
- We have seen that vulnerable women and girls contribute immensely to protecting the environment and are motivated to do so after attending the training sessions on climate change.
- Cooperative leaders have shown their capacity to advocate on behalf of their members and build relationships with governmental officials at provincial level. These relationships will be important to sustainability and encourage future cooperation and partnership with local government.
- CECABU supported farmers in the development of business plans and facilitating the financing of eligible micro-projects. One of the key successes was the linking of farmers to share experience and knowledge during the training sessions.
- We have seen that the women receiving micro loans via the VSLA in this project are more likely to make repayments on time than men receiving access to finance via CECABU.

7. Budget

The first grant instalment of £342,894.98 was gratefully received on 20th July 2018.

In addition to the funding from the Isle of Man Government, Christian Aid has successfully raised £60,732 from fundraising activities that have taken place in Isle of Man. Fundraising efforts were primarily focused around Christian Aid Week events and activities in May 2018 and May 2019. We will continue to fundraise to secure the remaining £15,466.77 required to implement the project.

During this reporting period the total project expenditure is £351,731.14 against the Year 1 budget of £388,895.93. Please see the financial report for further details.

8. Sustainability

There are several key components which will enhance sustainability of the project objectives and activities beyond the period of funding. The main one to note is that we aim to strengthen the earning potential each small-scale farmer and ensure sustainability of their incomes in the long term.

Once established, the cooperatives will continue to operate after the project period and will act as a consistent buyer for farmers, offering a fair price for their produce. The profits from the cooperatives will be returned to the farmers through investments in training, equipment and support with diversifying their products. The maintenance of the solar powered processing equipment will also be covered by these profits.

9. International Development Education and Awareness

Christian Aid is committed to promoting the importance of international development to the public in Isle of Man. We continue to employ a part-time staff member engaged in fundraising and education, who promotes Isle of Man Government supported work and Christian Aid's other international development projects.

We committed to inviting our Burundi country staff to meet with the Isle of Man Government and members of the public whenever they are visiting Europe. We believe this is the best way for people to engage with our work, to talk about the projects generously supported by the Isle of Man Government and to enable the public to better understand development issues in the Global South.

We have witnessed resounding support for the project over the last 15 months and this has been clearly demonstrated in the generous financial support we have received from the public donating to help this project. We have raised a total of £60,732; which is 80% of the match funding required. Our fundraising efforts have centered around Christian Aid Week fundraising appeals in May 2018 and May 2019 and we have provided a variety of opportunities for community members to receive updates on the project progress.

Our offer to host a representative from the Isle of Man Government for a project visit in December 2019 remains open and we look forward to discussing this opportunity in the immediate future. This would provide an excellent opportunity to meet the partners, visit the project site and hear directly from the communities and farmers in more detail.

10. Next Steps

Christian Aid and our partners will continue implementing the project activities in Year 2 as outlined in the project plan. During the next 12 months we will:

- Host the official launch of the roaster and mini cupping laboratory for Horamama coffee to start operating in December 2019
- Mentor five key CNAC cooperatives in the transition towards commercialisation, management and inclusive resourcing for them to join the marketing union and COCOCA
- Monitor the commercialisation of the coffee roasted by the cupping laboratory
- Establish a system to produce organic fertiliser from biogas system and support renewable energy-powered micro enterprises run by female palm oil processors
- Procure and distribute the training materials and technology for the community health training and distribute the remaining bicycles to the lead women health community volunteers
- Continue coaching and support in the formation of women's sunflower producer cooperative union in Rumonge district
- Continue supporting enabling access to finance for female coffee farmers through creation of renewable-based enterprises
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the project within the communities.