



Resilience building through Community reconciliation and sustainable food production system

The experience of five communities in Rwanda

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WHO WE ARE

GER is a Rwanda based Non-governmental organization

Our mission: To support post-genocide peace building and community resilience in Rwanda and East Africa.

Our vision: People living in harmony while reconciling with nature

Our ethos: Partnership, togetherness, and inclusivity our way of influencing positive changes and put an end to inequality.

Promoting togetherness and collaboration between men and women - Gender equality



Cultural symbols of Rwanda



CONTEXT

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi has left over one million people killed, leaving a big number of orphans, physically and psychologically wounded people as well as victims of rape. It also left thousands in prison subsequent to their committing atrocities.

Rwanda economic activity was completely destroyed hence food insecurity and extreme poverty. Survivors had to adapt coping strategies with a long lasting legacy.

It is against this background that GER was established to support processes of community healing and reconciliation, including initiatives that target sustainable livelihoods and community food production systems.

We adapt Agroecology principles to local realities in view as the best approach in responding to existing issues holistically; as such, the approach provides a platform for community dialogues thereby amplifying healing and improve people's relations, and it also provides action that improve livelihoods and food system as well as supporting the conservation of ecosystem.

Covid19 impacted socio-economic aspects of life especially with the most vulnerable communities such as the elderly, people with disabilities and very poor communities from rural areas.

Covid19 has devastated Rwanda food system especially through the blockage of production, food market and social security as well. Rural communities who depend 100% on agriculture to earn a living, has been affected by the country lockdowns and fears of Covid19.

This has had impacts on the quantity of production and a market for the production which in return led to the scarcity of food in urban areas.

Now Covid-19



We engage in community knowledge exchange, intergeneration learning and reviving indigenous seeds



How we do it

Focusing on what matters to communities, GER targets people's connection with nature and culture by facilitating:

the creation of conducive spaces for farmers, academics, activists and policy makers to share their views on ways to improve local food production systems, protect local ecosystems and the wider environment.

the revival of indigenous seeds, facilitate community exchange and power relations, and people reconcile with their environments e.g engage in debates and discussions, organize field visits and connect generations through intergeneration dialogues.

work with policy and decision makers, religious leaders, local authorities and community representatives in the process of strengthening community participation.

OUTREARCH

Agricultural communities (185 women and 115 men) :

- 50 vulnerable households (40 elders and 10 people with physical disabilities) living in the peri-urban areas of city of Kigali.
- 300 farmers in the rural areas of Bugesera, Muhanga and Ruhango districts.

RWANDA Districts Map



Activities

- ✓ Identifying 50 most vulnerable people in semi-urban areas.
- ✓ Buying and distributing food support (Rice, Maize flour, Beans, Oil and sugar with soaps and facemasks) to 50 vulnerable communities.
- ✓ Introducing domestic farming requiring no movements, as a solution responding to measures against Covid19
- ✓ Mapping 250 small farmers in rural areas who need support with domestic agriculture
- ✓ Purchasing tools and seeds for 300 people to practice domestic agriculture.
- ✓ Monitoring domestic farming activities and documenting best stories and practices as well as lessons learnt.
- ✓ Meeting with farmers' representatives and authorities to facilitate the availability of market for small farmers' production during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Locally produced organic fertilizers (manure) are used to grow vegetables



Seeding



Addressing malnutrition

One of the project beneficiaries who said that the project supported her to solve food problems in her family, and she said that vegetables grown at her home helps her to have enough breast milk for her new born baby, and she is strong enough because she eat vegetables.



In 300 households and neighboring communities where the project was implemented, recipients acknowledge to meet their household basic food needs, and surplus sold at neighborhood markets.



Reducing the risk Covid19 from spreading



Communities in Muhanga District and neighboring rural areas said that they now rely on neighborhood markets for their farm produce, because going to the big markets can increase the risk of spreading/contracting Covid-19. They also say that growing their own food from home gave them access to food of their choice at the same time saved lives and protecting their families from COVID-19.

Gender – improving/strengthening of relations and sharing of responsibilities between men and women



Nature conservation

Community efforts in conserving biodiversity: use of locally produced organic fertilizers, tree planting, effective use of available arable space.

What next ?

- Agroecology movement: strengthen established vulnerable farmers in three Districts and push the agenda in inclusive way.
- Strengthen coordination and monitoring: farmers and partners involved in the project.
- Scaling the project in other areas in order to meet as many people as possible.
- Documenting success stories that will be used to scale up interventions in other communities.
- Promote voluntary savings and indigenous seeds bank.
- Community driven introduction of agroecology practices in schools to promote sustainable school feeding → through advocacy targeting policy makers, strategists and stakeholders.
- Capacity building for field staff and farmers representative to use virtual technology in experience learning and sharing that can be done remotely.
- Support to vulnerable groups e.g elderly and people living with disabilities through localized micro-farming activities.

Take home message

The legacy of sustainable small farming practices as coping strategies used during Covid-19. Ongoing Covid-19 is not acknowledged by farmers as efficient, but also serves as a pathway to addressing food security, reduce malnutrition. However, one must be mindful of other challenges of development e.g poverty, water access, impact of climate change etc.

Thank you