



© UNICEF/RWAA2011-00229/Noorani

Case Study on Narrowing the Gaps for Equity

Rwanda

One Cow per Poor Family: Reaching the most marginalized in Rwanda

Rwanda

One Cow per Poor Family: Reaching the most marginalized in Rwanda

ABSTRACT

Rwanda has made remarkable progress since the 1994 genocide, particularly in delivering education and health services to the poor. However, an estimated 57 per cent of Rwanda's population still lives below the national poverty line. The incidence of poverty among children and youth below 18 years is over 60 per cent.

Among Rwanda's population of 10 million, 81 per cent lives in rural areas. Rural populations and farmers have a higher incidence of poverty, with 67.5 per cent of the rural population living below poverty level compared to 14.3 per cent of urban populations (MDG report 2008). Subsistence farmers, households headed by children and youth, and those without assets and adequate household resources remain not only the poorest, but the most vulnerable to worsening poverty and the occurrence of external shocks such as natural disasters, food insecurity and economic crises.

Since the promulgation of the new constitution in 2003, Rwanda has made tremendous strides to establish good governance and policies that deliver public services and promote social equity. With its entrance into the East African Community and the Commonwealth of Nations, and with improving relations between Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and France, Rwanda is leaving the past behind and embracing new partners and investors to realize its home grown Vision 2020 and its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy. As a consequence, the government has embraced a broad pro-poor social protection Programme to address poverty and vulnerability amongst the poorest households in Rwanda, one of the key components of which is the "One Cow per Poor Family" Programme (the *Girinka* Programme).

BACKGROUND

During Rwanda's 1994 genocide, 90 per cent of cattle were slaughtered, devastating the livelihoods of many Rwandans. In Rwandan history, social status is often acknowledged through the possession of cattle, a strong symbol of wealth. By providing the poorest households with cattle, the One Cow per Poor Family Programme improves the livelihoods of those most in need and reinstates lost pride through the recovery of a traditional symbol of wealth. The programme is also contributing significantly to the national reconciliation process.

One Cow per Poor Family provides poor households with a dairy cow. The cow not only supplies milk, which can be an important source of nutrition and income to families, but also manure, which is a source of fertilizer for crops and biogas for cooking.

UNICEF supports the Government of Rwanda as the lead United Nations agency in the social protection sector to build child-sensitive social protection systems. Its key role, other than influencing policies, helping to set standards, building capacity and model workable programmes, is to support government by filling data and knowledge gaps. While UNICEF does not support the One Cow per Poor Family programme directly, it is helping the government ensure that its targeting mechanisms for all programmes, including One Cow per Poor Family, are child sensitive and take the needs of child- and female-headed households into account.

Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) provides a medium-term framework for achieving the country's long term development aspirations as embodied in Rwanda Vision 2020, the seven-year Government of Rwanda (GoR) programme, and the Millennium Development Goals.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Launched by President Paul Kagame, the Government of Rwanda approved the One Cow per Poor Family Programme in 2006. The Programme works in two steps: First, a poor family receives a cow free of charge. Second, when the initial cow reproduces, the first female calf is given to a neighbor who passes on a female calf to another neighbor, and so on. Criteria for inclusion in the program include:

- No current ownership of cattle.
- Having at least 0.75 ha of land, or a common area where a cow can be tended (igikumba rusange).
- Having prepared or being ready to prepare at least 0.25 ha of pasture.
- Having a simple structure to house a cow and capacity to feed and water it.

The One Cow per Poor Family Programme is funded through Government allowances, and through donations. The system includes parameters that require recipients to pass the offspring of their initial cow onto others, creating a multiplier effect to maximize and pass on the benefits of the initial investment and ensure a sense of communal responsibility for the success of the Programme.

Relying on the *Ubuganda* approach, which is a traditional Rwandan community mapping exercise for identifying categories of people according to their income level, the first beneficiaries are selected by the citizens of a village (umudugudu), crosschecked and approved by the local leaders and ministry staff. Since large livestock tend to be owned by individuals and not households, it is important that women obtain the same access to this programme as men. The new owners are then trained in animal husbandry (pasture establishment, housing, feeding, watering, disease detection and control). The cows selected must be approved for various standards of good health (animals have to be tuberculosis and Brucella negative before being synchronized and inseminated). Once the cows are distributed, they are monitored by a veterinary staff.

PROGRESS & RESULTS

The programme target (2010-2017) is for 350,000 poor households to receive a cow. Over 110,000 households have already benefited as of April 2011, including 40,000 born from original recipients. Some of the additional positive outcomes include:

- A school milk program is being piloted, currently feeding 19,989 children.
- In-country milk production has increased.
- A network of milk collection centres has been established throughout the country.
- Income from milk production has enabled farmers to invest in increased crop production.
- Manure can be used for crop fertilization and biogas.
- Milk sales have generated increased income for farmers.
- Individual farmers have been able to take loans to engage in development.
- New breeds of cattle have been developed for higher milk yields.

- Inseminator capacity has grown from 19 in 2005 to 522 in January 2011.
- Disease control improved as a result of increased attention to livestock breeding and research.

To date, UNICEF has established a strong reputation as a data collector and manager, and as a leader in social protection, education, capacity building and collaboration with other UN agencies to provide upstream support at central and decentralized levels. UNICEF's role has shifted upstream in line with Rwandan aid policy, to focus on evidence generation, advocacy, intervention modeling, policies and standards, and capacity building with special focus on community-driven initiatives. Thanks to strong national leadership and good governance, this shift has helped to influence government's and donors' allocation of resources.

Last but not least, UNICEF is also helping the government to produce a film on the One Cow per Poor Family Programme, to emphasize how nationally supported pro-poor approaches can help promote equity.

CHALLENGES

Financial: Success has led many families to register to participate in the programme and has resulted in a backlog. There is therefore a growing need for additional support from development partners.

Beneficiary capacity: Programme participants are very poor, and for most, it is the first time they have owned a cow. They require a significant level of capacity building support in the form of construction of sheds, available pasture, grass seed, training and education in animal husbandry and livestock management.

INNOVATION

The primary objective of the Agriculture and Animal Resources Sector is to contribute, in a sustainable manner, to the increase and diversification of household incomes, while ensuring food security for all the population in line with the priorities of the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA). The One Cow per Poor Family Programme thereby aims to increase asset ownership and promote animal husbandry among the poor.

NEXT STEPS

1. Programme decentralization: Funds for purchasing cows will be issued to districts to acquire cows from former beneficiaries, who will have the opportunity to sell their cow. If a family owns more than one cow and can sell one, they benefit from the resulting cash which can be put to other use.
2. Provision of assistance for construction of sheds (to be used for community livestock shelter), for education and training, and for distribution of grass seed to beneficiaries.
3. Distribution of additional cows.
4. Program monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
5. Purchase and distribution of drugs for disease control.
6. Strengthening of the existing network of milk collection centres, set-up of new ones, and facilitation of accessibility to livestock inputs through this infrastructure.

RELATED LINKS*

[“Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008-2012.”](#) The Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, September 2007.

**All titles are hyperlinked to their respective web-based files.*

© United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) September 2011

Disclaimer: This case study is not edited to official publication standards and is intended exclusively for sharing within UNICEF. Statements do not imply or constitute official opinions or policy positions of either the United Nations or UNICEF.

Acknowledgements: This case study is a collaborative effort among the UNICEF Rwanda Country Office, the Internal Communications Section (Division of Communication) and the Programme Division.

Authors/Editors: Jim Protos, Consultant (NYHQ); Francesca Morandini, Chief, Social Protection & Governance for Child Rights (Kigali); Misbah Sheikh, Chief of External Communications (Kigali); Christine Kanyandekwe, Deputy Director General for Animal Resources Extension (Rwanda Agriculture Board).

For further information on this ICON case study, please contact:

Abhijit Shanker
Chief, Internal Communications Section (DOC New York)
Email: ashanker@unicef.org
or
Noala Skinner
Representative, UNICEF Rwanda
Email: nskinner@unicef.org