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STRENGTHENING THE IMPACT OF RWANDA'S VUP-PUBLIC WORKS AND BENEFICIARIES' GRADUATION OUT OF POVERTY

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SDGs:



Country: Rwanda

Project Symbol: TCP/RWA/3602

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Duration: 1 December 2016 – 31 July 2018

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Implementing Partner

Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC); Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI); Case workers and Farmer Field and Life Schools (FFLS) facilitators.

Beneficiaries

Minimum Package Graduation Household beneficiaries from Gakenke, Nyabihu, Rubavu and Rulindo districts.

Country Programming Framework (CPF)

CPF Priority A: Improvement of food security and human nutrition among Rwandan population, specifically Indicators 1.2.2 and 1.2.4.



BACKGROUND

To eradicate extreme poverty and malnutrition, in 2015, the Government of Rwanda designed a three-year graduation out poverty pilot called “Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) – Minimum Package for Graduation (MPG)” as a social protection programme to complement cash transfer through public works and direct support to people living in extreme poverty. The project “Strengthening the impact of Rwanda’s VUP-Public Works and beneficiaries’ graduation out of poverty” added value to this agenda by responding to a need to better exploit the synergies between social protection and agriculture and improve support for the government programme.

IMPACT

By empowering MPG household beneficiaries to increase their food and income security at the household level, they will be better able to graduate out of extreme poverty in a sustainable manner.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

In order to achieve the intended results, the project used an adjusted version of the Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS) methodology. An initial needs assessment was carried out to identify the existing needs of MPG households, case workers and staff working in the sector. The other interventions in this project seized the opportunity to reflect on and utilize the results of this study. Capacities were built for 64 case workers, who then trained 600 beneficiaries through FFLS group facilitation. Building on the formation of these groups, Village Saving and Loan Schemes (VSLs) were created. In addition to nutrition, gender and agribusiness skills acquired through these trainings, each beneficiary also received agro-inputs, assets and start-up capital.

The results of an evaluation of 60 sampled beneficiaries showed that overall wealth nearly doubled (90 percent), savings increased 250 percent and significant improvements were made for food intake, as well as dietary diversity. Overall, households’ existing plots were used more productively and household crop production increased because of the agricultural techniques taught through the project, as well as the distribution of seeds and fertilizers. Additionally, an increase in beneficiaries’ confidence levels and better inclusion in the community were observed. The project built capacity on social protection and agriculture for 12 agricultural extension workers, eight sector technicians from four different areas of intervention and 50 technical staff from central government partners and other stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN

Field activities commenced later than expected because of a delay in the inception workshop for project activities. Although the project was originally envisioned to begin 1 December 2016, the actual start date for activities was in August 2017. The first activity implemented was a needs assessment carried out by two national consultants, which guided the specificities of the subsequently planned interventions. The main reasons for the delay in the project's initiation were difficulties finding skilled consultants for the needs assessment, as well as the country's run-up to the presidential elections in early August, which meant that local government officials were less available and thus, the actual implementation of activities in the field was delayed. A no-cost extension was approved because of delays in the procurement of small animals to be distributed, a high death rate of distributed goats and procedural delays in selecting the supplier. Moreover, the selected supplier was unable to provide a required health certificate, which further slowed implementation. Most planned activities were carried out but with the following minor adjustments: (1) Livelihood profiling was envisioned as the first activity of the project, but it was reduced to a simpler needs assessment because livelihood profiling had already been planned by the MINALOC/Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA). Therefore, MINALOC/LODA requested FAO assistance to enrich their quantitative methodology with a needs assessment. (2) No training toolkit for case workers was developed for MINALOC/LODA at LODA's request, because the government case workers model was being revised and there was a lack of clear guidance on the future role of case workers. Instead, the project provided support for the revision of the UNICEF Caseworker Guidelines Document and Community Sensitization Manual, which were under development towards the end of the project. (3) In addition, the project provided a simple reference manual for proximity services for case workers, based on their specific indicated needs, and produced gender and nutrition training material that was used by the case workers. For the reasons stated above, no communication expert was hired and a FFLS Master Trainer was recruited instead for the duration of the seven months of project field activities.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The following actions were planned for the phase out of the project: continued caretaker meetings after the end of the project; certification and recognition of case workers as FFLS facilitators by the Rwanda Agriculture Board; provision of start-up capital to VSLs beneficiary members; continuous weekly facilitation meetings by case workers with MPG households at their demonstration plots for at least six months following the end of the project; and strengthened collaboration between case workers and sector administration to ensure the effective management of the outcomes realized by the project.

SUSTAINABILITY

The alliances created among local governments at both district and sector levels contributed greatly to the sustainability of this project. It is also worth noting that this project was one of the first collaborations among FAO, MINALOC and the ministry in charge of social protection. Another key outcome was the commitment of all four sectors in which the project was implemented to adopt the project methodology and upscale it among other MPG beneficiaries in the same sectors, using the trained caseworker MPG project beneficiaries as resource persons and advocates. Before the project ended, two sectors had already started rolling-out/scaling up this activity, and another district pledged to implement the same methodology in other sectors in the district.

DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- Gender sensitization tool developed for more gender equality in subsistence agriculture-based households in Rwanda.
- Nutrition and increases crop production posters for sensitization purposes created.
- Information leaflet on safe and right application of fertilizer and pesticides developed.
- Reference manual produced for case workers for proximity services available to MPG households.
- Booklet on the FFLS methodology in a social protection context published.
- Reports on the nutrition-sensitive social protection workshop and gender-sensitive social protection workshop produced.
- Household survey carried out.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	More extreme poor people in Rwanda are graduating out of poverty in a sustainable manner	
Outcome	Existing initiatives in the VUP are strengthened by added agricultural aspects	
	Achieved	Yes
	Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baseline/livelihood profiling and needs study of VUP PW minimum package beneficiaries together with LODA. 2. Number of minimum package beneficiaries who received agricultural inputs. 3. Number of beneficiaries who are trained on improved agricultural production techniques, nutritious crop varieties, agribusiness skills and received agricultural inputs. 4. Number of case workers and FFS facilitators trained. 5. Number of informative materials developed with good practices for case workers and FFS facilitators.
	Baseline	The MPG designed by the Government consisted of the following three components for each beneficiary household: (i) asset transfer in form of three pigs, three goats, three sheep or 20 chickens, in accordance with the preference of the beneficiary household; (ii) case management by recruited case workers, who were used to monitor and mentor between 30-50 households in the same area that they reside, and who are recruited locally by local officials, receiving three days of training from LODA (although they do not receive formal payment, they are incentivized with communication cards and a bonus after their annual performance evaluation); and (iii) linkages to existing financial services, such as subsidies and low-interest loans.
	End Targets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study conducted that identified the needs of MPG households, which was used to design the project implementation response. 2. Total of 600 MPG beneficiaries from four selected sectors (150/sector) from Gakenke, Nyabihu, Rubavu and Rulindo districts received agricultural inputs assistance (i.e. seeds and fertilizers). 3. Total of 600 beneficiaries (grouped into 30 FFLS groups) trained on agricultural production, nutritious crop varieties and agribusiness skills. Groups formed based on the geographical location of households and consisting of 15 to a maximum of 30 households. Each FFLS group met weekly at their established demonstration plot, facilitated by the case workers.. 4. Total of 64 case workers and eight government sector technical staff (social protection extension workers) and FFS facilitators trained. 5. Two informative materials with good practices for case workers and FFS facilitators developed.
Comments and follow-up action to be taken	The project exceeded its target number and scope of beneficiaries. Instead of benefiting 320 as targeted in the project design, 600 extremely poor households benefited from project implementation. Additionally, 600 beneficiaries, 64 case workers, 12 agricultural extension workers and eight sector technicians from four sectors in four targeted districts, as well as 50 technical staff from central government partners and other stakeholders, benefited directly from agro-inputs and asset transfers and/or capacity building through training. The FFLS methodology will be scaled up in all villages to boost MPG beneficiary households' graduation out of poverty. Case workers will continue to ensure the mentoring and follow-up of existing MPG beneficiary households' FFLS and create new groups from other MPG beneficiary households.	

Output 1	The minimum package is better aligned with the needs of VUP Public Works beneficiaries' needs		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	1. Baseline/livelihood profiling and needs study of VUP PW minimum package graduation beneficiaries together with LODA. 2. Number of minimum package beneficiaries who received agricultural inputs and assets.	1. Conduct a need assessment to identify beneficiaries' needs and align them with the minimum package. 2. Total of 320 beneficiaries (100 per sector) to receive the agricultural inputs and assets.	Yes
Baseline	Before the intervention of the project, the MPG initiatives were implemented without reference to beneficiaries' needs, i.e. the minimum package received by beneficiaries was not aligned with their needs.		
Comments	A needs assessment was carried out by an agriculture and a gender expert, which extended beyond the original design of meeting the needs of MPG households by also including an assessment of the needs of case workers and sector staff. The assessment also considered the implementation challenges of the MPG. A total of 600 MPG households (150 in each sector) were selected in collaboration with sector officials and grouped into 30 FFLS groups, which were maintained after the end of the project. Each of the 600 MPG households received nutrition-rich vegetable seeds, fertilizer and avocado seedlings twice during the project, and they were supported to build or renovate their household kitchen gardens. To address the finding of the needs assessment related to the high death rate of small animals, each of the 600 MPG households also received construction materials for small animal shelters (iron sheets, wooden planks, nails, hammers, hoes and saws) and participated in the construction of the shelter. Finally, small animals that were distributed under the MPG initiative and died were replaced. In close collaboration with sector staff, 605 small livestock (350 goats, 230 sheep and 25 pigs) were procured and distributed to MPG households. The project secured an agreement with all sectors on a follow-up action plan after project completion to ensure that the impact of the project would continue and be scaled up to other MPG households. Case workers will continue facilitating weekly meetings with MPG households at their demonstration plot for at least six months after the end of the project.		
Activity 1.1	Conduct a livelihood profiling and needs mapping of the beneficiaries of VUP PW		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	A needs assessment was carried out as the first activity of the project. It exceeded the original design by including an assessment of the needs of case workers and sector staff and captured the implementation challenges of the MPG.	
Activity 1.2	Implement proposed agricultural additions to the minimum package		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Each of the 600 MPG households received nutrition-rich vegetable seeds, fertilizer and avocado seedlings twice during the project and were supported to build or renovate their kitchen gardens. They also received construction materials for small animal shelters and helped with the construction of their household shelters. Small animals that were distributed under the MPG framework and died were replaced, and 605 small livestock (350 goats, 230 sheep and 25 pigs) were procured and distributed to MPG households. Case workers will continue facilitating weekly meetings with MPG households for at least six months after the end of the project.	
Activity 1.3	Based on request of MINALOC/LODA: monitor the impact of the additions to the minimum package as opposed to the normal minimum package		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	A baseline survey and an end of project household survey were given to 60 sample households in December 2017 and May 2018, respectively, to monitor the impact of the project. The indicators used for this study were the following: average overall household wealth, average value of household cash savings accumulated in the past six months, average number of meals per day per household, variety of types of food per meal and average size of land used for cultivation.	

Output 2	The minimum package beneficiaries of VUP Public Works have improved awareness on nutrition and basic agribusiness skills and capacities		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of beneficiaries trained on improved agricultural production techniques, nutritious crop varieties, agribusiness skills and who received agricultural inputs.	400 beneficiaries trained about agricultural production, nutritious crop varieties and agribusiness skills.	Yes
Baseline	No capacity building for MPG beneficiaries on agricultural production, nutritious crop varieties and agribusiness skills were carried out before the intervention of the project.		
Comments	Weekly practical training sessions for all 30 FFLS groups (600 beneficiaries) were carried out. Nutrition, gender and access to finance skills of 600 MPG households were enhanced through their respective FFLS groups. Each FFLS group set up a VSLs and saved RWF 3678119 (USD 4 378) by the end of March 2018, which enabled their members to access small loans to invest in agricultural activities. Each group also received RWF 14,000 (USD 17) of start-up capital per VSLs group member at the end of the project to fund small income-generating activities. Case workers will ensure the mentoring and follow-up of existing FFLS groups of MPG beneficiary households continue, and they will also form new groups comprised of other MPG beneficiary households.		
Activity 2.1	Train selected VUP PW beneficiaries on nutrition-rich food and diets and agribusiness		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Weekly practical training on nutrition, gender and access to finance for 30 FFLS groups (600 MPG beneficiary households) were carried out.	
Activity 2.2	Support and monitor the follow-up activities of the trained beneficiaries and encourage their move to agribusiness		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The MPG households were encouraged to make use of VSLs loans to establish an agriculture business. Most loans were used to enhance agricultural activities (e.g. purchasing small equipment or produce and reselling it for a profit). At the end of the project, each MPG beneficiary household received RWF 14 000 per VSLs group member through their VSLs to support their small business, most of which were related to agriculture. In addition, case workers will ensure the continued mentoring and follow-up of existing MPG beneficiary households' FFLS groups and establish new groups with other MPG beneficiary households.	
Activity 2.3	Beneficiaries share part of their new agricultural produce with the home-based child care facilities under the VUP-expanded PW design		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	As stated in the project document, this activity was contingent on the progress made by MINALOC/LODA. It would have only been possible if the planned home-based child care component had been implemented during the timeframe of the project and in the sectors of intervention. The activity was not implemented because of the delayed implementation of the home-based child care facility component in the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme. However, each group participated in nutritious cooking demonstrations that benefited the rest of the community, particularly children, who were invited to consume the meals prepared.	

Output 3	The capacities of case workers and agriculture extension workers are strengthened to provide technical assistance to the MPG and implementation of gender- and nutrition-sensitive social protection		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	1. Number of case workers and FFS facilitators trained. 2. Number of informative materials developed with good practices for case workers and FFS facilitators.	1. 50 case workers and FFLS facilitators trained. 2. Informative materials with good practices for case workers and FFLS facilitators developed	Yes
Baseline	1. No capacity building for MPG beneficiaries on agricultural production, nutritious crop varieties and agribusiness skills were carried out before the intervention of the project. 2. No informative materials with good practices for case workers and FFLS facilitators developed before the project.		
Comments	Technical training to become certified FFLS facilitators was carried out for 64 case workers and eight sector staff. A total of 12 agricultural extension workers were also trained, and 64 case workers and eight government sector technical staff participated in a one-day study tour to three FFLS groups in Rulindo District that were working well. They also exchanged lessons learned and observed a vegetable production tracking system. Central government stakeholders received capacity development, including two technical officers from MINAGRI that were trained on social protection by FAO and International Labour Organization (ILO) during two weeks of the Social Protection Academy at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin, Italy; a one-day capacity building event on nutrition-sensitive social protection that was held with 30 government participants from the nutrition, agriculture and social protection sectors; a three-day capacity building event on gender-sensitive social protection for 19 government participants from the gender, agriculture and social protection sectors, including district directors for social development from the four project districts. A booklet on gender sensitization information, a leaflet on the safe and right application of fertilizer and pesticides, as well as nutrition and increased crop production posters for sensitization purposes were produced.		
Activity 3.1	Establish connection and increase collaboration between FFS facilitators and case workers		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	To increase and improve the collaboration between extension workers at the community level, a small consultation meeting was held with lead case workers to identify their needs. This meeting ended with the certification of case workers to be FFLS facilitators, which was validated by the Rwanda Agriculture Board. During the quarterly project update, meetings were organized on the progress of project activities in each sector, bringing together district officials, sector officials, technical staff and representatives from other services, including agricultural extension services facilitators.	
Activity 3.2	Train key people in involved ministries and institutions and the FFS facilitators and case workers in nutrition- and gender-sensitive social protection		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The following capacities were developed for central government stakeholders: two technical officers from MINAGRI were trained on social protection by FAO and ILO during two weeks of the Social Protection Academy at the ILO International Training Centre; a one-day capacity building on nutrition-sensitive social protection was held with 30 government participants from the nutrition, agriculture and social protection sectors; a three-day capacity building on gender-sensitive social protection took place with 19 government participants from the gender, agricultural and social protection sectors (district directors for social development from the four project districts were among the participants).	
Activity 3.3	Capitalize and disseminate knowledge and lessons learned from the project		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The FFLS methodology will be scaled up in all villages to boost MPG beneficiary households' graduation out of poverty. Case workers will ensure mentoring and follow-up activities for existing FFLS groups of MPG beneficiary households continue, and they will also form new groups comprised of other MPG beneficiary households. The project established an agreement with all sectors for a follow-up action plan to continue after the project finished to ensure the sustainable impact of the project and scale up the activities with other MPG households.	

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