



# FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

## BWIRA

# RWANDA

## MID-YEAR COMMUNITY UPDATE 2023

Walking with Bwira

2021

2031



**FH COMMUNITIES  
IN RWANDA**  
**4 IN BWIRA**

**POPULATION**  
**15,652**

**HOUSEHOLDS**  
**3,717**

**PROGRAM  
PARTICIPANTS**  
**5,669**

Two years into their partnership with FH Canada and the communities of Bwira are already blazing a trail to a new future. 70 active Savings and Loans Groups have been established with a total of 1,955 members! So far, they have saved the equivalent of over \$4,700 CAD. Community volunteers are taking the lead on increasing food security and nutrition in their neighbourhoods. Together with FH staff, they've established demonstration gardens to grow new veggies, produce seedlings for the community, and support more than 250 households to create their own home vegetable gardens. FH has hosted 18 well-attended cooking demonstrations to show families how to incorporate new vegetables into their daily meals.

FH staff continue to collect baseline community indicators. This data will help steer FH and community leaders as they set realistic development targets and design activities for future years.



**Before having a kitchen garden, we used to eat potatoes, cassava, mostly starchy foods but rarely vegetables, and my two sons were frequently sick. They became healthier after we started eating kitchen garden vegetables on a daily basis.**

- Claudine, Cascade Health Group member



Written by Jean Pierre Kamanzi, FH Rwanda  
Prepared by FH Canada



## Better Together

Story and photographs collected by Jean Pierre Kamanzi

After her husband died, Rachel wasn't able to feed her four children on her own, much less pay school fees. The yields from their 10 acre farm were so low.

Rachel and her children live in Ngororero, Rwanda's second-poorest district. Most people farm for a living, but the acidic soil combined with a high level of erosion on the steep hills makes it very difficult to earn a living from the land. Rachel was in a perpetual state of panic about the future. "There was a problem of food shortage," Rachel said. "It was a big problem for me and my family to live in that situation."

When her community launched a partnership with FH Rwanda, Rachel joined in. "I participated in different FH trainings and received improved maize seeds, livestock, cassava cuttings, and lime [to reduce acidity in the soil]. I also joined a savings group. All those supports helped increase my agricultural productivity which increased my income. I became able to easily pay health insurance for my family, school fees for my children, and buy my own agricultural inputs."

Today, Rachel can feed her family from their farm!

With a loan from her savings group, Rachel bought a hen. By selling eggs, Rachel is increasing her savings and planning to buy more livestock and rebuild the walls of her house.

And, Rachel's not the only one benefiting from FH partnership! She explains, "Before, people were demoralized and full of fear about the future. Income was very slow ... Because of mobilization by FH staff, most community members have now started cultivating high-value crops to gain more income. The creation of savings groups in our community empowered members to increase access to and control over resources and use our collective power to overcome social and financial barriers."

Rachel feels confident that she can rely on her savings group in an emergency—a huge relief for this single mom of four!



**"The creation of savings groups in our community empowered members to...use our collective power to overcome social and financial barriers."**

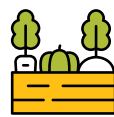
- Rachel



## Learning Through Play

Children need to experience the world through tactile play in order to make sense of it. In Bwira, home-based preschools help young children do just that. FH supported six home-based preschools with Early Childhood Development (ECD) learning and play materials and hygiene supplies. They also trained ECD caregivers on early childhood education and care to improve the growth and development of young children while preparing them for primary school.

The head teacher and the School General Assembly Committee (SGAC) are interdependent and active participants in school improvement. FH provided training to SGAC members from five schools to support them in developing strong school leadership and management skills.



## Veggies Power Up Health

The power of good nutrition cannot be overestimated when it comes to breaking the cycle of poverty! FH distributed kitchen garden seeds to Cascade Health Group leaders who planted them to produce seedlings in demonstration gardens. The leaders distributed these seedlings to neighbours who have established gardens. By training their neighbours to grow nutritious veggies, these leaders are promoting a sustainable way to increase food security and diversified diets in their communities. Participants have already begun to harvest and eat their fresh vegetables, including leafy greens. After a year, FH anticipates the leaders will go on to produce and harvest their own seeds to distribute to their neighbours, thus making them independent of FH resources.



**97** ECD caregivers trained on early childhood education and care practices

**6** home-based preschools given supplies

**10** Cascade Health Groups distributed seedlings to 1,440 neighbours

**321** caregivers attended cooking demonstrations to learn how to prepare a balanced diet



**“** Now, our home-based preschool is equipped with basic materials that help in teaching children and boosting the memorization process among children. Children use them to study, play, and increase their emotions.

- Eugenie, preschool teacher

**”**

# Livelihoods & Leadership



## Goats Galore!

To increase household food security and livelihoods, FH distributed goats to the most vulnerable families. These households were selected by community members and trained on how to raise goats before the distribution. In addition to increasing household income through the sale of offspring, milk, and meat, livestock also provide organic manure to increase a family's agricultural productivity.

FH is training teen mothers on tailoring and entrepreneurship. Participating mothers were selected by community leaders based on their vulnerability. After they graduate from the training, these young women will be equipped to start their own businesses. Having this ability to provide for themselves restores a sense of dignity to the participants, many of whom have been rejected or marginalized because of their pregnancies.



## Building God's Kingdom through Development

Churches play a key role in Rwandan society and are positioned to positively influence their communities. FH trained 44 church leaders on leadership and their role in serving their community and ushering in the kingdom of God. The training module included "Loved by God, Loving God", "God's Story", and "The Church and the Kingdom of God".

Church leaders were encouraged to strive for unity in their communities and grow in their understanding of the role of the Church in community development. Church leaders were taught how to plan toward that vision. Participating leaders then committed to contributing to the development and service of God's Kingdom physically, socially, spiritually, and cognitively and teaching their communities to do the same.



**333** goats distributed to the most vulnerable families

**20** teen mothers trained on tailoring

**4** nursery sites established to grow seedlings

**400** farmers trained on agriculture practices



## Thank You!

FH Rwanda, FH Canada, and the families of Bwira thank you for your generous gifts that support their community work. Just two years into their partnership, and already so much is changing! Your support is growing hope and catalyzing real transformation for leaders, teachers, parents, farmers, and children.