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Increasing the Health and Nutritional Outcomes of Rwanda's "One Cow per Poor Family" from a Gender Perspective

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Photo credits: University of Florida



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BACKGROUND OF ONE COW PER POOR FAMILY (EJO HEZA OR GIRINKA) PROGRAM

- Initiated by President of Rwanda in 2006 to provide poor families with one pregnant dairy cow
- Main implementing government agency is the Ministry of Agriculture through Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB)
- Largest implementing NGOs are *Heifer International* and *Send a Cow*
- Beneficiaries chosen to receive a cow are identified by the communities to be among the poorest in the area
- More than 203,000 families have benefitted from the Ejo Heza project to date





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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Increase milk production
- Increase family income for poor families
- Reduce malnutrition in poor families
- Improve soil fertility from increased use of animal manure
- Improve community cohesion from passing on cows



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RWANDA – AFTER THE GENOCIDE....

Nearly half of all Rwandan agricultural households are food insecure

Approximately 24% are female-headed households - more likely to be food insecure

There are 10 times as many widows than widowers – almost 50,000 widows from the genocide

More than 67% of women who were raped in 1994 during the genocide are infected with HIV

Sources: Rwandan Ministry of Social Affairs,
2007: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Survivors



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RWANDA – DAIRY INDUSTRY

- Rwanda produces around 185 million liters of milk annually
- Low yield with roughly 157 thousand milking cattle in the country
- In Rwanda, annual milk consumption per capita is 12 liters
- In comparison, annual milk consumption per capita in Kenya and Uganda is approximately 100 liters and 22 liters
- Poor quality feeds, lack of land, lack of veterinarians, cost of inputs are all constraints to dairy industry
- Source: EADD, 2008



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RWANDA – MALNUTRITION

- Forty-four percent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition and eleven percent of children are underweight
- Fertility rate in Rwanda is 4.6 children per woman and maternal mortality is high at 487/100,000 births (USAID (2016) <https://www.usaid.gov/rwanda/global-health>)
- 52% of children under five are chronically malnourished or shorter than they should be for their age (WHO, 2009)
- Stunting is more prevalent in children aged above 24 months while wasting is more prevalent in children aged under 24 months (Rwanda Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment 2009).





WHY THE FOCUS ON GENDER ISSUES?

There was little attention paid to gender and women's roles in the dairy value chain in the conceptualization of GIRINKA

In general, women in east Africa have:

- Less access to land and credit
- Less access to agricultural extension advice
- Less access to agricultural inputs –ie. veterinary supplies
- Less control over decision making that involves sale and marketing of agricultural products – including milk
- Are primarily responsible for providing nutrition to their households
- Often receive the least and poorest food in the household but have the highest nutrient needs, especially if pregnant or lactating





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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Conducted Literature Review on GIRINKA
- Identified organizations involved in GIRINKA program
- NGO's: (Heifer International, Send A Cow, World Vision, SNV, CARITAS)
- Government agencies: (MINAGRI, RAB)
- Private Sector: (Land O Lakes, IFAD)
- University/Research: CIAT, University of Rwanda
- USAID Mission



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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Interviewed organizations and individuals based on IRB approved questionnaire and their level of involvement with GIRINKA

Questions included:

- Perceived successes and challenges of GIRINKA overall
- Gender roles in Rwanda dairy value chain
- Perceptions of men and women's benefits of GIRINKA program
- Perceptions of nutritional or income benefits of GIRINKA
- Their recommendations for improving both GIRINKA overall and gender aspects for women and men



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KEY FINDINGS

Lack of monitoring and evaluation data on GIRINKA project – no baseline or regular monitoring by RAB

Male and female farmers receiving cows not properly prepared to receive a cow (ie. lack of training, lack of facilities, lack of feedstuffs, lack of land)

Female farmers often constrained by “Triple Roles”, lack of ability to own land, access to credit to build facilities...

Lack of veterinary and extension services

Female farmers not recognized as “farmers” by veterinary and extension services, unable to attend training because of location, timing, domestic responsibilities....



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KEY FINDINGS

Lack of understanding of how gender and nutrition issues are linked
Women and female children frequently have limited to no decision making in the household how ASF is distributed or consumed. Oldest males receive preference and have the least need for high protein intake.

Excess milk production being sold rather than consumed
Limited income generating opportunities for poor, rural families; and milk is often sold rather than consumed to pay for other household needs such as school fees or health care. Women are frequently not involved in decision making on sale or consumption of milk produced.



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KEY FINDINGS

Lack of labor to care for and milk the cow

After genocide, fewer men and boys available to plant or harvest fodder, build pens and housing, milk cows and market milk (all traditional male roles)

Local districts not following family selection criteria (giving to families who are not eligible)

Often cows are given by local authorities (if government implementers) to those who can pay, or have sufficient facilities to house cows. Bypasses most marginalized – especially women.



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DID GENDER CONSTRAINTS AFFECT THE GIRINKA PROJECT?

- Average size of farm plots in Rwanda are less than 1 hectare. Women rarely are owners unless a female-headed household, so rely on rented or leased land. Many plots are too small to support a dairy cow.
- Beneficiaries of cows are supposed to receive management training in advance, but few women are able to attend the trainings.
- There are few extension and veterinary services in Rwanda (about 37% of the populace have access to these services). Women have the least access to these services.
- There has been increased milk production, but milk is often sold rather than consumed to pay for other household needs such as school fees or health care. Women often do not have control over the decision to sell or consume milk.





KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formal evaluation of the Girinka program is needed by an external agency- acknowledged by Ministry of Agriculture and RAB
- Provide better preparation for farm families (both male and female headed households) in regards to training and monitoring in advance of placing the animals with families – ie. Heifer International, Send a Cow
- Provide capacity development on integrating gender and nutrition into livestock programs - organizations had limited to no knowledge how to integrate gender and nutrition into their work





KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider using small livestock, ie. goats and poultry, to increase ASF consumption and improve nutrition given the lack of land, feeds and veterinary services
- Train women on dairy management and milking to increase their ability to participate and take leadership in dairy cooperatives
- Further research is needed on improving nutritional status of women and children related to the dairy value chain, particularly decision making in selling or consuming milk





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QUESTIONS?

For additional information on the Feed The Future Livestock Systems Innovation Lab and Gender Resources

<http://livestocklab.ifas.ufl.edu/>



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QUESTIONS?





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