

**QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORT**  
**SURF RWANDA'S RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT**

**SURF – RWEP/2107- 455/011**

**A. Introduction:**

This is a quarterly narrative report on the Rural Women Empowerment Project (RWEP) funded by SURF and implemented by CREDI to avail donkeys as a source of draught animal power (DAP) for significant welfare improvement at household and community level. The project is expected to reduce drudgery and the work burden endured by rural women and children as an important avenue for achievement of the envisaged livelihood improvement through the agricultural sector as stipulated in the medium and long term national development framework. It is assumed that donkeys shall conduct the hitherto time consuming domestic chores and create room for the women and children to engage in more productive activities that shall elevate their economic and personal development.

**B. i) Beneficiaries:** The project targeted genocide survivors focusing on women and children. However, the benefits extend to the entire communities where these target groups live because the donkeys are used by all community members who need their services. This communal approach is in line with both GOR's reconciliation efforts and SURF's goal of building confidence among genocide survivors to integrate into the wider Rwandan community.

**ii) Implementors:** SURF chose CREDI, a Rwandan local development organization, to deliver this project on strength of the latter's seven years of experience in the Rwandan Rural Development field. Basing on evident success in elevating rural standards of living in Rwanda, CREDI was assigned to replicate their expertise in communities where SURF beneficiaries live. The districts targeted for implementation were Rwamagana, Rulindo and Gatsibo where 12, 7 and 6 donkeys were to be distributed respectively. However following the death of 2 donkeys from transit injuries, Gatsibo district was allocated 4 donkeys. So far, the project has been implemented at Rwamagana district and preparations concluded to implement it at Rulindo and Gatsibo districts.

**C. Project achievements since implementation**

With the arrival of donkeys in the target community, significant qualitative change indicators have been realized in the lifestyles and living conditions of the project beneficiaries in Rwamagana district. To date the donkeys have lessened the work load burden related to domestic tasks borne by women and children which include fetching water, carrying firewood, food and goods. During interviews on benefits accrued from the project so far, beneficiaries mentioned several accomplishments since the acquisition of donkeys in their homes and likened them to children that they once had. "We communicate very well. I can talk to them, summon them and they listen just like my own children would. They have revitalized my confidence" said one beneficiary whose children were all killed in the genocide.

The domestic activities undertaken by the donkeys, and appreciated by the beneficiaries, range from meeting all their water demands, resulting in significant cost reduction in building materials and agricultural activities, creating community cohesion and contributing to general community happiness. One donkey carries up to 120 jerry cans of 20 litres of water in a day. For an average village family, this is more than they need for domestic chores and the water use is extended to economic activities like brick laying, fertilizer mixing and watering plants.



Evelyn Uwimana stands before the house she raised when she acquired a donkey

Owing to improved access to water, a mud-brick that initially cost 70Frw is currently priced at 20Frw in this community, a factor that motivated one Evelyn Uwimana to erect a house in her hitherto idle land. “I had given up building because of high price of 70 Frw per brick but when tha fell to 20Frw after the introduction of the donkey, I immediately raised this house,” says Evelyn. Another area that the donkeys have impacted on is agriculture. While it took 45,000 Frw to fertilise her garden every two weeks before the donkeys came, it now costs Evelyn only 2,000 Frw to fertilise the same garden in 4 days. The 2,000 is to pay the porter who guides the donkey. Besides fetching water, the donkeys carry pasture and other loads for feeding livestock, further reducing farming costs.

Time previously spent on these donkey tasks by these women and children is now being utilized for other productive family tasks. “Before the donkeys came, we used to fetch water from dawn to 11 am but now the donkeys fetch water and we use that time to do other duties like mixing fertilizers, going to school and trading on the market day. Now that the donkeys have been introduced, our work load has been reduced as well, and our life expectancy no doubt will increase”, says another beneficiary who sells manure from her cows to her village mates.

The project impact so far felt in Rwamagana is expected to be replicated in Rulindo and Gatsibo that have been allocated 7 and 4 donkeys respectively. This considers the loss of two donkeys that died in transit and which would have made it 6 for Gatsibo. With its benefits so evident, there is obvious need to replicate the project across the country to improve the living conditions of women, children and vulnerable groups beyond Rwamagana district.

### **Project Activities so far undertaken;**

- a) **Needs assessment:** Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) that CREDI carried out in Rulindo, Rwamagana & Gatsibo districts identified cooperating farmer groups associations and cooperatives. Informal Interviews with key stakeholders, farmer groups, local leaders and transporters in these districts were carried out to identify their priority needs.
- b) **Training:** One sensitization and training meeting for farmers was organized in which films were shown, and practical demonstrations undertaken, on the use and management of donkeys with target beneficiaries in Rwamagana district. A study visit was organized for trainers. 1 CREDI staff and 1

veterinarian worked with Gatsibo district extension agents to select the trainers. Use and management of donkeys was demonstrated through 3 training sessions in which practical demonstration and relevant modules and posters were employed to convey the training messages.

- c) **Purchase and delivery:** 25 donkeys were purchased from Kapchorwa-Uganda and distributed to serve 5 groups of 5 members each. Each group accessed one animal.
- d) **Animal health:** Drugs, vaccines, cereal bran and other feed supplements were purchased and distributed to farmers to improve animal health practices.
- e) **Record keeping:** The project actuaries have been trained and monitored by credit management personnel to ensure that they are on course and all documentation is updated and comprehensible to the project beneficiaries and sponsors.



One of the donkeys on its way from fetching water

### Challenges

- Implementation of the project included budget constraints especially in the process of procuring the donkeys from Uganda. The transportation costs far exceeded the budgeted figure in the project proposal. Specifically, transport cost exceeded the budgeted amount by **750 USD**.
- The low number of trainers (two) in donkey use and management made it difficult to implement the project within the projected timeframe because all beneficiaries had to be trained before distribution.
- Two animals died from injuries suffered in transit. Efforts to administer treatment were made without success leading to their premature death.

### III. Conclusion

Clearly, the donkeys have significantly reduced domestic labor burden at household level across families that received them. The beneficiaries ability to manage the animals is unquestionable especially as both animals and their handlers were well trained on how to communicate.



Beneficiary watches the offloading of jerrycans of water

The economic benefits for the beneficiaries are countless as illustrated by the incredibly significant reduction in cost of farming and construction following the advent of the donkey project. The socio-economic ties at community level have been strengthened through sharing donkey services. The inevitable interaction during the process of determining the donkeys' chores leads to day to day sharing that leads to increased tolerance and eventually, and reconciliation between survivors and the wider population. Beneficiaries are happy because the work load burden on women and

children has been reduced with the donkeys accomplishing the key domestic tasks and according them adequate time for more productive tasks. The donkeys also offer a key tool for community cohesion in the form of play. Donkeys are playful and happily carry village children all the way to and from the wells, giving the beneficiary village a picture of the old community where adults and children had communal items to celebrate. We do not envisage revising the project objectives other than relocating to other needy districts to provide the same services when this project phase expires.

### **Lessons learnt**

- When vulnerable groups are supported they can be more productive and attend to meaningful priorities in the direction of poverty eradication.
- Households can be more socially–economically stable with reduction of workload through shared responsibility among household members and other task fulfillment agents e.g. animals, bicycles, wheelbarrows and other machines and equipment
- Community mobilization for economic development is possible when all members share a common vision to solve a common problem.

### **THE NEXT PHASE**

The project shall prioritise consolidation of achievements through training of farmer groups in Rulindo and Gatsibo districts and build on experience so far achieved in Rwamagana district to seek resources for replication of the project across the country.

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