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SUCCESS STORIES from FAO RWANDA

■ Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women

May 2016, Rwanda - Rural women's roles as active agents of economic and social change and environmental protection have been constrained in their roles as farmers, producers, investors, caregivers and consumers. They continue to face serious challenges as a result of gender-based stereotypes and discrimination that deny them equitable access to opportunities, resources, assets and services. To support rural women's economic empowerment, the UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP are spearheading a joint project, "Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women". Launched in October 2012, the programme provides a more comprehensive UN system response working together to empower rural women.

Drocella NYIRAMARUHE lives in the Nyarurugu District of Rwanda and is a beneficiary of the Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE). Through the Inades Formation Rwanda (FAO partner), a non-governmental organisation, she received FAO support in the form of sensitization and training on nutrition, hygiene, and family planning. She received fortified beans, a young female pig and training on building a kitchen garden. Drocella is in her early 40's, has four children in the ages of 12 to 2.5 year old. She lives with them and her husband in a three-room mud-house which is newly built by herself together with the group of the RWEE project in Cyahinda. Before the project, the family lived in a one-room house given by a neighbour and was struggling to make ends meet.



Drocella Nyiramaruhe

Voices of the Beneficiaries

Over the last eight months, since the start of the project, Drocella has been attending weekly meetings of the beneficiary group in Cyahinda. Besides the trainings, Drocella received fortified iron-rich beans, sweet potato cutting rich in Vitamin A, a young female pig and training on how to take care of it. Also, during the meetings, the group started a savings and credit scheme. The life of Drocella changed in all aspects. In terms of living standards, she now moved into a three-room house with her family, she owns a pig, around 60 guinea pigs and rabbits, chickens and a cow. Her nutrition and that of her children has improved as she now farms different vegetables and she uses them to feed her family. Her income security increased as she has been able to extend and diversify her small businesses.

The most important change that Drocella indicates is that her social status and integration has increased tremendously.

“I have seen my life and that of her family change in a positive way. I now feel part of the community. I think I have become an inspiration for the other project beneficiaries, as I show them how things can work out if you try to invest in your own business, take some risk and hold on to something that you started,” she said.

Drocella wants to further develop the activities she has going on and to help the community in changing minds and encourage them to work together. Her dream is to start a similar group with a saving and credit scheme and the mutual support that she experienced from the RWEE project group.



RWEE training

"I think I have become an inspiration for the other project beneficiaries, as I show them how things can work out if you try to invest in your own business, take some risk and hold on to something that you started"

Drocella Nyiramaruhe - Farmer

Emmanuel NDAYISENGA is 41 years old and has three children, in the age between 13 and seven is also a beneficiary of RWEE. He lives with them and his wife in a three-room cement house. He had four goats, a cow being raised for someone else and pig. He is farming vegetables such as cassava leaves behind his house.

The RWEE supported him with sensitization and training on agriculture technics, nutrition, hygiene, conflict management, saving and credit, income generating activities and family planning.

Since the start of the project, Emmanuel has been attending weekly meetings of the beneficiary group in Cyahinda, which consists of 40 beneficiaries, mostly women. The meetings are led by a local facilitator trained by the project and an agronomist that belongs to the RWEE project.

Emmanuel took part in the saving and credit scheme that the group set up and received a loan which he invested in the business of his wife. After paying back the loan, he received another loan which he invested again. With the profit from the business, he bought a goat.

Emmanuel and his family are more sensitized now on the issues that Emmanuel received training. With the loans and the material support he received from the project, Emmanuel invested and diversified his families' income generating activities.

Emmanuel says: "Through the meetings and trainings of the project, I have changed my mind, and I am able to discuss different ideas within the beneficiary group of the project." As a result, he decided to reduce his drinking.

"The money I saved from this has helped improve my life and the life of my family. My family has been stable for seven months now. My wife came back from her family and moved into the house again and continues with her business." He says his plans for the coming year is to continue with the businesses he started.

For more information, contact:

Josephina (josephina.mukamana@fao.org)

Jeanne d'Arc (dArc.MatujeMukamwiza@fao.org)

For more information, also see:

[About RWEE Joint Programme](#)

UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP agreed to spearhead a more comprehensive UN system response in support of rural women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia. The RWEE Joint programme on accelerating progress towards Empowerment of Rural Women (RWEE) is implemented in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda through joint actions via the Rural Women Economic Empowerment Joint Program (RWEEJP).

At the global level the four areas of focus of the JP are: rural women's improved food and nutrition security, increased income and wealth, enhanced leadership and participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes and more gender responsive policy environment for economic empowerment of rural women.

The JP was developed with a view to generate synergies that capitalize on each agencies mandate, comparative advantage and institutional strength to generate more lasting and wider scale improvement in the livelihoods and rights of rural women including young women.



"Through the meetings and trainings of the project, I have changed my mind, and I am able to discuss different ideas within the beneficiary group of the project"

Emmanuel Ndayisenga- Farmer