

Six Month Report on First Year Working Groups in Rwanda, July – December, 2014

This report covers the 26 working group which began in 2014 under the program management of Epiphanie Mujawimana

FOOD SECURITY: In July, all households harvested food crops from the previous season which included beans, potatoes, corn and vegetables from individual plots. In August, children started collecting manure and loosening the soil to prepare their farms so that between September and October they were ready to plant new crops. In November, the children continued with weeding and adding fertilizer to their individual crops. At the same time five working groups planted corn as a group project and four groups received land and planted bananas. These have been their first group projects. ZOE provided seeds, chemical fertilizers and truckloads of manure for these projects. Additionally, for the banana plantations, the group members received special training in crop management, as pictured to the right.



INCOME GENERATION & FINANCIAL SECURITY: Using grants supplied by ZOE, many working group members run small businesses buying or growing and selling things like sorghum, beans, bananas and avocados. They also generate income from raising small livestock like chickens, rabbits and pigs.

HEALTH, HYGIENE AND DISEASE PREVENTION

- ZOE paid the health insurance costs for the children who needed coverage, but could not afford it. Insurance in Rwanda is prorated based on earnings. Once families have a regular source of income they are able to cover this expense themselves and are proud to do so.
- In some cases, ZOE provided support for medical treatment fees for illnesses which were not covered by health insurance. If needed, ZOE helps with transportation and food for those admitted to a hospital.
- Materials and uniforms were provided for anti-AIDS clubs.

GENERAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Between August and November, ZOE worked with community leaders to help the group's homeless members, who did not have other options for housing, construct homes. ZOE provided iron sheets, nails, doors and windows. Fellow ZOE group members helped make the bricks and participated in construction to reduce the cost. With housing secured, some of the families whose siblings had been separated were reunited.
- Children who had dropped out of school, which often happens when the parents have passed away, were assisted by ZOE to reintegrate. Some were provided resources to attend vocational school and then provided start-up kits upon graduation.

- During this first year, children in the programs have been able to cease begging, stealing or working for unfair wages in order to survive. Instead they now have a more self-sufficient approach to food security. They have also learned how to discuss and find solutions to the challenges they face.

TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

Health, Hygiene and Disease Prevention. September trainings focused on proper hygiene and HIV/AIDS. The hygiene training covered basic topics like boiling water, not keeping animals in the house, and the importance of using mosquito nets. Training also included educating the children as to the importance of keeping themselves and their homes neat and clean as a way of countering the negative stigma often associated with poverty, and especially with being an orphan.

Many of the young people who enter ZOE's empowerment program do not fully understand how HIV is transmitted nor the importance of being tested and taking antiretroviral drugs. To counter this, the training on HIV/AIDS is extensive, covering topics from myths and causes to prevention and treatment. The youth also take pledges to protect their health and the health of others by making good personal choices and by helping each other make good decisions.

Child Rights. Ignorance of child rights is the main cause of child abuse and exploitation in their communities. During September, the children were trained on child rights in accordance with the United Nations' Rights of the Child. ZOE also trained members on child abuse prevention and taught them how to defend their rights. At the same time, ZOE educated community leaders who are sometimes ignorant of these rights.

Faith Cultivation. In addition to praying weekly during their group meetings, the ZOE program facilitators introduced the children to scripture readings to guide them in their empowerment journey.



A presentation during the exchange visit.

EXCHANGE VISIT: Representatives from one of the 2014 working groups were provided transportation and food in order to visit and view the activities of ZOE groups that had begun in 2012 and 2013. The representatives witnessed the application of ZOE's empowerment program and learned about various projects. They then brought this information back to the children in their region. Community leaders also participated in this observational visit and after noting the success of these advanced groups, were more committed to providing resources like land to support working group projects.