



Udder Project Update

August 2017

It was another whirlwind trip to Rwanda! We were there for 10 days and seemed to cover much ground in that time. It was wonderful to be back and see our good friends. As we had not been back since our trip in August, 2015, we were anxious to see all the changes that occurred.

Veterinarians: Felicien and Viateur, are doing well. They each have their own unique skills that complement each other making them a good team in the Food Security Program.

Food Security Team – remains the same

Coordinator: Reverend Augustin

Veterinarians: Viateur and Felicien

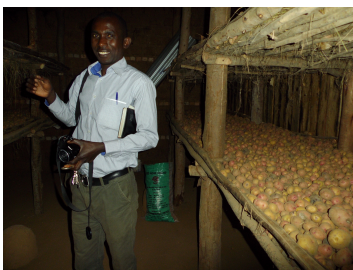
Agronomist: Emmanuel

Social Worker: Consessa

+ 17 veterinary technicians



The Food Security Program is still working in 17 sites around the Kigeme Diocese (the area that encompasses our projects located in the Southern Province of Rwanda), 4 of these sites remain maintenance sites (monitored only) and the other 13 are active sites that still receive direct aid from the Program in terms of farmer and paravet training. On our visit, we were unable to visit all of the Food Security Sites due to time and financial constraints. Some of these sites are very far from where we stay, the roads are very challenging to navigate and gas is very dear in Rwanda (Vancouver gas prices have nothing on Rwandan prices!). We were able to visit a representative sample however. As usual, some of the sites are showing incredible improvement while others still need help. The success rate at each site is dependent on a few factors- the soil in the area, the resources of the area and the leadership present in each of the sites.



One of the most successful sites in the Program is Cyivugiza. The site started as one of the poorest. The area had lost many people due to the genocide and AIDS. We were so encouraged! The leader of the Parish, Pastor Vincent, has, in 6 short years, turned the area from a destitute, hopeless area to a thriving site with many projects that have been designed to motivate (the Rwandans call it mobilize) the people from a position of poverty to one of self- sustainability. The Udder Project was happy to help by supplying seeds for crops, livestock and the training of the paravet, but, Pastor Vincent and the people of the area did the rest on their own. It was incredibly encouraging to see as it gave us hope that other areas that are equally as destitute as Cyivugiza once was, have a hope of rising above poverty.

We visited other sites as well that, although may not be as advanced as Cyivugiza, are showing good progress from when they started. We heard many testimonies from the beneficiaries of these areas of how the Food Security Program has helped them.

Food Security Testimonies:
"I have paid for health care for my family"
"I can pay my child's school fees"
"I have bought a cow"
"I bought a piece of land to grow crops for my family"
"I have improved my house"

There are still considerable challenges to overcome. They have been faced with a drought this season which has decreased the yields of their maize and Irish potato crops. They are also struggling with finding food for their cows. As a result, the cows' milk yield goes down in the dry season. We discussed methods of storing feed from the rainy season in order to maintain their abilities to feed themselves and their cows in the dry seasons. Overall, there was a feeling of positivity at each of the sites we visited and progress was seen at each site.

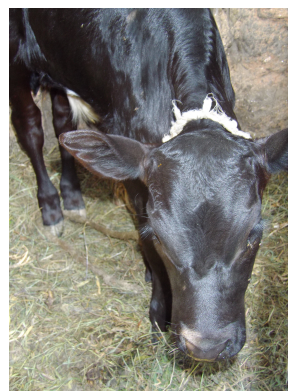


Paravets

The paravets that are at each site have proved to be invaluable to the beneficiaries. They are helping with the day to day activities of the farmers, giving advice and treating simple conditions in the livestock. They are making such an impact in the different Food Security areas that the paravet program is coming to the attention of the local government as a way to help improve the veterinary care in Rwanda. As a group, they are doing well. They still have their association and the bulls they purchased have helped to produce many calves

Challenges

The biggest struggle in the Food Security Program we face now is budget. We are struggling to find the resources to help all of the 17 areas. There are 4 areas that are still in significant need as it is a challenge to get the resources to them and to monitor their activities based on the fact that they are a distance away. The paravets in that area are not fully trained yet due to the lack of resources and, as a result, the beneficiaries are not able to utilize them for assistance with their livestock and crops. It has been a challenge this year for the Udder Project to find the funds to be able to fully support the Food Security Program. The priorities have had to be in salaries in order to ensure the continuity of the program. Pair this with the challenges of the drought this season and it has left these areas in a precarious state.



Rachael, Carolyn, Roger and Alayne met with the Food Security Team to strategize over how we can help

these areas and how we can make the Food Security Program self sustainable. Discussed first was the shrinking support from donations in Canada. It is becoming a challenge to raise money in Canada as there are many local charities needing money and times are tight. We also are taking a hit with the US exchange rate, losing thousands of dollars when we go to make a money transfer. Rachael also discussed that the Udder Project will not be able to maintain support forever and that the purpose of the Food Security Program is to build up the people and mobilize them to become poverty free and be able to maintain that on their own.

Potential Plan for Self Sustainability

So, an idea was introduced by Food Security to help achieve all of the above goals. The NGO World Vision has agreed to give the Food Security Team two buildings and equipment for milk collection centres in the Kigeme Diocese. They also funded the training of 49 new paravets in order to work for these centres. Food Security came up with a proposal that it presented to the Udder Project about costs to get the Milk Centre running and also the profit that will be anticipated. It is a well thought out proposal and, if successful, can generate the money to support all the Food Security Sites.

We discussed the Udder Project's role in this and it was decided that we will raise the funds to maintain the program until the Milk Collection Centre is generating the necessary revenue to maintain the Food Security Program and then, we would start to decrease the monetary support that we supply to the Program. The details are still to be worked out, but, we do have a plan going ahead that could see a sustainable future for the Food Security Program. This plan would also make it possible to eventually help other sites in the Diocese.



APAP We had the opportunity to meet with APAP this year. This is the farming group that Rachael has been meeting with since 2006. They have been struggling with the lack of a good executive committee over the last few years, but now have a stable group and are trying to improve the agriculture and livestock production of their area. A request was made for another bull. We have donated bulls to them in the past and it has helped to improve the breeds of cattle in the area. They came up with a proposal for a new bull. The Udder Project agreed to take this back to the board of directors in Canada to see if they will agree to support the project. However, Rachael did mention to them that they will need to contribute to the purchase of a new bull and that they have to make the project sustainable as this would be the last bull that we help purchase for them. They were very pleased with the consideration that we would help them.

There will be some significant changes in the next year as the Bishop of the Kigeme Diocese retires. We had a glimpse into the changes that may occur. We are not sure how, or if, this will change our involvement in Rwanda. Time will tell and we will keep you all updated. At present, this does not change our goal of helping the Rwandan people