

# act:onaid

## Newsletter

October 2020

**ActionAid and the Community  
to influence positive behaviors  
conducive to investing in  
human capital**



## Empowered, women are the pillar of household development



*"Since I was trained on entrepreneurship, together with my husband, we have embarked on investing in small livestock rearing. We bought two pigs and a rabbit to have manure which will allow us to have a good harvest and thus prevent malnutrition at the family level in general and among children in particular ",*  
Véronique MIBURO

Trainings organized by ActionAid International Burundi, through the Merankabandi project, are yielding positive results in terms of behavior change. Women, who have since long been considered vulnerable and unable to contribute to the development of households have become active actors in this sector, thanks to ActionAid. Véronique MIBURO lives on Mubaragaza hill in Mutumba commune, Karusi Province. Benefiting from Merankabandi project, she is actively contributing to the household development as she testifies.

"Since I was trained on entrepreneurship, together with my husband, we have embarked on investing in small livestock rearing.

We bought two pigs and a rabbit to have manure which will allow us to have a good harvest and thus prevent malnutrition at the family level in general and among children in particular ", says Mrs. Véronique adding that her family has acquired knowledge and lessons from sensitizations organized by ActionAid International Burundi.

Realizing that the "Merankabandi" project also aims at the well-being of children, her family managed to convince their daughter who was on the verge of dropping out of school due eye pain and the family not initially able to have her treated by an ophthalmologist, their daughter got treated, thanks to knowledge in financial management learnt from the project.

"Now that we are equipped enough in terms of financial management, we will manage what we receive from the monetary transfer, engage part of it in income generating activities and use the rest for the family well-being", insists Mrs. Veronique.

Mrs. Véronique hopes their daughter will be able to continue her studies and finish them in good health.

She is proud of the project, especially of the complementary activities because, according to her, " what beneficiaries need the most is not to have the money transferred to their phone numbers, but they need to know how to use this money".

“We have been receiving money from the project, but we did nothing valuable with it until ActionAid launched complementary activities”, she concludes.

She calls upon beneficiaries of the project, in particular women, to put into practice the concepts learned from the sensitization by ActionAid in order to manage the cash transfer in good faith and especially to undertake income-generating activities to contribute to household development.

ActionAid International has always believed that by empowering women, you empower an entire nation, but also that, that once empowered, women constitute the pillar to the development of any nation.

Funded by the World Bank and implemented by ActionAid Burundi in both Ruyigi and Karusi provinces, Merankabandi project supports approximately 30 thousand beneficiaries, of which at least 23 thousand are women. Beneficiaries receive cash transfers from Merankabandi and complementary behavior change activities from Actionaid.

## Behavior change in households begins with dialogue between spouses



*Mr. Tharcisse Ndayishimiye and his family*

*«Since I participated in the awareness sessions, I and my wife have given room to dialogue and everything is going according to plan. Before, the money I receive was wasted unnecessarily on alcoholic beverages»*

In the Burundian culture, the man is considered the only one to decide what to do in the household. Nevertheless, ActionAid Burundi, through its interventions tries to change the mentalities of the communities and the situation is changing.

NDAYISHIMIYE Tharcisse, lives on Rusamaza hill in Gihogazi commune, Karusi province. For him, any change in behavior in households should begin with dialogue between spouses.

*"I thank ActionAid which understood that complementary activities must go hand in hand with the monetary transfer. Before sensitizations, I did not realize the importance of dialogue with my wife because, naturally in the Burundian context, a man, the head of the family, decides for his family. There is no question sitting down with his wife to decide on family issues,"* says Mr. Tharcisse.

Though he struggled to participate in awareness sessions, he finally has realized that talking to each other is of the utmost importance as he continues.

*"Since I participated in the awareness sessions, I and my wife have given room to dialogue and everything is going according to plan. Before, the money I receive was wasted unnecessarily on alcoholic beverages."*

Through the Hinduringendo (be like others) sites, ActionAid organizes behavior change sessions on various community themes to help households whose members do not live in harmony change their behavior and develop themselves.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE, DIALOGUE BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES: PROVINCIAL LAUNCH IN RUYIGI AND RUTANA

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Lead by ActionAid in its intervention areas, the three consortium Organizations meet the community and share some needed highlights on the project.



The consortium Oxfam – ActionAid – Miparec has organized two days provincial launch for the “Good Governance, dialogue between civil society organizations and local authorities” project, funded by the European Union, on 19 and 20th August 2020 in Ruyigi and Rutana provinces.

Administrative representatives, civil society organizations, consortium members, representative of the private sector, and media, attended each of the provincial launch. As reminded, Mrs. Ariane Habimana, the project coordinator at AAIB, the general objective of the project is: Burundian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are effective partners recognized by local authorities (LAs) in the planning, implementation and monitoring of local development” could not be achieved unless we all interact and support all implementation phases, especially in this very starting one.

“ Collaboration should allow women, young people, and marginalized groups (main target groups) to benefit enough from the improvement and the appropriation of democratic mechanisms, active citizenship, but also to participate in key actions of the project through a rights-based approach”. She strengthened.

To achieve this, the consortium team (OXFAM-AAIB-MIPAREC) provides capacity building and financial support for the selected CSOs that will convince on very creative and innovation solutions and Also, look at how impactful, sustainable and

inclusive they are in terms of community involvement, the CSOs and local authorities accountability and interactions. The accountability presupposes above all a good look at the main challenges, including the civic space, the lack of dialogue and mutual trust between civil society, population, and local authorities as well as the lack of civil society participation in the definition. and the functioning of decentralization instruments at the local level.

Warm welcome and support was expressed through administrative authorities especially those of the socio-cultural adviser in Ruyigi, and the governor of Rutana. Different questions regarding the project were raised and answered and participants promised to support the project.

The project team was advised to sure these interaction workshops are regularly organized to update authorities on progress. Authorities suggested that strategic and operational orientation meetings that involve both the administration and the community representatives should also be prioritized for the project to achieve its objectives.

## **YOUTH, POTENTIAL CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION IN BURUNDI.**



With the support of ActionAid International Burundi, the Activista movement, organized a workshop on youth entrepreneurship in the province of Karusi from 29th to July 31, 2020. Getting out of the comfort zone, Business Identification; Finding a capital and start small; Book keeping and Record keeping; Market Research; Growing your customer base and Money Management, are some of the topics that were developed together with participants.

72% of the participants who attended the workshop were young girls. Youths represented 100% of the participants. The Workshop focused on entrepreneurship skills, Business plan design and Cooperatives Rules/Regulations in Burundi. Twenty-five (25: 18 women and 7 men) coming from 1 cooperative and 3 non-profit associations based in Karusi province have been trained.

Despite the immediate benefits resulting from the workshop such as a good understanding of youth entrepreneurship skills; the increased understanding on the basic skills on business plan, on the laws and regulations of cooperative movements according to laws in place in Burundi with the local Consultant in cooperative movements; the improvement of the organizational and institutional structure of their cooperatives; the pragmatic lessons from challenges and downs of others and the understood innovative ways of doing business using existing resources etc, participants trained expressed need of an extraordinary support in terms of entrepreneurship education.

They suggested increasing days of training for next sessions so that they may get more equipped in as far as entrepreneurship skills are concerned. They have also demanded to increase the number of participants in the next workshop and be given material support to start small but innovative businesses.

They recommended to be visited at least once a month to help them start cooperatives. They recommended to be visited at least once a month to help them start cooperatives.

According to Josias Ogden Ukuriniyesu, the Programme, Sponsorship & (internal) Comms Manager (ActionAid), young people should focus on business-oriented practices so that they may be in the decision-making machine and develop themselves using local resources.

Poverty and social injustice must be eradicated at any cost in the rural communities by empowering young women in these communities, he added.

*“ActionAid Burundi has done the best to give the young people the necessary knowledge and skills to start cooperative and raise entrepreneurial spirit in them. Our advice was that they start cooperative separately to their associations once they get home considering that now they have knowledge around cooperative movements”* underlined Mr. Ogden.

This workshop was organized as part of strengthening youth entrepreneurship as a potential catalyst for sustainable economic development and job creation in Burundi, especially in the rural communities.



*Youth capacity building workshop*

## Civil Society Organizations Mornings to address the main challenges and opportunities around the National Policies.

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The consortium comprising Care -ActionAid – REJA for the project “Strengthening Burundian CSOs to increase their contribution to the governance process and socio-economic development”, has organized three workshops known as “CSOs Morning”.

"CSOs Mornings" are crucial moments when representatives of civil society organizations, working in the same sector meet and discuss mainly on a specific civil policy and on other important issues regarding their field. During that session, participants discuss on major common

challenges and opportunities, analyze their strengths and major threats through the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis before coming up with some conventional strategic solutions and set up common action plan.

The first of the three (3) CSOs Mornings was organized in July on Environment and Climate Change sector group held at Care International Innovation Hub/Nawe Nuze on the theme " Challenges and opportunities around the national policy on water with the focus on Lake Tanganyika ”. The second on Challenges and opportunities around the law on GBV was held in August, while the last was organized in September and focused on Employment and Entrepreneurship and has addressed the main challenges and opportunities around the National Employment Policy".

In this very starting phase of the project, such Mornings bring together almost 25 CSOs representatives and facilitate in-depth analysis of the current context, the main challenges to its implementation that would constitute some advocacy objectives.

All the 3 workshops helped to make a good starting and collaboration between CSOs which should lead to the visibility and sustainable networking. Some key outcomes were generated at each CSOs morning; these include CSOs are strengthened; opportunities and information are shared; CSOs relationship and networking is built; etc....

Due to the specific context of Covid-19, many webinar talks will be organized to allow a wide participation and to adapt the project with the COVID -19 context.

## Community mobilization to reduce school dropouts

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Although education is believed to be compulsory in Burundi with free primary education and that children of school age are registered in large numbers for school, there is such a worrying dropout rate in some areas of the country. In Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province, school dropout cases are high. The Local Right Program 5 in that commune recorded 2,369 dropout cases out of 15,191 school children enrolled for the school year 2018-2019, but thanks to community mobilization activities, 972 children, i.e. 41% resumed school the next school year 2019-2020.

The reality above is due to lack of supporting strategies, the costs related to schooling that still enormous for many households with school age children. Most parents fail to send their children to school because of poverty. The unemployment rate discourages many parents and do not measure the school added value.



Diane Niyomwungere (first left) in a form II class

To support the campaign and advocacy in favor of education for all (EFA) at the national level, Actionaid International Burundi works locally alongside communities in their empowerment and capacity building. This program aims to strengthen communities on how these should address themselves issues around the education through community solidarity structures such as clubs for the promotion of Children's Rights at School (PRS); Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTA); school management committees (CGE) and community relays, all members of the Circle for the Promotion of Children's Rights (CPDE-Gira Iteka Kibondo) in Butaganzwa commune.

Diane Niyomwungere (16) is a pupil at ECOFO Mpungwe; she says she had dropped out due to lack of school materials since there are 6 children attending school in their family. She resumed after different community mobilization campaigns, as she reveals.

“I was motivated during the awareness campaign against school dropout carried out in our commune. I understood that finally one must study to acquire knowledge and capacity to understand well the environment around.

Through participatory theatre, demonstrations on violation of children rights in the community opened my eyes. I decided to go back to school, continue my studies as much as I can because even without a job, I will be equipped enough to defend my rights regardless of my position”.

According to Emmanuel Mbeshiminwe, the Headmaster of Ecofo Mpungwe, ActionAid International Burundi has done something commendable.

“The strong campaign by ActionAid in the commune has helped to get a good number of children who returned to school. My school recorded the highest drop-out in Butanzwa commune in 2018-2019, counting alone 163 cases on a total of 833 students enrolled (19.6%).

With mass sensitizations, theatre plays followed by home visits in households whose children had dropped out of school, the results were very satisfying because 103 children out of the 163 (more than 63%) returned to school this 2019-2020 school year.

“We are very proud of this and we remain vigilant to guarantee the retention of children with empowerment activities of communities and actors for inclusive education. I am grateful to Actionaid, it is through its support that this has been possible ”, appreciates Emmanuel Mbeshiminwe.

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*Emmanuel Mbeshiminwe, the headmaster of Ecofo Mpungwe*

## Livestock ownership: an engine for women economic empowerment.

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In Burundi, a patriarchal society, cattle, and larger animals are owned by men while smaller animals are under the control of women. Given the purchasing power, fewer households can afford to buy animals due to the lack of financial resources. Women and all their belongings, including livestock that they may have received from their parents, relatives or purchased themselves, are in control of men.

Even though, in many areas, things are changing, and women are proving exceptions to this believe general rule. Through the behavior change component of Merankabandi project implemented by ActionAid Burundi, beneficiaries are starting to invest in cattle and larger animals.

This is the case of Mrs. NAHIMANA Bélyse (32) living on RWERAMBERE hill of Gisuru commune in Ruyigi province.

She reveals that after having taken part in the awareness-raising sessions, especially on financial education, she immediately agrees with the saying that “where there is will, there is a way”.

In collaboration with her husband, they developed a project: renting a property to cultivate rice using a capital of 80,000 BIF. Part of the harvest was consumed, while the rest sold for 188,000 BIF.

With other 4 beneficiaries of the project, they organized themselves in a Village Saving and Loan Association, commonly known as IKIRIMBA. They save 30,000 BIF per month each member. At her round, Mrs. Belyse gained 120,000 BIF and decided to buy a cow worth 285,000 BIF.



*Mrs. Belyse and her husband NAHIMANA posing with her cow*

## ActionAid and the Community to influence positive behaviors conducive to investing in human capital in Karusi and Ruyigi.



Ndimugwimo Nadège (aged 27) breastfeeding her child

Within the awareness raising on the monitoring and quality assurance of IGAs (Financial Education Module, some complementary Activities mainly focused on infant and young child feeding practices and growth and on the behavior change in order to positively improve the physical, physiological and psychosocial well-being of the population marked the period July – August – September.

The very starting activity was the training workshops carried out on July 25-27th and 28 – 30th, on the key modules such as (1) Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF); (2) Integral

Early Childhood Development (DIJE) and Maternal and Child Health / Family Planning (SMI / FP) has allowed ActionAid Burundi and the community set up vegetable gardens, adequate latrines, hand washing stations, compost pits, clean containers for storing drinking water, shelves for cooking utensils, kitchen; demonstrations of good dietary, agricultural, breastfeeding practices, etc.

712 awareness sessions/visits for 16883 beneficiaries (Ruyigi) and 768 for 17104 beneficiaries (Karusi) during July – August and September.



Ndimugwimo Nadège & Barakamfitiye Edouard in front of their vegetable garden.



*After a cooking demonstration session, the beneficiaries of the Caga hill, commune Bweru feed their children.*

Despite the high spousal participation (estimated at 214.7% in Butaganzwa 2 commune) which highlights how much interest the beneficiaries attach on complementary activities and the increasing practices level, however there are still some challenges to address. The CDFC representatives are still expected for more involvement in the integration of learnt skills and it is necessary to focus more on new adaptation mechanisms for better achievements capitalizing, why not on the program extension in other localities.

The program is funded by the World Bank and will last for 29-months and carried out in Bugenyuzi, Gihogazi, Mutumba and Nyabikere (Karusi) and in Ruyigi, Kinyinya and Butezi (Ruyigi).

**act:onaid BURUNDI**

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