

First year report from Rwanda on all groups which began meeting January 2023

The following is an overview of the trainings and resources distributed to the families during their first year in the Zoe Empowers Rwanda program. This class includes 35 groups encompassing 876 households with 3,027 children.

Income Generation

March/April 2023: Zoe staff facilitated the training for all the heads of household. They learned how to identify good business ideas and the basic skills needed to run a business. Each participant then created a business proposal based on their interests, abilities, and community needs. By the end of April, every participant received a grant and started a small business.

After youth began earning profits from their businesses, they created group table banks to be used for granting loans to each other. These loans are used to boost initial businesses, create new income projects, and help siblings start their own income projects.

In their second year, groups will receive inputs and funds for group projects, to strengthen table banks, and for top-up grants to boost initial businesses. Youth that complete vocational training through apprenticeship and formal vocational trainings will be supported with start-up kits

Food Security and Agriculture Projects

February/March 2023: The heads of household were trained on how to grow their own food so they would no longer need to beg or do labor for food. They learned how to prepare a balanced meal with locally available foods and what home resources would help them become food secure. To achieve food security, each household was encouraged to have sustainable sources of food of sufficient quantity and quality. This includes:

- a store of dried legumes (beans, soybeans, groundnuts) and grains (maize, rice, sorghum)
- a garden of vegetables and tubers as well as at least one fruit tree
- livestock for breeding

The training also included local agronomists who taught the youth how to design and plant kitchen gardens. After training, Zoe provided various seeds so that each household could plant a kitchen garden, fruit tree, and crops.

June/July 2023: Zoe provided households with additional vegetable seeds and the groups with fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides for group' agriculture projects

September 2023: In collaboration with a government agronomist, youth members were trained on new farming techniques to improve their harvest outcomes.

October 2023: Zoe and government staff trained all participants on how to raise livestock and keep them safe for the purpose of more production. The participants got informed on livestock insurance for pigs and hens.

November 2023: Zoe provided small livestock (a pig, a goat, or hens) to every household. They also purchased additional livestock - mainly goats, pigs, rabbits, and chickens - with their own resources. Some even purchased cows, thanks to their businesses profits. The local government staff in charge of veterinary services provided vaccines and treatments to all livestock.

Health & Hygiene

During the recruitment process, Zoe staff discovered there were 12 children who were very sick. Zoe helped them access and then paid for their emergency medical treatment.

May/June 2023: In order to prevent HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancies, Zoe and local health center officials provided specific training. Group members were motivated to form anti-AIDS clubs for enhancing awareness not only among Zoe kids but also others in the community.

August 2023: Through training session led by Zoe and health center workers, the participants were trained on diseases caused by poor hygiene (such malaria, skin rashes, jiggers, intestinal worms, diarrhea) and how to take preventative measures.

September 2023: Zoe provided initial funds to purchase Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI) and because they now have small businesses, the young heads of household are able to pay medical insurance for themselves and their families.

November 2023: After the training on hygiene and disease prevention, the groups reported that a large number of families did not have latrines so the groups organized mutual help activities to build latrines and Zoe provided iron sheets for roofing to 82 families.

Child Rights

Early in the first year, there was a general introduction to the topic of child rights to assess if children had or were experiencing any child rights abuses. Staff began taking steps to address issues such as legal negotiations, obtaining birth certificates and national ID, family properties recovery, school reintegration, and to provide trauma counseling.

Housing

Through mutual help activities, groups assisted their member in need of house construction and repair. Zoe provided building materials such as iron roofing sheets, nails, doors, and windows.

Education

Zoe provided school materials and fees for 1,367 children in this class of groups so that they could start attending primary and secondary school regularly. School reintegration and provision of school fees and materials will continue in the second year with Zoe providing 50% support and the rest provided by the heads of household.

Spiritual Strengthening

Through group devotions offered at every meeting, the Zoe youth are connected with God. This has helped restore their hope and faith. In addition, through these devotions the youth feel the love of God and they believe that God has a better plan for their future.