

**IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF BENEFICIARIES THROUGH INCOME
GENERATING ACTIVITIES
A CASE STUDY OF THE RED CROSS MODEL VILLAGE PROJECT IN GIHOMBO
NYAMASHEKE, RWANDA**

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ABSTRACT

Between 2010 and 2013 the Rwanda Red Cross Society conducted a model village project in Nyamasheke district in Rwanda's Western Province. The project was technically supported by the Belgian Red Cross, and financed by the European Commission, with the Italian Red Cross as co-financing partner. The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of 2,000 households in community health and environmental protection and to improve the living conditions of the population. Notably, 200 particularly vulnerable women heads of households received productive grants (livestock) to conduct income generating activities and were grouped in savings and loan groups to generate a modest income and savings. At the end of its duration, in January 2013, the project had reached this objective by improving the access of the population to safe drinking water, by improving the hygiene, by reducing the prevalence of transmissible diseases, by reducing the malnutrition and diarrhea among children, and by strengthening the resilience of the community with regard to landslides through the implementation of anti-erosion measures. However, the available data regarding the impact of the income generating activities on the 200 women headed households were insufficient.

This research project had the objective to show to what extent the model village project indicators (income and savings increase) had been attained, what impact the income generating activities had on the living conditions of the beneficiaries, and to what degree the achievements are sustainable. In March 2013, the author conducted field research to collect quantitative and qualitative data through an administered survey, a focus group discussion, visits to households, and interviews with authorities and project staff. The collected data provide detailed information regarding positive changes that occurred between the start of the implementation of the project in 2010 and January 2013. The results of the study are significant with regard to the achieved change in the living conditions of the 200 women. The income generating activities implemented by the project had a positive impact on the increase of the income of the target group, as well as on their savings practice. The project effectively improved their access to health care and their physical, mental and social wellbeing, as well as the social cohesion among beneficiaries. Many respondents indicated positive changes regarding their human capital with regard to newly acquired skills, and the emergence of an entrepreneurial spirit among many beneficiaries can be observed.

Finally, this study provides an analysis of the factors that threaten the sustainability of the project achievements and makes recommendations for future IGA interventions.