

**RURAL SECTOR SUPPORT PROJECT AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN RWANDA
A CASE STUDY OF MUHANGA DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the impact of Rural Sector Support Project on poverty reduction, and Muhanga district was taken as a case study. The researcher chose RSSP because it was initiated with the purpose of alleviating the poverty among farmers located in rural areas. The study was guided by general objective of assessing the impact of RSSP support to farmers on poverty reduction by analyzing the contribution of RSSP to farmers and investigates the change in poverty levels among farmers in Muhanga district. Rural Sector Support Project started in 2001 as a pilot project in Karongi District and after it was rolled out at national level. It has the aim of revitalizing the rural economy and improving the quality of life of the rural poor person through increased transfer of technical and financial resources for the sustainable rural development. This is done through creation of farming cooperatives and the project supports members grouped in different cooperatives. The study was carried out in Southern province, Muhanga district and covered a period of three years from 2011 up to 2013. The population under study was 123 farmers in Muhanga district grouped in KIABER cooperative which is supported by RSSP from which a sample of 94 farmers was selected. A case study research design was adopted. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Regarding primary data, questionnaire, interviews and key informants data collection methods were used. Secondary data was obtained from review of literature; relevant books, journals, conference proceedings, project documents and some publications from the internet were carried out to support the findings from the study area. The findings revealed that RSSP has contributed to poverty reduction among farmers. Through rehabilitating the marshland, it has enabled farmers in Muhanga district to acquire well irrigated land and others who were formerly landless to acquire land to cultivate food and remain with surplus for the market. Also, due to trainings and study tours, RSSP has made cooperative members aware of the advantages of working in cooperative. It has also equipped members with improved farming equipment's. All the above have enhanced poverty reduction among rural farmers impacting on them both at cooperative and household level.