



Rwanda

The decades leading up to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda were fraught with violence between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. Food shortages and a slumping economy exacerbated tensions and often resulted in flare-ups of violence. The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front's 1990 invasion of Rwanda from neighboring Uganda sparked a civil war that lasted three years. Despite ceasefires and peace talks, the conflict peaked with the 1994 massacre of over 800,000 Tutsis in one of the worst genocides in modern history.

After the genocide, the country was economically and socially devastated. Rwanda began taking slow and deliberate steps toward reconciliation. The return of over one million refugees over the next decade presented challenges of repatriation and acceptance, but also opportunities for growth and stability. The ongoing war in Congo continues to hinder recovery, though less so since the RPF's withdrawal from Congo in 2002.

While human rights are still of concern, Rwanda continues to heal and rebuild. The government has acted to foster growth, and the country has shown promising signs of economic development.

Since our initial involvement in 1986, when a VOCA volunteer advised cooperatives, ACDI/VOCA has maintained a presence in



Rwanda, working to ensure food security and economic stability.

Building Food Security through Tailored Interventions

For over ten years, ACDI/VOCA has been recognized by both donors and partners as a skilled implementer of monetization and food security programs. In 1998, ACDI/VOCA was awarded the USAID Rwanda and Great Lakes Region Monetization Contract. This Food for Development (FFD) program monetized \$10 million worth of commodity in Rwanda and other African countries, which generated currency for emergency food security activities and helped rebuild a free-market food trading system that had been disrupted by civil war. In addition to addressing food insecurity, the program provided business training to 60 coffee associations. >>

Food security monetization initiatives continued in 2000-2005 with the PL-480 Title II Monetization Program: Food Security Initiatives Technical Assistance and Management Support. Through auctions of vegetable oil, this program generated valuable proceeds, supplied a scarce food commodity and facilitated the re-emergence of small-trader activity and an open, competitive market. It supported local initiatives that increased production and marketing of selected crops by training constituents in targeted subjects.

A four-year follow-on project to the above, known as the Development Activity Program (DAP), increased incomes, reduced vulnerability and improved household health and nutrition, especially for populations living with HIV/AIDS. DAP also increased access to basic commodities through monetization and local production. The program focused on food security activities and grants but also branched into agroforestry, road rehabilitation and cooperative capacity building.

In 2000, ACDI/VOCA signed memoranda of understanding with World Vision and Catholic Relief Services to act as their sales agent. The following year, ACDI/VOCA was designated lead monetizer for World Vision and CRS under the Rwanda Umbrella Monetization agreement.

Volunteer Assistance to Develop Value Chains and Local Capacities

ACDI/VOCA's volunteer program returned to Rwanda in 2000 with a one-year Farm-to-Market Volunteer Program that strengthened

the linkages between rural farmers and agricultural markets. Its main goal was to provide short-term technical assistance in high-impact agricultural subsectors to build the capacity of local institutions without creating dependence.

In one successful instance, volunteers provided support to coffee cooperatives to build coffee washing stations and facilitated their accreditation by the Fair Trade Labeling Organization. As a result, groups such as the Abahuzamugami Cooperative began receiving a price two and a half times the prevailing world market price for ordinary grade Arabica coffee. With its use of expert volunteers and extensive community participation, this program was instrumental in the rehabilitation of rural roads and bridges improving local and regional market access. Through grants management, the project supported local initiatives to expand commercial agriculture.

In 2002, the pilot project was succeeded by a one-year component of the Worldwide Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Program. The goal of this follow-on program was to improve linkages among rural producers, agribusinesses and markets by working with farmer associations and other institutions that have a broad impact on the efficiency of the marketing chain.

Improving Nutrition and Resiliency

ACDI/VOCA's more recent work in Rwanda targets vulnerable populations, especially those living with HIV/AIDS, in order to improve their access to nutrition and bolster their

economic resiliency. In 2008 ACDI/VOCA teamed up with Catholic Relief Services to provide technical support to the USAID-funded Food and Nutrition Interventions for People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) Ibyiringiro Project. In supporting improved services available to PLWHA as well as orphans and vulnerable children, the Ibyiringiro project addressed

- expansion of services to PLWHA and OVC households receiving food rations
- forming community-based organizations to support PLWHA and OVCs
- insufficient economic opportunities for PLWHA and OVC households
- insufficient weaning food and targeted nutrition education to HIV+ mothers to prevent the transmission of HIV to their infants.

Technical Assistance and Training

A main strategy has been to foster community participation with technical training that boosts local capacities. With the help of the Carana Corporation, ACDI/VOCA implemented the Market Linkages Initiative (MLI), which provided cost-sharing grants for capacity development, construction of grain-bulking infrastructure and procurement of crop-conditioning equipment.

Another successful training program is the Rwanda Post-Harvest Handling and Storage (PHHS) project, which addressed post-harvest inefficiencies by improving storage facilities and post-harvest practices. Of particular note is our Sell More For More™ cooperative training curriculum, which helps farmers earn

more income by improving post-harvest handling and executing market-oriented business plans. It was presented a Best Practice and Innovation Award by InterAction and IFAP, and we have since exported the curriculum to other countries.

Looking Ahead

ACDI/VOCA's legacy in Rwanda is a diverse set of interventions tailored to ensure food security, economic stability and growth. Working with local populations and NGO partners, ACDI/VOCA has helped Rwanda move from its unstable political past towards a future that is characterized by increased inclusion that benefits for all.

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