



RWANDA FIELD REPORT:

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Land Husbandry, Water Harvesting & Hillside Irrigation Project

A Case Study of New Investment supported by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)

In early May 2011, I visited the pilot site of an agricultural development project in Rwanda that received a commitment of \$50 million from the GAFSP in June 2010. I had the opportunity to meet with the Rwandan government's GAFSP Project Coordinator, Innocent Musabyimana, in Kigali, and I also traveled with him and other government staff to the Karongi region to see a pilot project that GAFSP will be supporting in other regions/district as soon as GAFSP funds are disbursed.

I. BACKGROUND AND UPDATE ON PROJECT

Rationale and Overview. The project, the "Land Husbandry, Water Harvesting and Hillside Irrigation Project" (LWH) is focused on creating terraces on hillsides, improving the soil on the land under cultivation on these hillsides, managing water run-off to reduce erosion, and in some sites, developing irrigation systems. It also seeks to help the farmers who benefit to access the value chain and gain access to credit. There is also a significant capacity building for farmers and institutions and overall institutional capacity strengthening.

Funding and Project Site Development. The \$50 million grant from GAFSP will scale up and replicate in other regions a pilot project in Karongi initiated by the Rwandan government which has already received \$6 million from the

What is the GAFSP? The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) is a multilateral mechanism to assist in the implementation of pledges made by the G8 at the L'Aquila Summit in July 2009 which was set up in response to a request from the G20 in Pittsburgh in September 2009. Financial contributions to the GAFSP to date have been provided by or pledged by: Australia, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Ireland, South Korea, Spain and the United States. Total commitments to date equal about US\$ 925 million, pledged over three years.

government's own resources. Since the government's initial investment in the Karongi site, the World Bank (IDA) has contributed a further \$32 million, which was disbursed in June 2010. Work is underway on four other sites with the IDA funding.

GAFSP funds to support the project will flow over four years. The first tranche of GAFSP funds are expected to be disbursed by the end of May 2011. The Rwandan government feels that GAFSP funds have moved quickly.



An example of the terraces created by the LWH project in Karongi.



Meeting the members of the group "Zeal" in Karongi.

Normally, the World Bank takes 2 years, whereas this process took just under 1 year. This project is a high priority for Rwanda government.

The goal for the project ultimately is to have 32 catchment sites. Now the plan is for 4-5 to be supported by IDA, 4-5 by USAID and CIDA, and 7-8 by GAFSP.

To date, the following sites are under way:

- **The Karongi region site (where I visited) is most advanced—this is the pilot project funded by the Rwandan government to demonstrate impact and the model to be used.**
- **4 other districts started in Jan 2011 with support from IDA.**
- **GAFSP sites are in development and will be under way shortly.**

Model of engaging farmers in the project. The project is creating primary groups of 15-30 farmers, based on proximity. There are not existing farmer groups in many of the regions. A challenge in Rwanda post genocide is that there is a lot of mistrust of neighbors (people actually trust institutions more than neighbors) so a lot of farmers are operating individually.

The project works with service providers to deliver these services to farmers to augment limited govt extension capacity. In Karongi, One Acre Fund providing intensive extension and providing access to inputs for a fee. The input scheme provides farmers access to credit via OneAcre and then they pay after harvest. So far, they have a 98% repayment rate. The same service provider provides extension

After groups are formed, there is a participatory approach to crop selection. Farmers are asked what kinds of crops they want to grow. In Karongi, farmers brainstormed a list

of 21. Then debated against selection criteria: (1) availability of market; (2) availability of post-harvest infrastructure; and (3) agronomic possibilities for the crops identified. The Rwandan government is also exploring South-South co-operation with India to bring in experts from India on how to build strong farmers groups.

Participation. Site selection is done based on macro criteria; the government identified zones with most urgent need for land husbandry, irrigation, and catchment. They also

The GAFSP model and investments to date

In June 2010, the GAFSP Steering Committee approved 5 grants totaling US\$224 million for Bangladesh, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Togo and Rwanda. This report reviews the project approved in Rwanda. In November 2010, more than \$100 million in grants were approved for Mongolia, Ethiopia, and Niger. The successful country proposals demonstrated a high level of need, an effective agricultural investment plan, and a coherent project proposal.

One of the innovations of the GAFSP is its governance structure. It is governed by a Steering Committee that includes 12 voting members (6 donors, along with 6 developing country governments), as well as 11 non-voting, but fully participating members. Non-voting members include 3 civil society representatives (including a farmers' organization leader from Africa and Asia); ActionAid serves as one of three civil society representatives on the Steering Committee of the GAFSP.



Vedaste and Umuvitse, the Chair and Treasurer of the farmer's group Zeal.



Farmers at the second GAFSP site visited.

analyzed rainfall patterns, social/economic status, and focused in on less food secure areas. They involve stakeholders at the District level in Joint Action Forums—where development projects and priorities are discussed at the district level. This is where detailed design is presented and discussed. At each site, there is a farmer’s general assembly formed which in turn elects a farmers’ site committee with leadership. Then there are the primary groups of 15-30 farmers with leadership as well. These groups engage in the crop selection process.

II. FIELD VISIT TO KARONGI DISTRICT

We visited two sites in the Karongi district, which is the pilot project funded by the Rwandan government which will be replicated elsewhere with GAFSP funds. The first site we visited was in the village of Kibaru, in Kagano cell. The community has already been through one planting season and harvest after their terraces were constructed, and they have just begun the second planting season. They planted potatoes in the first season and are now planting wheat.

More than 65% of the first harvest (of potatoes) was sold in the market (meaning it was surplus to what people used for food); whereas before only 10% of the community’s harvest went to be sold in the market. These products are sold in 4 markets: the local market in Rambura; Ruingira; Karongi; and Kigali.

The main problem for people in this area before the project was that there was too much rain and it was eroding the soil and running off; it was not controlled. The project created terraces and waterways to manage the flow of the water down the hillside. It also provided farmers with lime to enrich the soil which was degraded, and access to finance for inputs including fertilizers and seeds, and extension services.

We met with one of the primary groups in this area.

The leader of this group, “Zeal”, was Vedaste.

Vedaste told us:

“Before the project came, this land was marginal and unproductive. The project put in terraces, and provided us with seeds , lime and fertilizers that we pay for after harvest. We got a subsidy for the wheat seeds from the government.

“Now we are working all together.

“In the case of my farm, I took 90 kg of seeds for Irish potatoes, and I harvested 1,250 kg of potatoes. This was seven times better than my previous harvest.

“Our biggest challenge now is that we don’t have cows to eat the fodder that has been planned into the plots and waterways. We also need them for organic fertilizer. We also need access to good quality Irish potato seeds—we need support to link us to good seed providers.

“The benefit of the project is that is brings us together. We didn’t have groups before—we were isolated as individuals.

Umuvitse, the treasurer of the group, said:

“We are very poor. We have a 50% repayment rate on the first harvest but we haven’t sold the seeds yet so we expect to fully repay them.

“We thank all those partners who are supporting us. Before these were marginal lands. Now we are very productive. Now we need to integrate cows.



The top left of the photo shows the mountainside before terracing and the rest, afterwards.



Worksite where farmers are constructing terraces.

2ND SITE – KARONGI

To reach the second site, also in Karongi district, we drove much higher into the mountains. At this site, the terracing had just been completed in some areas, and there was a worksite to construct more terraces. We got to see the project at an earlier stage.

Here, we met a farmer called Jean-Paul. He said:

“Before the project, most of our land was marginal. Before, with everything you do, fertilizer washed down the hill and even crops washed down the hillside. With terraces now we will become more productive. We can really control erosion. We really appreciate the control of erosion to make our land ready for agriculture.

“After all the investment, we think we will have a good result. It will uplift our livelihoods, which were not very good before.”

The chair of this primary group, Damasin, added:

“Before we were just isolated, scattered, not organized. We planted all kinds of crops. We were not organized at all. Now we cultivate together and promote one crop and make a big production and bring it to the market. We are also cultivating fodder on the slopes. For those with cows, they will benefit. Others need cows.

“Before the project came here, farmers didn’t have bank accounts. Now, all the farmers are paid through accounts. We have savings cards, not just cash.

After visiting with these farmers, we walked a ways down the mountain towards a worksite where farmers from the community and nearby area were being paid to dig the terraces, creating employment. Rather than having big companies tender for the work, the government opted for a high intensity man power approach, generating income for the local farmers.

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