



USAID RWANDA INTEGRATED IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM (IILP)  
Ejo Heza "A brighter future"

# QUARTERLY REPORT

Reporting Period: FY12-QTR3 April through June 2012

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# USAID Ejo Heza Program Quarterly Report

## A. Executive Summary

USAID Ejo Heza is a five year program endeavoring to improve the livelihoods of 75,000 rural people through improved agriculture productivity and access to financial services. The program addresses both the demand and supply side of financial services, with strategies to influence behaviors for positive change in the areas of literacy, nutrition, savings, financial services and agriculture extension services. The program runs a health and nutrition component focusing on enhancing access to nutritious foods and proper utilization of available foods. The program benefits from USAID's Feed the Future initiative.

Ejo Heza has seen results across all the program focal points of agriculture, nutrition, savings group formation and basic literacy. Program beneficiaries have been trained in CHF's Integrated Savings and Lending Group (ISLG) methodology and are beginning to make deposits within their groups on a regular basis. Farmers in cooperatives have grown maize with an increased harvest expected in the coming quarter as a result of the technical support of USAID Ejo Heza partner agronomists and the adoption of crop appropriate agricultural techniques. To date, 13,659 farmers have accessed agriculture extension services through trainings provided by USAID Ejo Heza partners.

USAID Ejo Heza is also involved in the Government of Rwanda's (GOR) nationwide nutrition campaign, and aims to link program beneficiaries to nutrition groups and train in agriculture techniques to promote the establishment of kitchen gardens. By June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012; 13,913 individuals had received nutrition training.

Ejo Heza continues to engage 9,300 learners in literacy classes and will graduate its first class in Quarter 4. The USAID Ejo Heza technical team conducted an evaluation of learners in the literacy program, focusing questions on their opinion of the process; i.e. enrollment criteria, use of materials and convenience of the venue. Evaluation results showed that learners were able to read their names and short sentences.

Ejo Heza conducted a financial sector mapping exercise in April 2012. The purpose of the study was to establish prevailing financial services in Rwanda and how they are relevant to Ejo Heza beneficiaries. The study revealed that many training curricula for savings groups and financial education already exist in Rwanda. It recommends enhanced coordination to ensure transparency in the system.

Nutritional programming has been implemented across all Ejo Heza districts. Trainings have included curricula on balanced diets and kitchen garden management. Supporting awareness is a critical aspect of the program since malnutrition can be caused by poor food utilization and limited access. Having a clear understanding of domestic food needs and how to grow and utilize food is a key component of the program and a USAID Feed the Future priority. The first phase of the kitchen garden establishment was launched during this reporting period and will directly address household food needs.

In order for Ejo Heza activities to be sustainable, “Be the Change Volunteers” were identified and trained to facilitate grass root program activities. BCVs helped to train individual beneficiaries and mentor them on different aspects of the program surrounding nutrition, agriculture and savings. The BCVs also play a liaison role between the community and the program to facilitate effective communication and implementation.

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## Table of Acronyms

ADEPR	Association des Eglises des Pentecotes au Rwanda
AEE:	African Evangelical Enterprise
AMFIU	Association of Microfinance Institution of Uganda
AMIR	Association of Microfinance institutions in Rwanda
ASCA	Accumulated Credit and Savings Association
BCVs:	Be the Change Volunteers
CBOs:	Community Based Organizations
COOPEC:	Cooperative d'Eparne et Credit
COP:	Chief of Party
CRS:	Catholic Relief Services
DUHAMIC:	<i>Duharanire amajyambere y'icyaro</i>
FEWSNET:	Famine Early Warning System Networking
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FtF:	Feed the Future
Ha	Hectares
HEA:	Household Economy Approach
IILP	Integrated Improved Livelihood Program
ISLG:	Internal Savings and lending Groups
JADF:	Joint Action Development Forum
KAP:	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
MaFI	Market Facilitation Initiative
MEMS:	Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services
PSI:	Population Service International
RAB:	Rwanda Agriculture Board
RIM:	Resaux inter-diocese des Micro finance
ROSC	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
RPO:	Rwanda Partner Organization
Rwf:	Rwanda francs
SACCO:	Saving and credit Cooperative
SBCC:	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SCC:	Swedish Cooperative Centre
TOT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

## **B. Program Overview and Back ground**

CHF International's USAID Integrated Improved Livelihoods Program, locally known as USAID Ejo Heza (Kinyarwanda for "brighter future"), is being implemented over the next five years, 2011 – 2016, with an aim to improve the livelihoods and food consumption of 75,000 of Rwanda's very poor, particularly women, by building the capacity of low-income households to access financial services necessary to grow their enterprises as well as assist financial service providers to develop and deliver effective products to the rural market. As health and nutrition impact people's ability to be productive, USAID Ejo Heza will also integrate nutrition messaging throughout its program activities as well as promote kitchen gardening and improved food handling to support more nutritious diets. USAID Ejo Heza is being implemented along the following four key elements:

**A. Increased demand for financial services:** USAID Ejo Heza addresses the demand-side issues that limit the use of financial services to improve livelihoods and food consumption by promoting savings and use of credit, financial literacy, basic literacy and numeracy, while expanding access to business development and agricultural extension services.

**B. Increase supply of financial services:** USAID Ejo Heza seeks out, engages and provides targeted support to those financial service providers, including MFIs, SACCOs and potentially commercial banks, with the interest and capacity to expand their outreach and develop products that meet the needs of the rural market, ensuring a more inclusive and holistic financial service sector.

**C. Behavior Change and Marketing:** Behavior change and social marketing approaches sensitize the population on the benefits of financial services, improving production practices, working cooperatively and improving access to health and nutrition services. This will be achieved through model farmers, ISLGs and cooperative members as change agents, already known and respected within their communities, to share and demonstrate how they have improved livelihoods.

**D. Health and Nutrition:** USAID Ejo Heza implements complementary short-term and long-term actions to ensure that the most vulnerable populations attain skills and knowledge that lead to greater food security and greater understanding of diet, nutrition and hygiene—especially within the critical first 1,000 days of newborn children and their mothers. All nutrition activities, coordinated by Save the Children, will be linked closely with both education and extension services delivered by Rwandan partner organizations (RPOs) within this program as well as with the stringent approval requirements of the Government of Rwanda.

## **C. Quarter in Review**

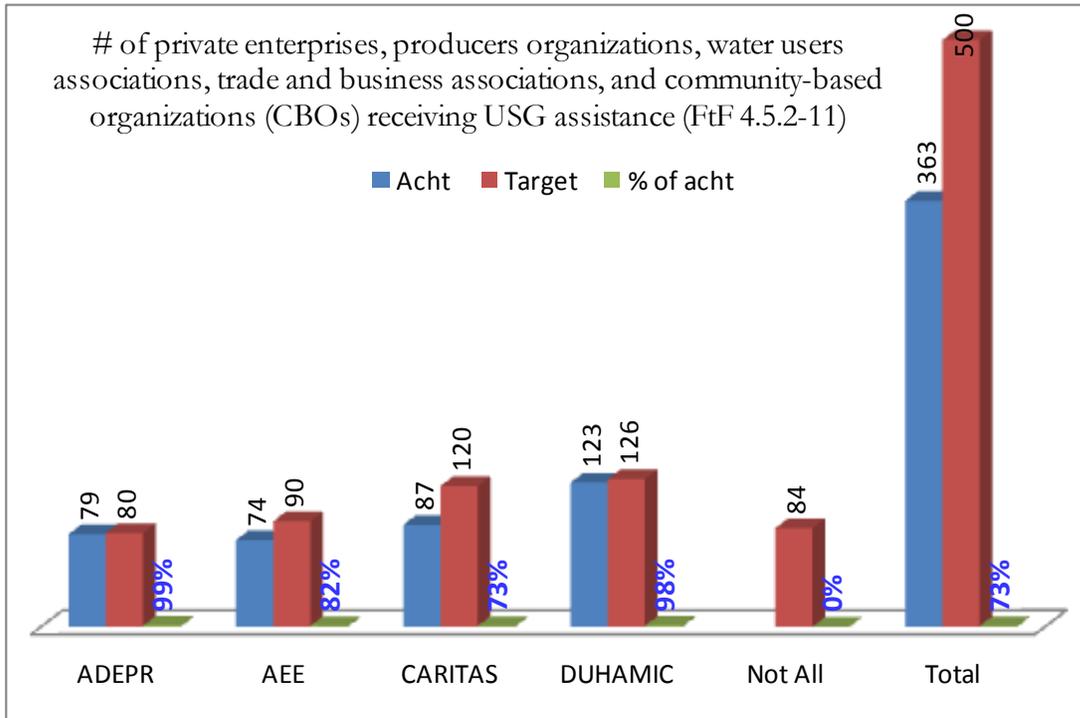
During the course of the quarter a set of activities were undertaken at central, partner and field levels. In April, the first month of Quarter 3, several preliminary program activities were ending and direct implementation was launched. The reporting period witnessed the launch of field activities in agriculture, nutrition and the continuation of literacy teaching in 400 literacy teaching centers. Further, in collaboration with the GOR and development partners, a nationwide nutrition campaign was launched. As an active partner in the campaign, USAID Ejo Heza also managed to accelerate its nutrition component. To date, nutrition community volunteers have been trained and nutrition groups are in place, resulting in 2,100 kitchen gardens in public areas like markets, government offices and health centers. Initial training of trainers (TOT) was conducted to 31 participants from RPOs at health facilities in the program districts of operation, including agronomists from all districts sectors where the program is implemented. After the training, the financial sector mapping study was finalized and disseminated to stakeholders and the quarterly report was submitted. Monitoring tools were designed and shared with partners for enhanced data collection and reporting purposes. Program staff participated in different meetings with partners to share experiences and define working mechanisms together.

## **D. INCREASE DEMAND FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES**

### ***Program element 1.1: Promoting Internal Savings and Lending Group Formation***

Ejo Heza staff provided technical training to RPOs on ISLG bookkeeping procedures, the importance and proper usage of saving and loan management tools, committee member's responsibilities and leadership in savings mobilization. Another set of training offered by RPOs to beneficiaries included the ISLG committee structure which involves a President, Vice President, Treasurer and 2 counters.

In the district of Rutsiro, representatives from 8 groups were trained, 5 of which were newly formed. The amount saved by the members of these groups ranges from 15000 Rwf to 45000 Rwf; the groups have however not started granting loans. The majority of our ISLGs have opened bank account with nearby micro finance institutions such as the SACCO or the Banque Populaire du Rwanda. They make monthly saving deposits and are advised to meet twice a month at minimum.



During April- June, 140 ISLGs were formed and supported through training. As depicted in the graph above, the overall achievement on the creation and support of groups is 73%, while the process is ongoing.



Photo 1: Member of ISLG depositing her weekly savings in Nyanza district; *photo by Ejo Heza*

### ***Program element 1.2: Increasing Financial Literacy***

In its support to the financial sector in Rwanda, USAID Ejo Heza, in conjunction with the Association of Microfinance Institute of Rwanda, organized a five-day master training of trainers (TOT) workshop on financial education from May 28th to June 1, 2012 in Kigali.

The training was based on the globally renowned Microfinance Opportunities Curriculum. The 30 participants at the training were drawn from USAID-Ejo Heza partner organizations, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), financial service providers and supporting institutions. The objective of the training was to create a pool of Master Trainers in financial education that could then roll-out trainings in financial education not only to their staff, but also to beneficiaries or clients.

On the last day of the training, June 1, 2012, a financial education material's exhibition was organized at the Umubano Hotel that drew exhibitions from various financial and development organizations in Rwanda. Some of the local participants included Catholic Relief Services (CRS), German Savings Bank, Equity Bank, Duterimbere Microfinance, AMIR, and the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC). Content adapted and used in the broader East African region whether in audio, video or print was also displayed by organizations such as Association of Microfinance Institution of Uganda (AMFIU), Microfinance Opportunities, TechnoServe and Equity foundation. This provided participants with real examples of content development and adaptation.



Photo 2: Participants checking training materials

### ***Program element 1.3: Improving Basic Literacy and Numeracy***

#### **a. Literacy Evaluation**

For the technical supervision of literacy classes, a visit was conducted primarily to check on the attendance, use of curriculum and the methodology. The evaluation of learners shows an average of 85% were able to read and write with clear understanding of both consonants and vowels. The purpose of the evaluation was to ascertain that learners comprehended the curriculum as anticipated. Note that graduation of this first class is slated for July 2012.



*Photo3: Adult literacy learners practicing reading in Nyagisozi sector of Nyanza district;  
photo by Ejo Heza*

#### **b. Literacy Class Supervision**

For the purpose of monitoring the literacy classes, 86 literacy teaching monitors (70 Male, 16 Female) have been mobilized by the Association des Eglises des Pentecotes au Rwanda (ADEPR). These mentors provide feedback to field officers from literacy centers on a regular basis. Also local leaders are engaged in mobilizing community members to join and stay in classes. One of the suggestions from the literacy center monitors is that an English course be offered. There is ongoing basic literacy enrollment in the existing 400 literacy centers. Learners that enrolled in January will be graduating in July 2012.

As part of USAID Ejo Heza support to ADEPR in the implementation of the literacy component, an evaluation was conducted on the overall progress in the integration of the nutrition components into the curriculum in the Southern and Western provinces.

The field teams evaluated seven literacy and nutrition training sites by talking to focus groups comprised of students and teachers as well as reviewing the progress made on the course materials and physical observations of the training sites.

The task was also intended to motivate learners to continue participating in classes to minimize drop out cases. Some of the strengths of the course highlighted by the respondents were:

- ✓ Learners were excited about the personal and professional opportunities that lay ahead for them and their families. The majority of the learners surveyed wish to become members of, or establish their own, cooperatives or ISLGs after the course concluded.
- ✓ Learners were able to see the course as a “functional curriculum” because of the daily life skills they had acquired such as using a mobile phone, reading the Bible and understanding market road signs.
- ✓ The functional literacy curriculum that combined Ejo Heza trainings inspired behavior change as learners applied financial lessons to their own lives.
- ✓ Learners had adopted the role of peer mentors and were advising one another in areas of literacy and personal issues addressed by Ejo Heza lessons.

### ***c. BCVs Nutrition TOT and Agriculture techniques***

In addition to being program beneficiaries, Be the Change Volunteers (BCVs) are community members who participate in mentoring and basic implementation of program activities at the grassroots level.

The use of BCV aims to make the program intervention more sustainable as BVCs “own” the program in their respective communities. They are trained and contribute to various program areas. In this reporting period 1,029 BCVs were identified and trained to support the program. They contribute in areas of nutrition, cooperatives and ISLGs and agricultural extension services. BCVs were trained and supported by field officers to draw two month work plans. These plans detail their respective activities, controlling duplication of beneficiaries in the community making it easier for field staff to mentor them. They were trained in cooking demonstration, kitchen garden establishments and drafting work plans. Further, BCVs were trained in preparing vegetable nurseries for seeds to be used in the kitchen gardens.

The BCV training focused on specific themes including; 1) Balanced and diversified diet, 2) Breastfeeding, 3) Hygiene, and 4) Introduction to Bio Intensive Agriculture and the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach.

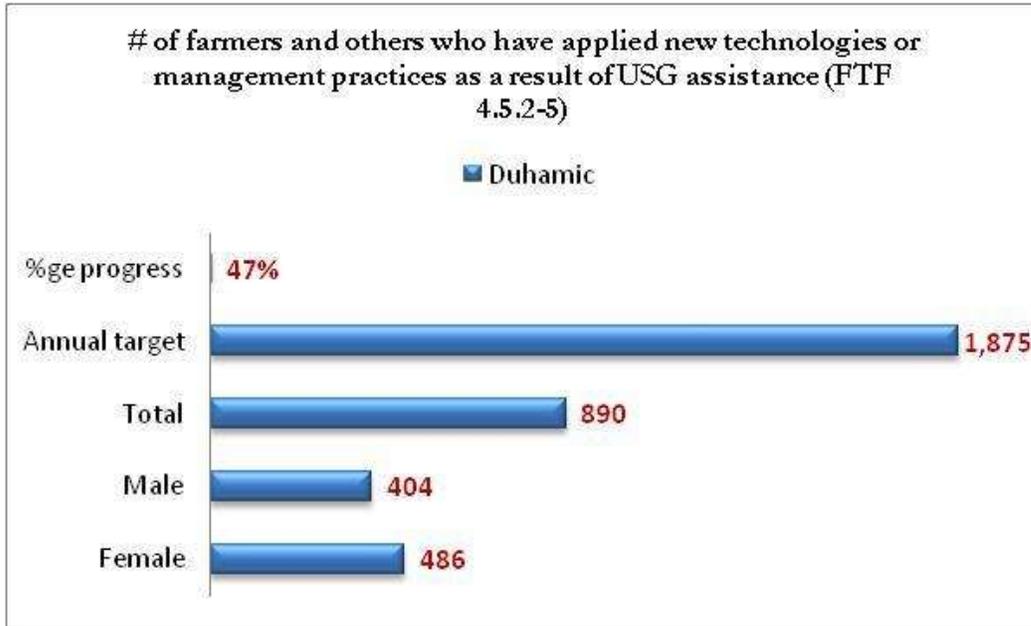
In this reporting period, a host of agriculture activities were accomplished including agriculture extension services provided to farmers and USAID Ejo Heza’s collaboration with the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) to secure improved seeds and distributed them to cooperative farmers.

### ***Program element 1.4.2 Supporting Cooperative Development:***

#### **a. Supporting cooperative development**

During April-June, the process of identifying potential cooperatives to work with USAID Ejo Heza was ongoing. After critical analysis, 28 cooperatives were identified and initial agriculture trainings

commenced. They have been supported with extension services, an activity intended to enhance their



production level. The provision of cooperative support services is distributed across implementing RPOs. The chart below portrays the 28 cooperatives and their respective supporting RPOs.

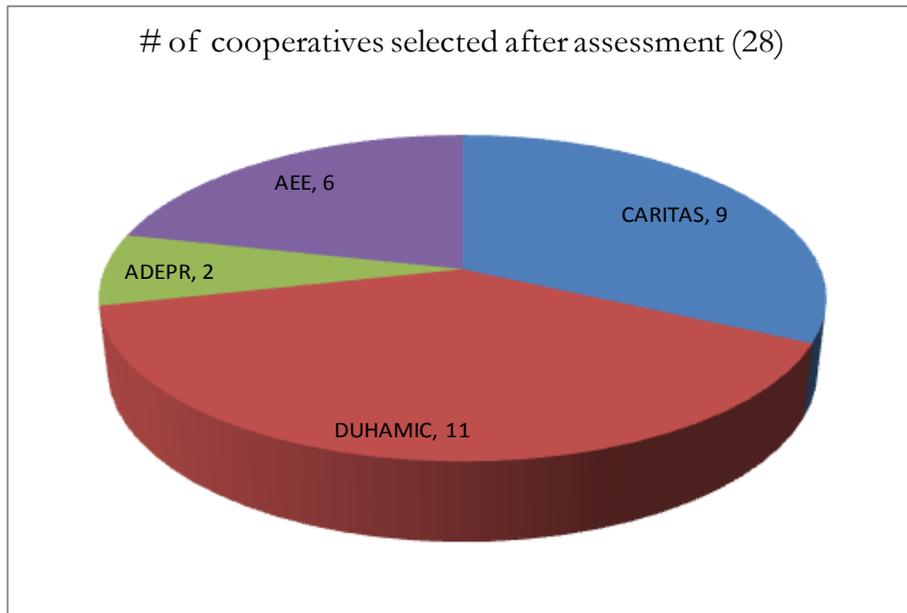


Figure 2: Cooperatives selected by each RPO

They are involved in the program's value chain priorities and have all planted maize in varying size plots.



*Photo 4: Farmers of Duteraninkunga cooperative supported by USAID Ejo Heza in their Maize farm; photo by Ejo Heza*

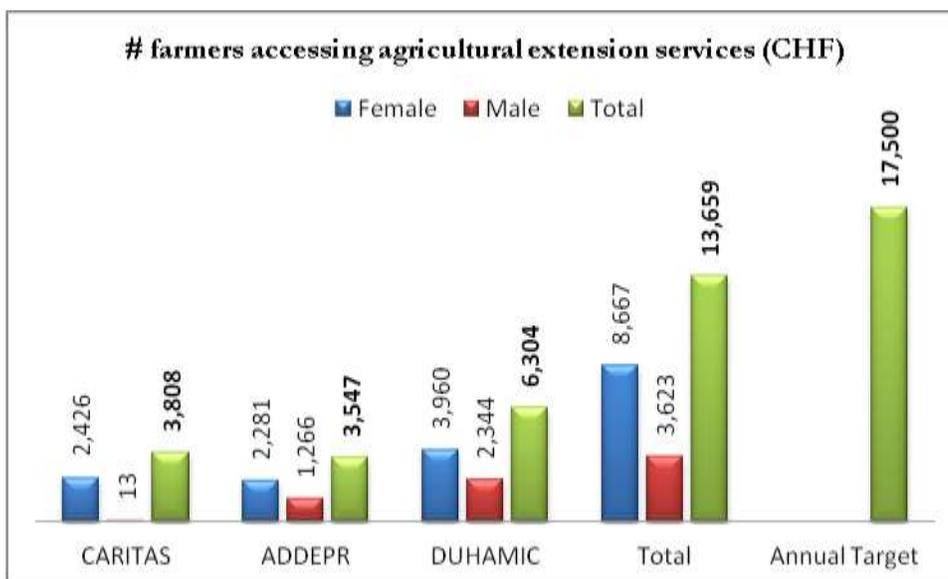
#### ***Program element 1.4.4 Enhancing Productivity through Extension Services:***

##### **i. Farmers applying new technologies**

890 farmers applied new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance in this reporting period. They are all supported by the DUHAMIC (*Duharanire amajyambere y'icyaro*) and are drawn from the districts of Gisagara and Nyanza. This activity is conducted in cooperatives with the overall goal of 1,875 farmers (47%) applying new technologies or management practices in Year 1. The figure below depicts the number of farmers who applied these techniques.

##### ***ii. Agriculture extension services***

During April – June 2012 USAID Ejo Heza provided famers with different extension services trainings, including use of improved seeds and soil conservation. These extension services improved the farmer's crop and productivity. For example, during the torrential rainfall, an estimated 37.5 ha of maize farms were saved from destruction due to better land management techniques.



**Figure 4: # of people accessing agriculture extension services**

## **E. INCREASE SUPPLY OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

### ***IR 2.2 and 2.3: Facilitating financial sector innovation and Supporting Capacity Building.***

#### **i. Financial sector mapping presentation workshop - 3rd April 2012**

During the months of February and March 2012, USAID Ejo Heza commissioned a financial sector mapping study aimed at understanding the supply and demand side of the financial sector in Rwanda as part of its baseline study to inform programming. The supply side issues addressed included financial service providers, their current products and services offered and potential services they could provide; the demand side addressed income and expenditure among the target population and their preference for financial services providers. The AMIR/REMC consortium conducted the study which included formal, informal and innovative financial services as well as reports from NGOs, the government, microfinance institutions and commercial banks. Discussions involved beneficiaries in the USAID Ejo Heza target districts of Nyanza, Gisagara, Nyaruguru, Nyamagabe, Karongi, Rutsiro and Ngororero.

**i. Rationale:** *The purpose of the study was to form a holistic understanding of the financial services and products landscape in Rwanda focusing on the program's districts of operation, the scope for financial linkages available and opportunities or challenges for USAID/Ejo Heza in developing these linkages.*

#### **ii. Objectives**

- 1) To identify factors likely to influence the development of microfinance in the target districts.
- 2) To evaluate the current supply of microfinance services in USAID Ejo Heza target districts.
- 3) To understand the funding needs of clients and the potential demand for microfinance.
- 4) To identify and compare practices of key potential partners.
- 5) To identify institutions supporting financial literacy and learn about their strategy and

methodology, history and a brief assessment of their capacity.

### **iii. Methodology:**

To gather data on the demand, supply and support side of the financial service landscape in Rwanda, qualitative research methods (structured interviews, focus group discussions and a review of reports and policy papers such as Central Bank reports and so forth) were used. Information was collected from the following groupings:

- Current and potential clients (demand side)
- Financial Service Providers (supply side)
- Innovative financial service providers (supply side)
- Institutions providing financial education (enabling environment)
- Government institutions, donors and partners (enabling environment)

To understand the funding needs of clients and potential clients, a client assessment exercise was conducted through 25 focus group discussions.

### **iv. Selection criteria for sampled districts**

The criteria in the table below were used for the selection in deciding among the eight districts of USAID Ejo Heza operation; three districts were chosen as the study sample. The selection emphasized places with less vulnerability, more access to, and potential in, using financial institutions along with more access to disposable income. Through this process the three districts selected were Huye, Karongi and Nyamagabe. Key informants interviewed were both current and potential clients (demand side), financial service providers (supply side), innovative financial service providers (supply side), institutions providing financial education, government institutions, donors and partners (enabling environment).

### **v. Findings of the study**

According to the National Bank Report December 2011, financial institutions in Rwanda are broken down into both formal and informal institutions. The formal institutions include: 11 commercial banks, 66 licensed microfinance institutions including Cooperative d'Eparne et Credit (COOPECs) and non-Umurenge<sup>1</sup> SACCOs, 416 Umurenge SACCOs, *cooperatives, and Amatsinda*.<sup>2</sup>

Further, the study found the following institutions exist in the eight districts of USAID Ejo Heza operation:

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<sup>1</sup> UMURENGE SACCO, is a Saving and Credit Cooperative at every administrative sector of Rwanda. Currently there are 416 Umurenge SACCOs in Rwanda

<sup>2</sup> Amatsinda informal savings groups

*Banque Populaire du Rwanda*, UWALIMU SACCO, Urwego Opportunity Bank, RIM SA, Umurenge SACCOs, Cooperatives, Amatsinda and Ibimina. Duterimbere IMF, Vision Finance Company and Bank of Kigali exist in at least four or more of these districts. Besides traditional banking, a multiple of other innovative banking modalities were found in sampled districts. The study also shows preferences for saving and credit products.

## **F. HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

### ***Program element 4.3: Establishing Kitchen Gardens.***

#### **a. Kitchen garden preparation**

The emphasis of the kitchen garden training was the prevention of micro- and macro-nutrient deficiencies particularly anemia, the promotion of basic hygiene including hand washing, the promotion of the kitchen garden model, the increase of agricultural production and the importance of local food consumption.

The training also discussed themes related to chronic malnutrition in Rwanda, along with the importance of exclusive breastfeeding from 0- 6 month olds, complementary feeding for children 6 to 24 months old, a balanced and diversified diet not only for pregnant and lactating mothers, but all family members, and the nutritional value of local staple foods. 31 participants were trained and created one day demonstration studies in Ngororero district. Some of the participants mobilized the community to establish kitchen gardens and taught them about food utilization. Others worked at health centers where they were responsible for nutrition services. This training was conducted in Muhanga district and offered to members of the African Evangelical Enterprise (AEE), CARITAS, ADEPR and officials from health facilities.

With collaboration from the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), different types of seeds to were distributed to cooperative members to establish nursery beds in household kitchen gardens and in communal areas. 27 nursery beds have been established thus far. After the training each trainee committed to train a minimum of 20 people from the community to promote this simple technique.

### ***Program element 4.4: Promoting Better Food Utilization.***

#### **a. Nutrition campaign**

In order to prepare for the massive campaign on nutrition and attain the anticipated target of 18,750 individuals, a TOT was conducted for both the RPO field staff and health facility representatives in the three districts of Karongi, Ngororero and Rutsiro in the Western Province, but the training attracted trainees from all 8 districts. The objective of the training was to build the capacities of trainers (RPO staff, health workers of hospitals and health centers, nutritionists and BCVs) in basic nutrition and health. The training focused on early and exclusive breastfeeding for children 0-6 months old, complementary feeding for the 6-

24 month olds including weaning, balanced and diversified diets for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers and children up to 24 months old.

### b. Training on nutrition

During this reporting period, USAID Ejo Heza provided training on cooking demonstrations as well as kitchen garden management. Overall, 13,913 people were trained by all RPOs during this quarter.

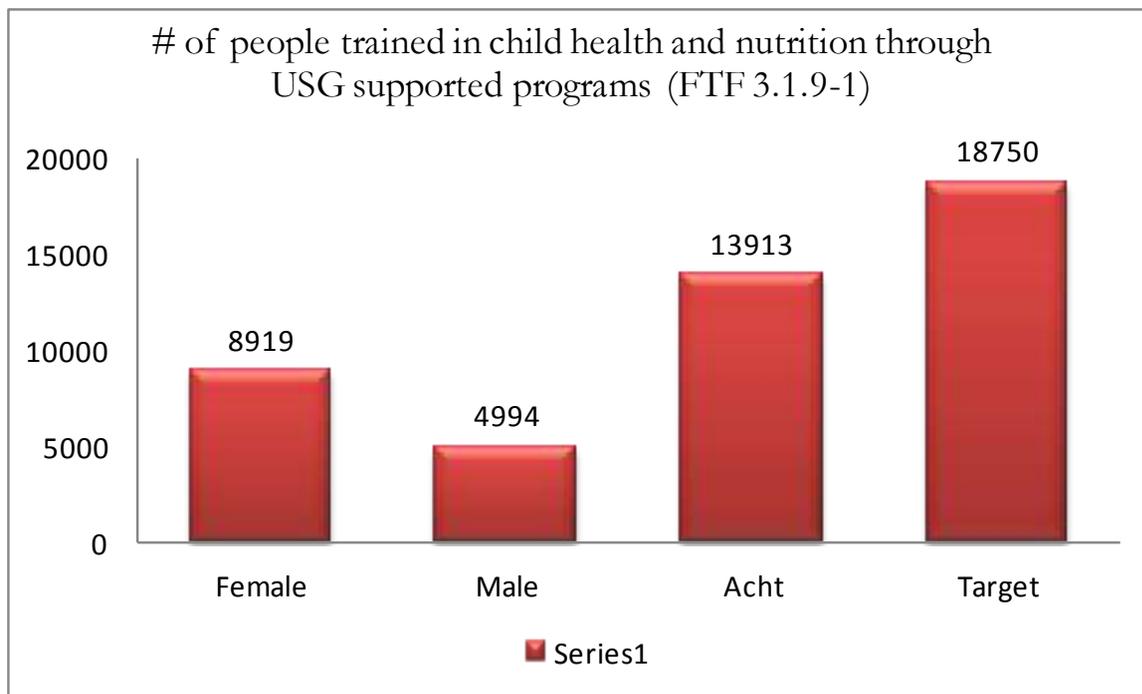


Figure 5: People trained on nutrition

The annual target of this indicator is 18,750 beneficiaries trained; 13,913 of which were trained through an accelerated program where community volunteers trained 20 beneficiaries on average kitchen garden establishment, balanced diets, breastfeeding, and provided cooking demonstrations during four days the last week of June 2012.



Photo 5: Examples of kitchen gardens established by USAID Ejo Heza beneficiaries in Gisagara district.

## **CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

### **G. BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL MARKETING**

In this quarter, a study to design the strategy for behavior change communication was commissioned. A consultant was hired, and the scope of work was finalized with tools to collect primary data meaning data directly collected from beneficiaries after receiving a service. In the coming quarter, data collection and analysis will take place. This will contribute to understanding of the knowledge, attitude and practices (KAPs) on different aspects of the program, particularly nutrition and agriculture. The study will be the basis for the development of the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy. Program and partner staff will be trained on SBCC to be able to manage BCC activities in their respective activities.

### **H. MONITORING & EVALUATION**

#### **i. Quarter Two program report**

A program report portraying Quarter Two accomplishments was generated containing program achievements from October 2011 through March 2012. It included both a narrative and data that was uploaded in the MEMS system.

#### **ii. Tools designing tools**

Various data collection and service provision tools were improved and created depending on the need and data desired by the program. Intake survey tools that capture the profile of program beneficiaries were created and tools relating to group identification were improved. The focus was on tools used to collect and report on agriculture extension services.

#### **iii. Data collection**

Data collection is one of the essential activities used to produce accurate program reports and have information for effective and informed decisions with minimum errors. For this reason, forms were distributed to collect data from individuals and households, mainly from beneficiary groups such as ISLGs, cooperatives and literacy classes. The data collected is entered into the spread sheets for reporting purposes. They are entered and consolidated at the USAID Ejo Heza level to provide the picture of implementation status and manage to provide due feedback. Because the program is in its early stages excel files will be used until a database is created in the coming quarter.

#### **iv. Participation in the Livelihood Zoning**

FEWSNET, along with USAID Rwanda, organized a 3 day workshop on the demarcation of livelihood

zones in Rwanda. The goal of the meeting was to have an up-to-date livelihood zone map with the consensus of implementing partners. The same meeting announced the new deadlines for both reporting and target setting for the upcoming 2013 fiscal year.

#### **v. April and May reporting**

The Monitoring and Evaluation unit assembled both the April and May reports showing program accomplishments during the reporting period. This helped to account for resources and fulfill the mandate to provide feedback with effective and informed advisory services to the program.

#### **vi. Data Quality Assessment**

To ensure quality of program data, data was regularly verified from implementing organizations at both their central offices and districts. During the month of June, a data assessment visit was made to five districts to review data for three of the four RPOs. This assessment emphasized data related to ISLG and literacy.

*Goal:* this exercise aimed at determining whether the data obtained from RPO field offices was the correct type, quality, and quantity to support its intended use.

*Objectives:*

1. To rapidly verify the quality of reported data for key indicators (ISLG & literacy)
2. To verify the ability of data-management systems related to collection and management and to report quality data

The Monitoring & Evaluation Unit conducted a week long data quality assessment on each RPO to verify data quality issues. Several discrepancies related to figures and names of beneficiaries were discovered. We recognized that RPOs made efforts to rectify some errors, but they were not yet fully accurate.

*Solutions proposed*

- i. Collect all data on hard forms from the community and make an accelerated data entry with the support of the M&E team from USAID Ejo Heza. Because RPOs have a lot of data for provided services they were unable to enter this data and meet the reporting deadline; so, to ensure that no data is missed we provided support to accelerate the data entry process and incorporate this data in the quarterly report.
- ii. Correctly fill out all required boxes in the form for the forms to be considered complete.
- iii. Submit rectified versions by July 5th, 2012.
- iv. Conduct the data quality verification every three months and hold a meeting to share feedback with program coordinators.

# **I. External Communications and Partnerships**

## ***i. Partnership Meetings and forums***

USAID Ejo Heza is part of the development fraternity in Rwanda. To clearly fulfill the anticipated role, a strong network is essential at all levels. During this reporting period, several meetings and contacts were made by USAID Ejo Heza staff which included a wide variety of players at various levels namely local, central government and civil society activists. The following are examples of some of the strategic meetings held in Quarter 3:

### ***ii. Ministry of Agriculture and Animals Resources Joint Review Meeting***

This is the line Ministry for the USAID Ejo Heza program. Through an invitation by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, USAID Ejo Heza participated in the agriculture sector proposal budget review for the fiscal year 2012 – 2013. USAID Ejo Heza staff also participated in the Agriculture Sector Working Group meeting since it is a member of the Group.

### ***iii. District Joint Action Development Forum (JADF)***

JADF is a government forum which convenes all development actors in the district to streamline and coordinate different interventions for stakeholders. Through its implementing partners, USAID Ejo Heza is a member of the forum in all eight districts where it operates. RPOs were supported to design work plans with budgets for 8 districts running through December 2012. There was full participation in JADF meetings in different districts. For instance, USAID Ejo Heza was on a committee responsible for reviewing JADF's internal rules and regulations in the Huye district.

### ***iv. Rutsiro District Visit***

The Chief of Party (COP) visited the Rutsiro District to present the program to district authorities and solicit their support of for program. The mayor promised full support towards the Ejo Heza in Rutsiro district. The objectives, activities and targets of the Integrated Improved Livelihood Program (IILP) were explained to the mayor, and the COP requested the program to provide its work plan to the district and commit to providing regular reporting of accomplishments to the district.

### ***v. Reading Day with Imbuto Foundation***

USAID Ejo Heza has a literacy component and it was necessary to coordinate with other institutions doing similar interventions and devise ways of achieving more results. Through an invitation by the Imbuto Foundation, USAID Ejo Heza was represented as their partner on “*Reading Day*”, a day dedicated to the importance of reading in the Rubavu district under the patronage of the First Lady. The main lesson from the day was the need to encourage our target group, especially those that graduate from the literacy program to develop their reading skills.

vi. ***Ministry of Health malnutrition work plan supervision***

Through our Nutrition Advisor, USAID Ejo Heza contributed to the supervision and implementation of the malnutrition work plan in Nyagatare district spearheaded by the Ministry of Health. The primary goal of this supervision is to accelerate the implementation of the nutrition intervention at the district level. Subsequently, the implementation of the plan in Nyagatare has not commenced due to funding constraints. CRS, Population Service International (PSI) and Intra health are responsible for this activity. Nevertheless, the district managed to train multiple committee members at the sector level on hygiene-related activities such hand washing before eating food.

vii. ***Local Inclusive Market Learning Group***

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, CHF international hosted the local inclusive market learning group which is a year old Rwandan group that focuses on learning about implementing inclusive market development.

The local learning group is an informal group comprised of various international and local development organizational staff that regularly meet to network, share initiatives, solve concrete problems, learn from each other and interact. The group is associated with the Market Facilitation Initiative (MaFI) which is an international learning and peer-support network of practitioners, researchers, donors and entrepreneurs working to unleash the power that markets have to be sustainable, resilient and dignified livelihood opportunities to large numbers of marginalized producers.

During the meeting SNV shared their experience in the promotion of the dairy value chain which was useful information for USAID Ejo Heza as we explore ways in which to serve this sector.