INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Gikuriro Program was a five-year USAID-funded Integrated Nutrition and WASH Activity implemented in eight districts (Kicukiro, Nyarugenge, Rwamagana, Kayonza, Ngoma, Ruhango, Nyanza and Nyabihu) between 2016 and 2020 with a goal of improving the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children under five years of age, with an emphasis on the 1,000 day window of opportunity from pregnancy until a child’s second birthday.

Gikuriro directly supported and contributed to the GoR-led efforts to combat malnutrition in Rwanda through its sector strategies and policies such as the Ministry of Health’s (MoH) Third Health Sector Strategic Plan (2012-2018), the Social Cluster’s National Food and Nutrition Policy, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources’ (MINAGRI) Nutrition Action Plan 2013-2018, and National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan 2013-2018, all drawn from the Rwanda Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II for 2013-2018 that is embedded in the Rwanda Vision 2020.

The Program achieved most of its targets and collaborated closely with the GoR entities including NECDP, MOH, RBC and districts to ensure self-reliance and ownership of the initiatives supported under Gikuriro. CRS and its partners delivered on key national strategic frameworks including coordinating the development of National Nutrition, WASH, ECD Social Behavior Change Strategy, revision of CBEHPP roadmap and tools, development of water quality strategy, and designing and developing several social behavior change tools and communication materials over the last four and half years.

The program strengthened the technical and administrative capacity of thousands of service providers, local implementing partners and government structures; established and made functional several community structures including savings groups, farmers field learning groups, community health clubs, village nutrition schools, and school based health clubs to promote nutrition prevention, access to sanitation and hygiene services, improve household livelihood and to rehabilitate children who experienced acute malnutrition.

Through its investments, USAID/Rwanda aimed to improve the health and nutritional status of Rwandans in order to accelerate Rwanda’s progress to middle income status and better quality of life through sustained growth and poverty reduction. Gikuriro was implemented by CRS and its partners including SNV, Faith Victory Association (FVA) and other five local NGOs in close collaboration with national and decentralized GoR structures. The nutrition and WASH packages were implemented in combined manner in five districts whereas in Ruhango, Nyanza and Rwamagana, the program implemented only WASH and district coordina-
In Kayonza District, the program was implemented directly by Faith Victory Association (FVA), which entered in an agreement with Catholic Relief Services in 2016. Gikuriro collaborated and worked with the district leadership to align the Program’s plans with the existing priority to address malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitation issues in a multisectoral and holistic manner. To reach the beneficiaries, the program collaborated with the District Plan to Eliminate Malnutrition (DPEM) committees from the district to the village level and the health facilities (two districts hospitals and 15 health centers) as the key actors in the implementation of government initiatives to improve nutrition, hygiene and sanitation in the community. In Kayonza District, the program was implemented in all twelve sectors (Murundi, Kabare, Gahini, Rukara, Nyamirama, Mukarange, Kabarondo, Rwinkwavu, Munini, Ndego, Murama and Ruramira) of the 50 cells and 421 villages.
Implementation Approach of the Integrated Nutrition and WASH Components

I. The Integrated Nutrition Package

A. Village Nutrition Schools (VNS)

Gikuriro’s approach in nutrition used an adapted version of the Positive Deviance/Hearth (PD/H) methodology called village nutrition schools to promote community-based rehabilitation of malnutrition, cooking demonstrations, nutrition counseling, and growth monitoring and promotion. Gikuriro Program built the capacity of service providers in Kayonza District to achieve improved nutrition outcomes, while supporting improved nutrition and WASH behaviors at the household level. Coordination committees for the District Plan to Eliminate Malnutrition (DPEM) bring together district stakeholders from a range of nutrition-programming sectors. Gikuriro strengthened the capacity of these district structures to plan, monitor, evaluate, report and analyze data for effective implementation of nutrition actions.

In Kayonza, Gikuriro established 472 VNS groups in 10 sectors. 10,343 parents received nutrition education through village nutrition schools. A total of 1,463 under five children were rehabilitated at village nutrition schools. To achieve the objective of fighting malnutrition, Gikuriro Program worked with 472 model mothers, 472 model fathers and 1,684 community health workers.
B. Farmer field learning schools (FFLS)

Agriculture is a key program component integrated with Nutrition, WASH and Economic Strengthening to ensure the sustained improvement of the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children under five years old.

Gikuriro used the Farmer Field Learning School (FFLS) extension approach to promote Bio-Intensive Agriculture Techniques (BIAT), including improved kitchen gardens and the use of bio-fortified crops that are rich in nutrients (Orange Fleshe Sweet Potato rich in Vitamin A, High Iron beans), different types of vegetables, fruit trees (passion fruit, tree tomato and papaya) as well as the promotion of small livestock (chicken, rabbit and pig) to increase protein and micronutrient availability, promote dietary diversity and increase income for vulnerable families.

In FFLS (groups formed by 25 to 30 farmers per group), participants learnt BIATs through demonstration plots to improve soil fertility and increase crop productivity on small plots of land using cheaper inputs (organic manure) as most of households with malnourished children own small arable lands and lack financial means to buy chemical fertilizers. Agricultural activities were done in close collaboration with Government agricultural extension agents (sector agronomists) and Community volunteers (Farmer Promoters) who supported the program to promote the adoption of BIATs at household level by beneficiaries and community members.

In addition, in Kayonza District, three FFLS from Gahini, Ruramira and Kabare sectors were supported by Gikuriro Program to implement fish farming activities to further diversify sources of animal foods to increase protein intake in the targeted households with children under five years and pregnant and lactating women that are affected or at risk of malnutrition.

A total of 409 field learning schools were created across the district. These were supported by 51 farmer promoters who were trained on BIATs. 7009 small livestock (chicken, rabbits and pigs) were distributed to beneficiaries to help them access fertilizers and at the same time improve their nutrition by eating meat and eggs.
C. Saving and Internal Lending Communities (SILC)

Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) is a savings group model developed by Catholic Relief Services (CRS). SILC groups are user-owned, self-managed savings and credit groups that are accessible, transparent and flexible. A SILC group typically comprises 15-30 self-selecting members, and offers a frequent, convenient and safe opportunity to save; helps members build useful lump sums that become available at a pre-determined time; and allows them to access small loans or emergency grants for investment and consumption. SILC groups build upon, and reinforce, social bonds among community members. The methodology can be easily implemented by generalist, grassroots organizations, and is well-suited to integration with other development interventions.

In Kayonza, Gikuriro initiated 538 Saving and Lending Communities (SILC) groups, with a membership of 12,392 to promote the culture of saving and income generating among members of village nutrition schools. The cash saved could be used to support adoption of WASH practices and to increase household income as well as utilization for nutrition purposes in the households. SILC groups saved over 180 million Rwf as of June 2020. Meanwhile, SILC groups within CHCs saved 86,136,355 Rwf by June 2020. As a result of saving and lending, 6170 SILC group members started income generating activities.

Success story: The secret of saving

Ms Clemetine Mukashyaka’s story is a testimony that with little money and good management skills one can succeed in business. Ms Mukashyaka, a member of a village Saving and Internal Lending Community (SILC) in Kayonza Town, is a vegetable vendor in the nearby Market. “I started selling vegetables in September 2017 with capital of 5000 Rwf,” she said. “My capital has since risen to 50,000 Rwf.”

Because of her hard work, she earns at least 12,000 Rwf, the amount enough to cater for the needs of her son and help her husband to pay house rent. “My son gets everything he needs because I earn a steady income”, she said. She can save 2,100 Rwf every week in the SILC. Her job has also contributed to better feeding for her family. She said: “I don’t buy vegetables at home because I take some from my stall. So, we can eat vegetables every day.” Apart from looking after her family, Ms Mukeshimana and her husband, a hawker in Kayonza Taxi Park, bought a plot of land for 400,000 Rwf, to which she contributed 200,000 Rwf from her savings. “We are planning to start the construction of our house”, she said.
II. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Packages

A. CBEHPP implementation approach

Gikuriro scaled up the GoR’s Community based Environmental Health Promotion Plan (CBEHPP) across the 12 sectors of Kayonza, reaching all households in the 421 villages. The rollout included cascaded training to hundreds of community health club (CHC) facilitators; providing technical support and training to environmental health officers and partner WASH staff; printing and distributing CBEHPP guides and tools to all villages, and following up and motivating families and member of CHCs to adopt optimum sanitation and hygiene practices.

Over 29000 households were targeted in Kayonza for the implementation of the CBEHPP package that improved the sanitation and hygiene outcomes at households and community levels. To this effect and through CBEHPP, 421 CHCs were established and supported to stay functional; 1,684 CHC facilitators were trained on CBEHPP; over 38,000 sanitation facilities and 38,000 handwashing facilities were constructed and renovated through the CHC structures. CHC facilitators continued to support CHC members to cover the learning of the content of the CBEHPP modules and practices adoption at home.

Vulnerable households that could not complete the specific assignments requiring inputs, for example latrine construction, were supported by Gikuriro with iron sheet (2700 households received 2 iron sheets each) and 200 households received iron sheets for animal shelters. Various complementary support were given such as increasing access to safe drinking water storage by provision of jerricans to store drinking water to 10,590 households.

To sustain hand washing practices in the families, 300 CHC members were trained to produce liquid soap, to be used at home but also as an income generating activity.
B. Water supply system

With expansion of its scope and allocation of additional resources from USAID towards end of the third year, Gikuriro integrated water supply hardware interventions into the package and supported the community and GoR to construct a significant number of infrastructure that improved access to over 25,956 people in Kayonza District. Gikuriro advocated to the donor for an increased access to water supply to strengthen and enhance achievements reached with the implementation of the CBEHPP. USAID responded positively and provided additional fund for construction of water supply infrastructure. To this effect, Gikuriro achieved the following high-level results during implementation period: Thirty-six (36) water infrastructures; 8 boreholes, 13 water kiosks, 15 water springs, were constructed and improved access to water for over 25,956 people in Kayonza District.

C. COVID 19 response

The COVID 19 pandemic affected the whole world and called for Governments, UN agencies, international and local NGOs, Civil society organizations to join forces to combat the pandemic. USAID Gikuriro Program responded nationally by supporting access to hand washing facilities. In Kayonza in particular, 4 hand washing stations were constructed at health centers in Mukarange, Nyamirama, Rukara and Murundi Sectors. Furthermore, USAID Gikuriro strengthened social behavior change by pushing WASH and COVID prevention voice messages and sms to around 2500 beneficiaries from Kayonza District.
D. School Health Interventions

Gikuriro Program recognizes that schools offer an opportunity for social behavior change and young people, if well capacitated, not only can change and adopt good health practices but can also be agent of changes in their communities. In this line, Gikuriro supported Groupe Scolaire Kabarondo and Groupe Scolaire Kabura in Kabarondo Sector and Groupe Scolaire Ndego in Ndego Sector with various school interventions: creation of School Health Clubs (SHC) and construction of VIP latrines and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) rooms commonly called in Kinyarwanda “Icyumba cy’umukobwa”

Within SHC, Teachers and students facilitating the SHC activities were trained in Hygiene and sanitation and SHC management to enable them to ensure functionality of the SHC, reach out to their fellow students, their homes and the surrounding communities.

To improve hygiene and sanitation in those schools, Gikuriro constructed VIP latrines blocks with 6 toilets for boys, 6 toilets for Girls, 2 for teachers with gender consideration and 1 for the people with disability. A MHM room was constructed, equipped with a bathroom, hygiene and sanitation material, beds and bed linen for the girls to use and rest if needed. Safe disposal of used sanitary pads was taken into consideration and incinerators were annexed to the MHM rooms.
Success story 1

Poultry farming raises standard of living of a community health worker

Theogene Uwintije, a 32-year old community health worker in Musumba Village, Nyamirama Sector, Kayonza District has a successful poultry project, thanks to small loans from a saving and internal lending community (SILC) of which he is a member.

“I started with ten hens and a rooster, each bought at 5,000 Rwf. These produced 80 chicks after one month”. He reared the 80 chicken by five months and sold them at 320,000 Rwf, earning a profit of 220,000 Rwf after deducting costs of feeds and medicine.

Subsequently, he bought 200 chicks at 1000 Rwf each and sold them at five months, earning a profit of 520,000 Rwf. Again he bought 300 chicks, which he sold at 7k after four months, earning 2,100,000 Rwf.

Uwintije testifies that his lifestyle has tremendously improved. “Before joining the saving group my family was living in a small mud and wattle house roofed with only sixteen iron sheets,” he said. “The house was very small for my family and it was difficult to host visitors.” He has since bought two plots of land and a four-bedroom house.

Thanks to his regular income from the poultry business, Uwintije pays health insurance in time for his family of four. He also saves with Ejo Heza, the government’s initiative to help Rwandans save for old age. He reveals that hygiene at his home has improved after he constructed a good latrine at 200,000 Rwf.

His dream is to buy a motorbike to simplify the marketing of his chicken, because currently he uses a bicycle.
Menstrual management rooms funded by USAID/Gikuriro Program have improved the hygiene of girls, restored their confidence and improved school attendance. “Girls used to miss school whenever their menstruation started, but currently, no one misses because this menstrual management room has all the facilities we need,” said Marie Goreth Umutoni, the head girl of Groupe Scolaire Nyarugenge, located in Burima Cell, Kinazi Sector, Ruhango District. At least 608 girls from both the upper primary and secondary school sections use the MHM.

“Women use the room between 1st and 15th of every month. 30 - 35 girls use the room between 26th - 30th and 5 - 10 between 14th - 25th,” she said.

Soap making for income and hygiene

It is 3pm. A group of about thirty men and women, all members of Bitoma village community health club have gathered to work together making liquid soap. Bitoma village is situated in Kinzovu Cell, Kabarondo Sector, Kayonza District. The club has 101 from 100 households. Six members of the club learned soap making skills with support of Gikuriro Program in December 2018.

According to Ms Juliet Ingabire, the facilitator of the CHC, access to liquid soap has greatly improved hand-washing in the community. “Before we started making liquid soap, only 59 out of 100 homes in our village had tippy taps. The number has since risen to 90 because bottled liquid soap is easier to preserve,” she said.

She revealed that there is ready market for the soap in supermarkets in Kabarondo Town and health centers. “But first of all, we use it for handwashing and cleaning in our homes.” The CHC sells liquid soap at a subsidized price to its members. “They use it for handwashing, mopping, washing clothes and utensils,” she said.

Background

In December 2018 Gikuriro Program supported the soap making training of 90 members of community health clubs from Ngoma, Rwamagana and Kayonza Districts. Other participants in the training were WASH officers, sanitation and hygiene officers and environmental health officers from the same districts. The trained members of community health clubs are expected to train members of their communities.
Pictorial
1. Children wait for a meal prepared by their mothers during a village nutrition school session.
2. Mothers prepare food during a VNS session.
3. A woman makes crafts. Mothers sell their handicrafts and earn some income which they use to buy nutritious food, pay mutuelle de sante and save in a SILC group.
4. Members of a SILC group in Mukarange Sector hold a weekly meeting.
5. Women work together on a pit latrine belonging to an elderly member of their community health club.
6. Children share a meal served by their mothers during a VNS session in Rwangabarezi Village, Nyamirama Sector.
Results and impact of Gikuriro in Kayonza District

USAID/Gikuriro Program achieved the following detailed results during the implementation period:

Support to DPEM Coordination

- DPEM 307 Participated in a one-day orientation meeting for village DPEM coordination committees on roles and responsibilities
- 1524 attended biannual coordination meetings with sector, cells and villages committees

VNS

- 429 VNS groups initiated in the sectors of the second cohort and others covered by IPA for comparison research
- 1279 Children were rehabilitated from malnutrition
- 121 SPEM committee members were trained on leadership skills, time management and resources mobilization. 300 CPEM committee members trained on roles and responsibilities
- 1123 PLs were trained on MIYCN
- 285 CHWs were trained on VNS methodology and 188
- 1116 PLs were trained on Positive Parenting
- 6 Sectors have conducted VNS exchange visit to learn from advanced groups
- 50 Best VNS group were awarded with rain water tanks
- 180 Best performing CHWs were awarded with goats
- 421 Villages were supported by Gikuriro to conduct cooking demonstration
- 126 HC service providers were oriented on taking anthropometric measurement for MCH week
- 1240 CHWs were oriented on taking anthropometric measurement for MCH week
- 48,000 (90%) of all under five children were screened during MCH week
- 335 Nutritionists from Kayonza Health centers met to analyze barriers preventing pregnant women to consume (IFA)
- 11 Cooking demonstration material kits were provided to VNS groups
Achievements in the Agriculture component

- 94 FFLS facilitators from villages covered IPA comparison research trained on FFLS and BI-ATs. 475 Farmer Promoters and 51 New Farmer Promoters trained on BIATs, diseases and pest control
- 321 Groups received Small Livestock grant of 140,000 Frw per group to enable purchase livestock
- 381 FFLS group members were awarded through FFLS competitions
- 18 FFLS members were trained on Fish Farming and 4 FFLS groups started fish farming
- 475 Groups received 581,000 Vines of Orange Sweet Potatoes seeds
- 475 Groups received seeds of High Iron beans
- 480 Households of Nyamirama and Ruramira planted 50,000 cassava leaves cuttings
- Gikuriro supported 409 FFLS groups
- 7009 Small livestock distributed through off-spring sharing and SILC loans
- 83,160 (Papaya, tree tomatoes and passion seedlings) were distributed to 9,240 Gikuriro beneficiaries
- 3210 beneficiaries received small livestock including 362 pigs, 5054 chicken and 2302 rabbits

Achievements in the WASH component

- 10,590 best performing CHC members selected in 353 villages of Kayonza were supported with Jerrycans with which are being used to store clean drinking water
- 421 CHCs were established in Kayonza
- 1,684 CHC Facilitators trained on CBEHPP
- 300 CHC representatives trained on liquid soap production
- 200 HHs received iron-sheets for animal shelters
- 6 CHCs, 3 per sector were awarded 21,600,000 Frw and 3745 CHCs were graduated
- More than 2701 Vulnerable families supported with iron sheets