It is no surprise to see that Send a Cow Rwanda is having a remarkable impact.

Its approach fits naturally in Rwanda. By providing livestock, it mirrors Rwanda’s culture of *girinka*, in which dairy cows are given as a sign of gratitude or respect. By bringing communities together on common goals, Send a Cow Rwanda supports the national drive to reconciliation.

So when the Rwandan Government launched its ‘One Cow Per Poor Family’ programme in 2006, which aims to reduce poverty and malnutrition among 350,000 households, it was natural that Send a Cow Rwanda would become one of the delivery partners. We are now also receiving funding for a new project under the government’s Fonerwa scheme for a greener, more resilient Rwanda.

I am delighted to see the synergy that is created when government, agencies such as Send a Cow Rwanda, funders such as UK Aid and others, communities and farming families work together – strengthening the process of reconciliation. Families are increasing their confidence and eating better; rural communities are becoming enterprising and resilient.

Rwanda has come a long way in recent years in tackling poverty, against a tragic, historic backdrop. But it faces many challenges in the coming years, particularly from climate change.

I am confident that Send a Cow Rwanda will continue to play a vital role in helping rural communities collaborate, adapt, grow, and thrive. I am grateful to all of those who work with us to make this happen.
About our impact in Rwanda

By Angelique Barongo, Send a Cow Rwanda Programme Manager

Families in Rwanda supported by Send a Cow are full of optimism. Where once they lived divided, in poverty and in hunger, they are now making money, eating better, and building a more sustainable future together.

This report shows the often dramatic impact that our three-year, holistic, knowledge-intensive training programmes have on some of the world’s most marginalised people. It demonstrates how:

1. Our work enables smallholder farming families to end poverty and hunger – while improving the environment. Before our projects, fewer than one in five is food secure; afterwards, it’s almost nine in 10. Incomes rise to well above the national average. Their healthcare, housing, hygiene and education are all better.

2. Our work puts poor people in charge of their lives. We do not provide families with many material resources, other than livestock if they need it. Instead, we show them how to optimise what they already have. People develop the confidence, skills and community support they need to build sustainable farms, diversify their income, and reach reliable markets. Working across the community, they learn to work inter-dependently as one.

3. Our work taps into impressive levels of community engagement. We work through self-help groups whose members provide support for one another. This builds on the national system of umuganda (monthly community work schemes), which is part of the drive to post-genocide reconciliation that has helped build the forward-looking country in which we live today.

4. Farming families get rapid returns for investing in our projects. Their self-esteem and confidence – essential building blocks for their development – blossom within just six months.

5. Our impact lasts. The ‘after’ data for this report was collected from groups who had graduated two years previously. Their achievements across the board were still robust. This bodes well for their future resilience to the stresses of climate change.

6. Our work builds on a strong basis provided by the Rwandan Government in many areas. Poor families have relatively good access to education and healthcare. Our work at the family and group levels complements the government’s work at the community and national levels.

This report shows that families, communities and countries can change. Governments, NGOs and communities can work together. Poverty and hunger can be beaten. I thank everyone who is helping to make this happen: donors, partners, staff, volunteers, officials and, of course, the farmers.

“Farming families get rapid and lasting returns for investing their time in our projects”
Building confident hope

Poor people often have more resources than they realise. We begin our work with poor families and communities by exploring this together.

We explain how even barren backyards can produce vegetables. We discuss how any animals they own can become more productive, and how their manure can be used to enrich poor quality soil.

Most of all, we encourage people to believe in themselves. No matter how poorly educated they are, they have the potential to learn. No matter how poor, communities can support one another. Farming families start to believe they do have the power to change their lives, and can break free from a hand-to-mouth existence and the fear of destitution. We help them develop a vision of where they want to be, and how to get there. Hope gives families and communities reason to invest their energies into our projects.

About our impact

Send a Cow Rwanda began work in 2001, with our head office in Kigali. We work with smallholder farming families in community self-help groups. Our approach is based on:

Hope: Farmers explore their available resources – personal and material – and learn how they can optimise them to change their lives. They develop the confidence in a better future needed to invest time and energy into our programmes and their farms. Community groups agree a shared vision for the future.

Means: Farmers learn skills to increase farm yields while improving the environment. We provide dairy cows, goats, bees or seeds where necessary. Families decide together how to use their resources, increasing spending on education, health, and homes.

Future: Aspirations rise. Families save money, diversify their incomes, and seek more sustainable markets. Groups take action in their communities, and pass on skills and offspring of their gift livestock. They ‘graduate’ from our programmes, but continue to work and progress together.

This report is based on three sets of data, collected in late 2014/early 2015:

1. ‘Before’ data: 197 farmers beginning projects funded through the Rwandan Government’s environment and climate change fund Fonerwa. Randomly selected out of a possible 600 households.

2. ‘Progress’ data: farmers currently involved in projects funded by UK Aid. Fifty-five people were surveyed at the six month stage; 71 people at the one year stage; and 70 people at the two year stage. Randomly selected out of a possible 707 farmers.


% with good self-esteem

Within just six months, the number of people with good self-esteem (scoring over 15 on the Rosenberg scale) jumps by 111%.

This figure stays high throughout the project, with 94% rated as having good self-esteem after they graduate – up from 44% at the start.

For more about our data, go to www.sendacow.org/our-impact
Are you confident you can provide enough food and income for your family’s needs from your farm?

Before

- 38% no confidence
- 36% little confidence
- 22% very confident

One year

- 12% very confident
- 30% confident
- 41% little confidence

After

- 6% completely confident
- 51% confident
- 14% very confident

Happiness with life rises by 61%, while happiness with family life is up 103%. More harmonious family relations mean greater ability to plan and work together.

After the project, confidence in providing for the family has risen by 181%, from 27% to 76%.

The remaining 24% who have little or no confidence may feel they do not have enough land; many have plot sizes of just 0.2 hectares.

These people should benefit from our work helping people diversify their incomes (see p9).
Women and decision making

Projects work best when everyone is fully engaged in their design and delivery. As the confidence of farmers rises, so too does their ability to speak up and make more informed decisions about how to use their resources, and what action to take.

Families learn to pull together, and self-help groups discuss common challenges and plans.

Women – who make up two-thirds of self-help group members – learn to speak up; and men learn to listen. People discover that by pulling together, and sharing workloads and resources, their farms can thrive – for the benefit of their families and communities.

The status of women in Rwanda has changed in recent decades. Since the genocide, women have contributed to, and often led, the reconciliation process.

Many households are headed by widows. The Rwandan Government is proud of its record on gender issues.

We aim to reach those truly marginalised women who have been left behind and help them take part in community and public life. This is an element of our programmes we have strengthened considerably in recent years. We believe that future impact surveys will reflect this.

Women who feel comfortable speaking in public

This shows answers from women only. The number of those comfortable/very comfortable speaking in public rises by 89%. By the end of our projects, most women are able to make their voices heard in their self-help groups and wider community.

People who think women can influence decision makers

A third of those asked before our projects (men and women) thought that women could influence decision makers a lot or fully. That figure rises 51%. Women are beginning to be recognised.
Women’s participation in household decision making

Before: 43%
After: 89%

Women who can make autonomous decisions

Before: 46%
After: 68%

We ask women who makes decisions about household and farm matters such as expenditure, type of crops to grow, and how to raise livestock. Most women say they are able to contribute to such decisions, up 107%. Two-thirds say they could also take these decisions autonomously, up 48%. See www.sendacow.org/our-impact for more details.
Rwanda has serious levels of hunger, with about 30% of its people undernourished according to the Global Hunger Index 2014. Yet farmers in our projects can build thriving farming systems, based around sustainable organic agriculture, that enable the vast majority to feed their families.

They diversify their diets too, introducing animal protein and nutrient-rich vegetables. Before our work, only 40% have a balanced diet, eating more than six food types each day; after, it is 90%.

Freed from hunger and the fear of hunger, parents can put their energies into developing their farms. Their children are less likely to grow up stunted, and can focus at school.

Levels of food security rise by 383%, measured according to the widely-used Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS).

People were asked what their families had eaten in the past 24 hours. The number eating protein-rich dairy rises by 1200%. There are also drops in consumption of the cheaper staple foods, such as tubers and beans.
Rwanda is one of the world’s poorest countries, although poverty is declining. Families in our projects start producing enough food for themselves and a surplus to sell. Each dollar also goes further: they spend less on food, have clearer plans, and learn money management skills.

Average incomes rise from $150 to $798 per annum, or $0.4 to $2.2 per day. This means our work takes people from well below the average national annual income of $650 (World Bank, 2014), to well above it. Most, of course, still want to earn more: satisfaction with incomes rises from 17% to 46%.
Rwandan communities have relatively good rates of access to clean water and sanitation. This is partly thanks to *umuganda* – the compulsory monthly community work schemes.

Send a Cow’s work complements these community schemes at a household level. We teach people about home hygiene and water treatment, and show them how to install tip-tap handwashers. Group members take it in turn to help one another dig pit latrines. This work at a household level improves standards of public health, benefiting the whole community.

There are high baselines figures in most areas. Nonetheless, the ‘after’ figures suggest that our work is reaching some of the most marginalised people who had been left behind by national advances. All homes have latrines at the end of the project, though these may lack proper doors to provide privacy or concrete slabs around the drop hole, for example.
Rwanda has good government services in the areas of education and health. It has the highest primary school enrolment rates in Africa, and a national health insurance scheme.

Our work helps families benefit fully from these. Their increased sense of self-worth and belief in a better future mean they give a higher priority to their health and education. They can also pay associated costs such as transport; or can afford low-cost private school fees.

There is a 43% rise in satisfaction with access to health services; and a remarkable 123% rise for satisfaction with children’s education. The sharpest rise comes within the first six months, suggesting that these are among the first things that families pay for with their increased incomes.
Homes & Assets

With money comes choice. Improving housing is one of the first choices that people make: replacing mud homes with brick and thatch roofs with tin, and creating separate sleeping areas for boys, girls and their parents.

They can also choose what to buy for the household, improving their quality of life and enabling them to further grow their farming businesses. They buy comfortable bedding to replace grass mats, improving the quality of their sleep; bicycles to enable them to reach new markets with their produce; and radios and mobile phones to keep them informed and connected with the wider world. Owning such assets also increases families’ resilience, as they can if necessary be sold in times of drought or illness.

The number who describe their homes as in good condition rises by 174%. Poor quality homes can have mud walls and leaking grass roofs; good quality homes will be made of brick with tin roofs, keeping the family sheltered from rainfall and safe.

Asset ownership

By improving their means of communication and transport, farming families are able to develop their enterprises further. Radio ownership is particularly striking, up 79%.
Ancille & Fabien’s story

Just one year after starting work with us, Ancille and Fabien are eating better, educating their child, and planning their future.

Training has been key. Improved hygiene awareness means better health. Savings and credit skills are helping them with their joint bank account, from which they pay school fees for their youngest son. Ancille rates gender training as particularly helpful, as Fabien now helps her with collecting firewood and cooking meals.

Together, the couple – in their 60s – are building a thriving farm. Send a Cow gave them three goats; they now have eight. They are composting the manure to boost their harvests, have set up covered nursery beds, and pass on seeds to neighbours. With the income from vegetable sales, they have bought a calf.

Now they are making further plans. They want a tank to harvest water, and hope to set up income generating activities for an easier retirement.

This family’s success is mirrored at the group level. Together, the Abashyizehamwe group is finding better markets for livestock, saving money, and advocating for more support – including training for others in their community.

They are confident that, by working together, they will achieve even more in the coming years.

“A wide range of technical, social, financial and organisational measures resulting from Send a Cow’s work were identified which have contributed to strengthening farmers’ climate resilience.

Using such measures in an integrated, knowledge-based/learning-by-doing manner is providing an effective approach to addressing the different aspects of climate resilience (shocks, variability, longer term gradual change) while making a positive if small contribution to mitigation.”

Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, quoted in Building Resilience, Send a Cow 2015.
Enterprise & savings

At the end of our projects, the vast majority of farmers are selling produce and saving money. The number who describe themselves as casual labourers or unemployed has dropped from 34% to 5%. More farmers are diversifying their income sources: 26% have more than four income generating activities, compared with 10% before.

This diversity, plus their savings, increases families’ resilience to shocks such as illness or natural disasters.

And it is not just these farmers who will benefit: they will pass on their skills to others in the community, employ people on their farms, spend money in their local economy, and educate their children so they can achieve even greater things.

Selling produce

By the end of our project, 96% of farmers have something to sell – up from 83%. They are moving away from selling to traders and hawkers, and selling directly at local markets. A small minority – 8% - are in cooperatives, enabling them to get a better price for their produce, and giving them clout to advocate for better services. We are already increasing our work in supporting groups to establish cooperatives, so our impact in this area will grow.

“So far I think the savings and credit and income generation training has been the most helpful. Once I have increased my savings a little I will combine this with a small loan and start a chicken project. Before working with Send a Cow I couldn’t imagine myself as a businesswoman but now I am sure I can make it happen!”

Norah, farmer in UK Aid funded project
Average savings, among families who have savings, have increased more than three-fold. This suggests that farmers can now invest in their farms, or save money in a bank account to protect themselves against shocks such as drought and increase their resilience.

Savings activities per family

There are high levels of saving in Rwanda, thanks in part to government backing for a variety of savings schemes. After working with us, 88% of farmers are saving, against 66% before, representing a 33% rise. The farmers are also saving in a greater number of different ways; are less reliant on relatively informal schemes such as table banking; and are keeping their savings within schemes run by their self-help groups, which implies an increased trust in their neighbours.

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Afterword

These remarkable findings are good news for farmers in Rwanda. They give us the confidence to build on what we have already achieved, find more ways to reach the very poorest families, strengthen communities, raise funds, and bring hope to marginalised people.

They are also good news for farmers in Burundi. Like Rwanda, Burundi has suffered years of unrest. But unlike Rwanda, there has been little investment in rebuilding it. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world; and the hungriest (Global Hunger Index 2014).

Send a Cow is now beginning work in Burundi, with a new team drawing on the invaluable expertise of colleagues in Kigali. I am privileged to head both teams. Sadly, we have to proceed with caution: in 2015, Burundi again has suffered unrest. But Send a Cow’s pilot schemes here are already helping families build their farms.

We want to see these communities grow together, flourish and spread hope. I am hopeful that, with your support, we will soon be able to bring you data from Burundi that illustrates just that.

Thank you.

Andre Nsengiyumva
Send a Cow Rwanda/ Burundi
Country Director