

JANUARY-MARCH 2018

Greetings from Kenya

Receive warm greetings from Kenya! The 2018 year started well in most countries of East Africa having peace. God has been faithful to us and we have a period of good rains with a promise of a bountiful harvest in May this year. We have witnessed God's blessings and protection in many ways. We continue praying for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan as they wait for God's intervention. May Gods favor be with you all in 2018 year!

Food security project empowers women

In Africa and other parts of the developing world, women comprise 85% of the total smallholder force and are largely responsible for food security at the household level. Usually men sell the farm produce, manage most of the household income and are often responsible for deciding what to plant and where to plant it. Women, on the other hand, cannot make such important decisions in the presence of their male partners.

In Africa, CBM has four Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) food security projects in DRC(2), in Rwanda(1), in Kenya(1) and 2 relief projects in South Sudan. Currently we are working with lead farmers (LFs) who are in charge of 10 of their neighbouring beneficiary farmers. LFs were selected from beneficiary farmers who were early adopters and farmers who were ready to spend time in training their fellow farmers. The project has taken time to give intensive training to LFs who in

return have been able to reach out to their neighbours in an effective way. We realized that



Figure 1: Lead farmers (in orange T-shirts) in Kirehe project, Rwanda.

farmers were ready to listen more to one of their own. The project also realized that by working with LFs was also another way of project sustainability within the village. Once the project comes to an end and the field supervisors move elsewhere, there will still be skilled people left in the community. The trainings that have taken place in the last few years were more of changing the mindset of the people rather than those that are just giving 'handouts'. We all know that 'handouts' make people more dependent on the project instead of empowering them. The project has taken time to build capacity to the current field staff through seminars and workshops within and outside their countries with special focus on women empowerment.

Regardless of age, religion or color, women still struggle for their presence to be felt and appreciated

throughout the world. Through selection of LFs in the food security projects, women have been given the opportunity to lead and train other farmers in the village. So far, this has been quite encouraging. The few men in the project have started to realize that the fight is no longer a fight between men and women but a *stiff* fight against hunger in the world. *There is no way a population can survive if 52%¹ of its population is ignored in decision making!*



Figure 2: A lead farmer from Kirehe, Rwanda has come with her little son so that she can attend the LFs meeting.



Figure 3: At an old age, Genereuse (Left) is still mulching & covering her land expecting a good harvest. Ruth (myself) is on the right encouraging a group of LFs in Kirehe project, Rwanda during a visit in march 2018.



Figure 4: Even during a group meeting, the lady Lead farmer in the above picture does not waste time but does her crocheting for her coffee table at home. At the same time she is listening and hearing well to the speaker. Women are amazing!

The involvement of women in the CFGB food security project.

The food security project has endeavored to involve more women in the decision making of all activities within the project cycle. This has been done in several ways:

- Increase of economic resilience by improving food security and nutrition within the area of jurisdiction.

¹ Female population is 52% while men population is 48%.

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Since we started the four projects by using conservation agriculture (CA), there has been an increase in crop yields due to increased soil fertility after using mulch, increased moisture retention, crop diversification which reduces risks of crop failure, reduced labor from weeding the crop and minimum tillage. No more digging of the land after the farmers learnt about the principles of CA and this had a direct impact/benefit to the women farmers. It saves their time to take care of the children, it prevents deterioration of their health especially the pain on their backs as they continue digging the land and carrying goods.



Figure 5: Rosemary, a field supervisor in the Embu food security project, Kenya. She has become an expert in using Conservation Agriculture simple tools, which used to be a "man's" domain.

- By having more women as LFs, there are able to earn respect from their peers. The trainings for LFs are more and the women are able to get motivated and start in believing in themselves. It strengthens the decision making capacity of women.
- Introduction to new post harvest technologies has helped the farmers preserve their food without spoilage until a certain time when the prices are high and they get good income. This also prevents the men from selling all the

crop produce and leave their families vulnerable. Farmers are encouraged to sell only when prices are high and when they have enough for their families.

- Diversity of crops has helped in minimising the crop failure because different crops have different harvesting periods. Farmers are now planting drought tolerant crops that help in food security.
- One thing is for sure that, if the household has enough food, then the female in the house feels secure. The women do not need to spent most of the day looking for food for the family.

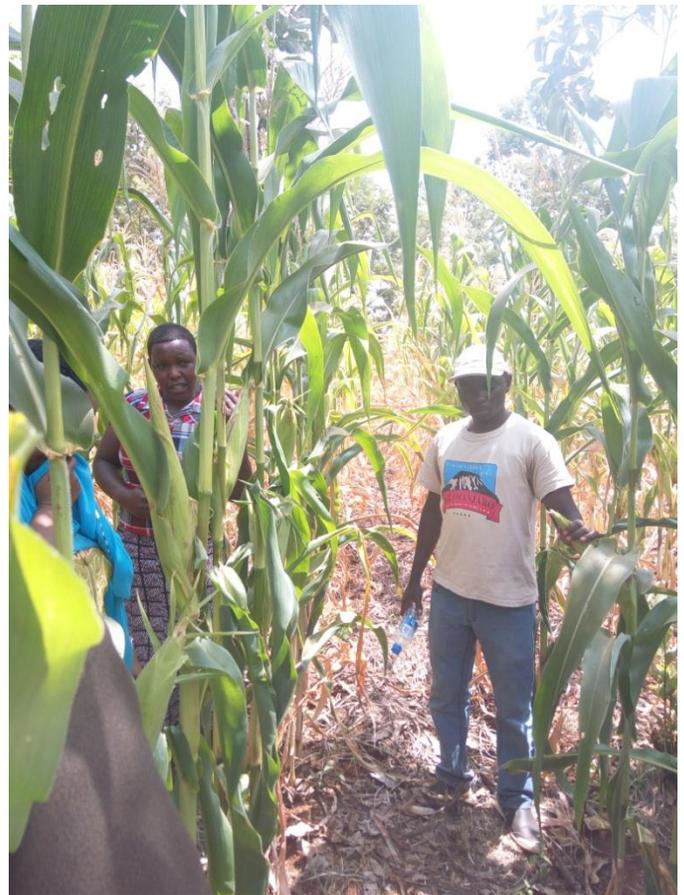


Figure 6: Ann (left) is one of the young & promising LFs who has performed well and earned a lot of respect from the men folk. She is explaining to farmers on the benefits of the new maize variety during a farmer's field day in Embu, Kenya. On the right, is David, the field supervisor for that village.



Figure 7: Field supervisors from Kirehe project, Rwanda has only 1 female field staff. Despite the struggle to involve more women in the field, the ratio of women to men is still low.



Figure 8: Virginia (left) is a field supervisor from the Embu project, Kenya. She is with a lady LF explaining the benefits of the new variety of cowpeas during a field day in January 2018.

Prayer and Praise items

- We thank God for the for safe travels to Rwanda from the 12th-16th March 2018.
- We thank God for the good rains all over the Eastern & Central Africa region in Rwanda, DRC and Kenya.
- Pray for peace in South Sudan & DRC and for the relief project work going on in South Sudan.

Appeal for financial support

To our partners, I am grateful for your continuous prayers and financial support throughout the year. May God bless you all as you abide and trust in His amazing love. I wish you a great Year 2018!!!!!!

If you wish to partner with Ruth in Kenya, please contact Barb Keys at Canadian Baptist Ministries bkeys@cbmin.org or donate on line at www.cbmin.org Cheques can be mailed to CBM 7185 Millcreek Dr. Mississauga, ON L5N 5R4 Or you can reach them by phone at 905.821.3533

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