

Project Update: August 2017

In July 2017, Improving Marginalized People's Initiatives for Biodiversity Conservation project continued the training of historically marginalised women in modern weaving for the preservation of the Volcanoes National Park reach natural resources. Activities continued as scheduled under the supervision of both the trainer, the managing team and the Consultative Committee. Ahead of the 1st phase of the project which involves the end of the 3 months contract of the trainer, the managing team intensified the monitoring activities to assess the trainer's impact and in the same time the project progress and provide necessary support as well to ensure the project momentum. Let's recall that in April 2017, the project suspended its activities for 3 weeks to help beneficiaries and project management team join the rest of Rwandans to mourn the innocent lives lost during the 1994 genocide. So, this extended the duration of the trainer's contract from March to July instead of March to June as initially scheduled.

To better prepare the next phase that involves the extension of the training to 66 more women and producing for selling, the managing team in collaboration with the trainer organised a practical test to evaluate the trainees' individual level. The evaluation proved a big change in skills and knowledge development in regards with modern weaving as well as environment and conservation issues. Despite, the trainer's satisfaction, she however suggested to split the group into three small groups in accordance with the scorecard to ensure no one is left behind. Those three small groups include a group of graduated (those who can start training other and produce baskets for the market), advanced (who can start training others but can't really produce baskets for the market) and medium (those needed to be assisted to improve their skills). Thus, seven women were graduated while 10 and 16 were placed respectively in the advanced and medium groups. According to the trainer, this will ensure no one is left behind.

Besides the 1-day evaluation, trainees continued with the usual training. Up to now, the project managed to produce 10 baskets, four traditional mats, 30 earrings, and six plates. On market, this "treasury" represents approximately \$200. The goal for the 2nd phase of the project is to increase the quantity in terms of products and income.

Challenges

Likewise any other project, this project is facing some challenges. Among these challenges, there's:

A workshop: initially, the cell agreed to grant one room to the project. Unfortunately, at a point we noticed that this won't be an integral use due to other emergencies and priorities. Without plan B, we had to continue with the training anyway. In meantime, the trainings are being organised through small groups formed randomly to help beneficiaries from one place easily the compound of any member of their choice. Although, this has been a short incident, we believe that this can negatively and costly impacted on both the motivation and the project monitoring/follow up. And, we're alternatively thinking on how the project can own its own workshop.

Existence of projects with different strategies and approaches: the existence of historically marginalised people and other poor and vulnerable people, calls for various projects for Shingiro. While many of them are focused on capacity building

and skills development others are focused either on job creation or providing direct aids mainly food. In order to avoid a situation where our beneficiaries especially the indirect beneficiaries may be tempted by such projects, the project management in collaboration with the Consultative Committee launched a joint mobilisation campaign.

For the next period, the project intends to extend the training to 66 women. The managing team together with the Consultative Committee, will help graduate women become trainers to provide this training and necessary assistance to the two groups to help them move forward.

