

## Improving maize production activities in Makamba and Matana Diocese, Burundi

Burundi is recovering slowly from a civil war that lasted over a decade and claimed the lives of approximately 300,000 people and displaced many more.

Burundi has remained largely peaceful since the end of the war, but is still classified as one of the poorest countries in the world. Its social, economic and political stability continues to be threatened by regional unrest and recent political tensions, most notably in spring 2015.

Christian Aid Burundi implements programmes through a range of partners, including faith-based organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector.

Many Burundians live in rural areas and are dependent on farming. Agricultural livelihoods are still recovering from the consequences of war, and in recent years have faced further uncertainty due to the increasingly variable climate, making food security a real challenge for many.



Competition for farmland is high and rainfall is erratic, particularly in the north and east of the country. It is difficult for farmers who have achieved food security to move beyond this into profit and financial security. They tend to be held back by a lack of business skills, access to a conducive business environment and lack of community structure. Farmers need assistance to adapt to a changing climate and to extract the greatest possible value from their harvest.

### **Project goal**

To strengthen the business performance of small scale maize farmers to ensure their livelihoods are both sustainable and secure, and providing them with an increased level of income.

### **Partner organisations**

Christian Aid has partnered with the Anglican Church of Burundi (Makamba and Matana Dioceses).

### **Challenges to be urgently addressed**

- Farmers have a limited access to inputs such as organic and mineral fertilizers, and have small landholdings averaging 0.5 hectares resulting in low levels of production.
- Poor harvests have led to lower amounts of surplus crops available for sale, and farmers have often been forced to quickly sell their produce to processing plants before they can add any value to them, or increase their revenue.
- Farmers are at risk as they do not have access to the financial capital required to invest in modern technology. This is resulting in there only being a limited number of opportunities available for these smallholder farmers to engage with markets.
- The low numbers of farmers engaging with cooperatives impacts upon the level of produce available for sale.
- Brokers and middlemen continue to control and distort the market.



- The cost of processing is unnecessarily high due to the use of inefficient milling units, unreliable power supplies, and the high cost of renting milling facilities. All of which decrease the profitability of these small scale farmers.

- The limited knowledge of the national and international maize markets, along with a lack of strong marketing strategies is preventing farmers from adapting to meet the requirements of potential buyers.

All of the above are fuelling the cycle of poverty and deprivation among the Makamba and Matana farmers.

### **Next steps:**

This second phase of the project will focus on helping the farmers to reach autonomy and adopt business minds through various training opportunities. The farmers will learn about how to become financially attractive to banks and micro financiers.

Christian Aid will assist the farmers as they implement their business plans and:

- Conduct entrepreneurship and 'ready for finance' training for 600 farmers.
- Provide cooperative members with the information on their drafted business plans to ensure every member understands and is content with the planned strategy for their cooperatives.
- Link the cooperatives with financiers who are willing to provide them and their members with finance options.
- Link the cooperatives with the private sector in a sustainable partnership that will provide market access for these small scale farmers.
- Assist the maize farmers as they acquire additional land to help them increase their level of production even more.
- Conduct a Cooperatives Growth Strategy Review at the end of the project.

### **Financial information**

This project requires £56,595 to complete these activities.

### **Expected results**

The project intends to sustainably double income for 22 small holder maize producer associations / 600 farmers through:

1. Sustainably increasing at least 50% of production/processing capacity of the maize processing plant.
2. Improving the capacity of the producers to respond to the demand of their clients, whilst competing with suppliers from other countries such as Tanzania.
3. Increasing the capabilities of 22 producer groups to collectively own, manage, and reap the benefits of the maize processing unit through a closely governed cooperative union in the two provinces of Makamba and Matana.

### **Further results**

- Improved governance structures of the cooperatives.
- More female maize growers will have been empowered to be part of decision making processes regarding investment in and use of benefits from the maize value chain.
- Co-operatives will have been linked with relevant services and inputs.
- The cooperatives will manage the Maize processing plants.
- The Maize Grain Milling plant (sales, capacity utilization of raw materials) will have improved levels of performance.

- Increased (tripled) levels of maize production.
- Measures for resilience against climatic changes will have been developed in Matana and Makamba.

**Summary of significant change**

This initiative of developing the capabilities of small holder farmers will increase their ability to respond to both market demand and unfair competition by consistently supplying large quantities and high quality produce, which will in turn provide them with the opportunity to be rewarded by their clients with better and fair prices. This in turn will result in higher levels of household income.

The project is built on the already successful result of the COCOCA Model used in Christian Aid's Coffee 'In their Lifetime' Project in Burundi.

**Thank you for your kind consideration of the work of Christian Aid Ireland in  
Burundi.**