

Women's Grinding Mills - INGABO - Rwanda

Rwandan Union of Agriculturalists and Animal Breeders (INGABO) is a non-governmental organization, formed in 1992 to serve as a technical resource union providing training, technology, and credit assistance to over 45,000 agriculturalists and animal breeders and their related associations throughout twelve provinces of Rwanda. INGABO's mission is to advise farmers to improve their agricultural and animal husbandry activities. INGABO carries out activities under the following seven program areas: 1) improving agricultural production; 2) improving animal production; 3) promoting women's empowerment; 4) promoting youth empowerment; 5) reinforcing local solidarity banks; 6) reinforcing a national culture of peace and reconciliation; and 7) grassroots capacity building.

INGABO's members, especially women, have low income potential. Most income generating projects are inaccessible to women in rural areas. Many of their families' basic needs, such as medical care, school fees and materials, and comfortable homes are not accessible to them. Malnutrition in these rural families is often prevalent among children 10 years old and younger. Too often, because of lack of resources, mothers are unable to diversify their children's diets with vegetables and other vitamin-rich foods. Without a well-balanced diet, the risk of vitamin deficiency among young children rapidly increases. Women in Rwanda work extremely hard, often much harder than their male counterparts. In Rwanda, it is the traditional distinction between women's work and men's work that continues to place upon women's backs many of the household duties such as cooking, fetching water, caring for children, cultivating and harvesting fields, pounding grain into flour, etc. One of the major tasks identified by women as the most difficult and time consuming is the pounding of grain and/or manioc into flour. This is a task that women undertake both in preparing food for their own families and households, as well as for market. Typically, pounded flour fetches a higher price at markets, as well as with the middlemen who purchase goods from rural areas for transport and resale in the cities. Yet, because of the time involved in preparing it, women often sell their corn, sorghum, or manioc whole, for less money.

This project will directly assist 140 people. Specifically, this project will assist 90 people (68 women and 22 men) in Mugina Commune, and 50 people (45 women and five men) in Ntongwe Commune. The indirect beneficiaries of this project include the general public of the Mugina and Ntongwe Communes, as they will have affordable access to a grinding mill, thus reducing the labor and time involved in traditional food preparation.

The goal is to lighten the manual tasks of women in food preparation, and to provide an opportunity for increased income generation, thus raising women's ability to care for their families and improve their children's nutritional status. The objectives are: 1) to provide one grinding mill each to two women's groups in two rural areas of Rwanda; 2) to assist women



Uzamushaka Beata (right), a member of INGABO, helps to weigh a bucket of newly-ground cassava flour. Photo: Tammi Mott/CWS

in increasing their household income through the establishment of rural savings and loan programs that will work from the revenue of the mill and provide small credit opportunities to women; 3) to facilitate the work of women in preparing food, and to provide additional free time for other care duties; 4) to improve the quality of food.

These grinding mills will be incorporated into larger training and support programs that INGABO offers to women's agricultural and micro-credit groups. In addition to the direct support of the gift of two grinding mills, women's groups will also benefit from INGABO training activities. The grinding services will facilitate the maintenance and sustainability of the mill. Repayment of credits will be accompanied with interest, thus increasing the amount of revolving funds available for future disbursement to other community/association members. INGABO has considerable experience in the transference of both capacity and technical knowledge to local populations and has purchased and installed several grinding mills in other communities.

Support for Church World Service helps make this program possible.