Cows and Kings

A Cattle, Culture, and Education project in Mihigo, Burundi

Open Hand Studios and the Association des Jeunes Giteranyi

Project Brief

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Project Summary

Burundi is concisely ranked the as the 3rd or 4th poorest country in the world with most residents making a living through subsistence farming. A dream for many farmers is to own cattle. Cattle offer nutritious milk, natural farm fertilizer, and can be sold for the equivalent of two years wages. As successful projects in neighboring countries have shown, cattle projects have worked to improve family health and raise incomes for the villagers.

Like the rest of Burundi, the village of Mihigo is a small farming community that lacks electricity and running water and many still live off the land and trade through a barter system. Those earning wages rarely make more than half a US dollar per day. Even fewer own cattle. L'Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l'Agriculture Familiale (Association of Young People from Giteranya for the Preservation of Family Agriculture) is an association of young people of Mihigo village which, given the rapid growth of the Burundian population and the increasing depletion of limited arable land, have come together in order to find ways to overcome the challenges facing their community and to improve the livelihood of their families.

Recognizing the benefits of cattle projects, the association has approached Open Hand Studios to help start a cattle-keeping project through the purchase of eight cows of local breed along with startup funds covering operational cost for a period of eight months. It is expected that nearly forty families totally 250 people will directly benefit from this project and the initial eight cows will have grow to thirty after five years.

This proposed permanent project aims to contribute to the long-term development agenda of Burundi, focusing on the village of Mihigo. The project will employ multiple staff, improve farm yields, raise nutrition levels, increase income, and allow local farmers the opportunity they have always dreamed of: the chance to own a cow.
Introduction

Burundi—a small country of about 8.7 million people living on 27,843 square kilometers—is located at the heart of the African Great Lakes region and has weathered nearly two decades of conflict and troubles, which have contributed to widespread poverty. Burundi was ranked 185th out of 187 countries on the 2011 United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index, and eight out of ten Burundians live below the poverty line. Per capita gross national income (GNI) in 2010 was US$170, about half its pre-war level some 20 years ago. Though the country is attempting to rebuild itself after emerging from recurrent conflict and ethnic and political rivalry, there is still a long way to go before the majority of Burundians can enjoy their socio-economic and cultural rights.

Between 1993 and 2000, more than 300,000 civilians were killed and 1.2 million people fled from their homes to live in refugee camps or in exile. During that period, life expectancy declined from 51 to 44 years, the poverty rate doubled from 33 to 67 per cent and economic recession pushed the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita down by more than 27 per cent. The long period of fighting was extremely disruptive to agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for ninety percent of Burundians. The destruction and looting of crops and livestock, as well as general insecurity, has put rural Burundians under serious strains. Burundi was traditionally self-sufficient in food production, but because of conflict and recurrent droughts, many parts of the country have had to rely on food imports and international food aid.

The vast majority of Burundi’s poor people are small-scale subsistence farmers trying to recover from the conflict and its aftermath. They face many constraints. This relatively small country has a high population growth rate, and as the population grows, the amount of fertile land available for agriculture is decreasing. According to the World Food Program, the level of food vulnerability is extremely high: more than 60 per cent of the population is at risk of food insecurity as a result of climatic events, declining soil fertility and rising food prices (IFAD, 2012).

The adverse effects of prolonged drought, the increase in crop pests and the decline in land productivity are most apparent in the eastern and northern regions (Kayanza, Ngozi, Kirundo and Muyinga). In those regions an estimated 100,000 households are at permanent risk of food insecurity and fragile nutritional conditions. The extremely high population density (ranging between 270 to 500 inhabitants per km² in the rural areas) has contributed to greater food and resource scarcity in across the country (IFAD, 2012).

In short, poverty in rural areas is the result of:

• High population pressure on over-cultivated, eroded land supporting farms of an average size of 0.5 hectare or less;
• Insecurity and displacement;
• Recurrent drought, especially in northern regions;
• Scarcity or poor quality of agricultural implements and technology,
• limited market incentives;
• Low productivity of labour;
• Low cash incomes from subsistence agriculture or limited non-agricultural activities;
• Inadequate basic health and education services and safe drinking water; and
• High rates of illiteracy (IFAD, 2012).

In order to deal with the above-mentioned problems, in July 2011, the government launched “Vision 2025” after four years of preparatory work and consultations with national partners. Vision 2025 comprises eight pillars, including governance, human capital, economic growth, regional integration, population growth, social cohesion, land-use planning and urbanization, and partnership. It represents a road map for Burundi’s sustainable development through accelerated economic growth, and for the reduction of poverty to about 33 per cent by 2025. The United Nations Development Program and the African Future Institute supported development of the plan and other development partners, non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector could use “Vision 2025” as a framework to support Burundi in dealing with extreme poverty.

It is in this framework that the Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l’Agriculture Familiale proposes to run a cattle keeping project in Mihigo in order to ensure food sovereignty and security of their families. In addition, the proposed project would increase family incomes of the association members thus reducing their total reliance on income from limited farm produce. Finally, this proposed project aims to contribute to the long-term development agenda of Burundi, Vision 2015, by focusing on the village of Mihigo, commune Giteranyi in Muyinga province, North East of Burundi, which falls under the regions of Burundi that are under constant threats of hunger.
A short history of Burundi

Pre-colonial period

Before Westerners (Germans first and Belgians after the end of the first World War) arrived, Burundi was ruled by a princely oligarchy, known as the Ganwa, a clan traditionally viewed as ethnically distinct from both Hutu and Tutsi, and which provided a unifying point of reference for all Burundians. Tutsis and Hutus were linked to one another as “patrons” and “clients,” but social standing and ethnicity were imperfectly correlated. Moreover, the traditional order did not impose any rigid system of social stratification (Newbury, 2001).

Enterprising or fortunate Hutus, for example, could come to exercise considerable influence and enjoy wealth or social standing greater than that of many Tutsi. It was, in Rene Lemarchand’s phrase, “status, not ethnic identity,” that “was the principal determinant of rank and privilege” in Burundi. In addition, regional or clan distinctions (e.g., northerners versus southerners, or Batare versus Bezi) were often as salient as or more salient than the Hutu-Tutsi categories (Lemarchand, 1996).

Political divides in pre-colonial Burundi centered not on Tutsi-Hutu distinctions, but on competition within the princely Ganwa clan. This struggle was perhaps the dominant political trend of that era. Competing Ganwa factions sought to mobilize support among both Hutu and Tutsi. Ethnic tensions between Hutu and Tutsi, though not unknown, were rare. “When ethnic tensions did emerge, they were highly localized and more often than not were generated by the abuses of local princely authorities acting hand in hand with Tutsi elements.” Unlike in Rwanda, where the expansion of the monarchy involved direct conflict with existing Hutu kingdoms, in Burundi the kingship did not become identified with Tutsi supremacy, but instead “derived much of its legitimacy from its symbolic identification with Hutu elements” (Wolpe, 2011). This was due to the fact that the Ganwa ruling clan was thought to be from the Hutu ethnic group, though with time the Ganwa socially identified themselves with the Tutsis.

In short, although Burundians traditionally defined themselves as Hutu or Tutsi or Twa (a generally marginalized pygmyoid group comprising no more than one percent of the Burundian population), evidence of ethnically based political mobilization is scant. Even by 1962, when Burundi became independent as a constitutional monarchy, the principal line of political cleavage was not between Tutsi and Hutu, but between the Bezi and Batare, two princely factions with ethnically mixed followings (Newbury, 2001).

Downfall of the Monarchy and the Rise of Division and Genocide

Burundi has had a violent history since the 19th century, rooted in a combination of stern rule by princely Ganwa, diseases, epidemics, and the taxation policies of the colonial powers namely Germany (1890-1916) and Belgium (1916-1961). As is well known, the Belgians favored the Tutsi, having bought into the “Hamitic myth” that the Tutsi were born to rule, while the Hutu were born to farm (Waters, 2003).
It is always a challenging task to talk about the history of Burundi because many times, both Hutu and Tutsi nationalists have adapted the history of their country to suit their own purposes. For instance, in 1985-86, Hutu from the refugee settlement in Mishamo, Tanzania explained that the Tutsi took advantage of the situation to consolidate their power under the Belgians. At the time of the arrival of the Belgians, the Tutsi lied to them “telling the Belgians that the Hutu are accustomed to cultivating—by that token, therefore they should be taught agriculture... Even today, the Hutu [in Burundi] will tell you that “me, I am accustomed to cultivate.” (Malkki, 1995).

No matter the account that was given by Hutu refugees in Mishamo in 1985-86, from a positivistic viewpoint such mythical history in fact simplifies colonial history. Peasant revolts against combined Belgian/Ganwa taxation regimes were frequent, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. Differently from the stories told in Mishamo, Lemarchand tells how revolts were rooted in regional identities and not along the Tutsi-Hutu dichotomy, but on the Ganwa ruling class (Lemarchand, 1995). Lemarchand further notes that fear was growing among Ganwa families, whose authority was gradually being eroded by emergent Tutsi clans jockeying for positions in the new colonial bureaucracy, starting about 1930. The result was that while the Ganwa continued to rule both as the king and also as appointed chiefs, the Tutsi began to staff elements of the colonial state (Lemarchand, 1995).

This led to the contradictory situation that as independence drew near in 1961, the one truly popular national figure was the Ganwa son of the King (Mwami Mwambutsa IV Bangiricenge), Prince Louis Rwagasore. Rwagasore was a charismatic figure, able to mobilize the forces for independence against the Belgian rulers. With the support of the Hutu masses, he won election as Prime Minister shortly before independence in 1961. However, Rwagasore was assassinated in a plot organized by a Belgian-supported rival to the throne a few months later. As Lemarchand writes, it was only after this event that what was a three-way focus on power (Hutu masses against the Ganwa and the Belgians) shifted to the two-way (Hutu-Tutsi) ethnic competition that still characterizes political maneuvering in Burundi today (Lemarchand, 1996).

Ethnic segregation in post-colonial Burundi rigidified during the 1960s as members of Tutsi clans came to dominate provincial leadership, pushing aside both Ganwa and the few Hutu who held authority. Lemarchand documents this process well of how Tutsi clans came to dominate administrative posts across a period of about 40 years from the 1920s through the 1960s. After Rwagasore’s assassination in 1961, an unsuccessful coup organized by Hutu officials in 1965 led to the assassination of the Hutu Prime Minister (Pierre Ngendandumwe) and some tens of thousands of Hutu being massacred and others fleeing to neighboring countries (Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire).

The coup plotters and many higher-level Hutu were executed, and most high-level Hutu were excluded from the government. In July 1966, the Ganwa king (Mwambutsa IV Bangiricenge) was forced to abdicate in favor of his son (Prince Ntare V), who in turn was deposed and exiled when the then Tutsi Prime Minister Captain Michel Micombero took power through a military coup. Following this, Micombero abolished the monarchy, and declared the nation a republic.
The Tutsi-dominated military faction from the southern province of Bururi then seized control of the cabinet at the expense of not only Hutu and Ganwa, but also the powerful Tutsi faction from the northern province of Muramvya. In 1969, accusations of coup-plotting were leveled and the Hutu elite were again targeted with a hundred being executed and all Hutu eliminated from the military. By 1972, the Bururi faction had turned its attention to the Muramvya Tutsi, who in a series of show-trials received severe sentences, contributing to mass fear of the reigning government (Waters, 2003).

In the context of the increasing competition between Tutsi groups, in April 1972, expatriate Hutu invaded from Tanzania and killed some 10,000 Tutsi along the shore of Lake Tanganyika in the southern tip of the country. Mwambutsa, who had briefly returned from exile, was also killed by the Tutsi-dominated military. The response by the Tutsi-dominated army was brutal enough that Lemarchand considers it the first genocide in the Great Lakes Region (Lemarchand, 1995). Over 100,000 Hutu were massacred and several hundred thousand fled to neighboring countries, primarily Tanzania, between 1972 and 1974. The 1972 events marked the complete end of the Burundian monarchy as well as the hope, at least for the next 43 years, of the Hutu elite ever being in power.
Cattle and Culture

Inka (cow) and ethnicity in Burundi

There is a stereotype that cows (inka) were only owned by the Tutsi people. However, as empirical research shows, there is evidence of keeping cattle among the communities of the Great Lakes Region of Africa, who later on formed the current ethnic groups known as Tutsi and Hutu. Research shows that ethnicity in Burundi was based more on someone’s occupation rather than being a constant and inherited social status. As such, it is always a puzzle for political historians to understand the decades long conflict between Hutu and Tutsi of Burundi because the two groups share the same culture and language.

Ethnic conflict in Africa is commonly characterized as the product of cultural diversity and the expression of ancient tribal antagonisms. However, this conventional wisdom is wrong on both counts. In Africa, no less than in the United States, Europe, or Asia, most ethnic conflicts arise not from the differences among people, but from their similarities. It is this that moves people into conflict—their desire to control the same political offices, the same commodity marketing contracts, the same command posts within the army, or the same restricted number of slots in educational institutions or the civil service.

It is true that if people do not speak the same language, or have different cultural understandings of what is called “the rules of the game”, the intensity of the conflict might increase and thus be more difficult to manage. This is particularly so when different ethnically defined groups have significantly unequal resources. Cultural differences, however, are not what bring people into conflict in the first instance, and few conflicts in Africa are linked to ancient antagonisms.

Burundi is a vivid example. One normally thinks of ethnicity as an expression of cultural, linguistic, or religious differences, however, no such distinctions apply to the Tutsi and Hutu. They speak the same language, share a common culture and Burundian identity, look back to a traditional common monarchy, have for centuries lived peacefully together occupying the same hills and communes, and have intermarried. The two do have distinct origins and physical prototypes: the Tutsi are believed to have migrated from the Northeast and are generally described as tall with angular facial features; whereas the Hutu are believed to be of Bantu origin, and are often characterized as short and stocky. Intermarriage, however, has made these physical characteristics an extremely imperfect predictor of ethnic identity. Today one finds as many short Tutsi as tall Hutu. Moreover, although Burundians theoretically derive their ethnic identity from their fathers, the many children of mixed marriages have further blurred the Tutsi-Hutu distinction. A child of a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother is considered as Hutu whereas a child of Tutsi father and a Hutu mother is considered to be Tutsi.

What traditionally distinguished Tutsi and Hutu were their occupational differences: Tutsis tended to be cattle herders and Hutus generally farmers. But even this distinction was not ironclad. Many Hutus grazed cattle and “[it was by entrusting their cattle to the Hutu that the Tutsi were able to establish clientage ties with Hutu elements, thus bringing Hutu and Tutsi together into a complex web of reciprocal rights and obligations. Far from driving a wedge between Hutu and Tutsi, their different occupational statuses provided the basis for a closer union.”

Rene Lemarchand

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There are, however, varying accounts of how the practice of keeping cattle became an important element of the Burundian culture, especially among the ruling Ganwa clan. Available archaeological findings reaching beyond 2500 years ago in central Rwanda and Burundi are too sparse to give a clear picture of how Tutsis and Hutus were living. But, F. van Noten’s work strongly suggests a distinct pattern where regional differentiation in pottery styles, roughly corresponding to the north-south axis along the continental divide, are more distinct than are the differences among the several local communities in Burundi and Rwanda.

In addition, linguistic evidence suggests that the way in which Tutsi and Hutu people were living was largely an internally generated process rather than the result primarily of cultural infusion from outside (although influences and skills from outside could well have expedited the processes involved). By 800 AD, communities (including the people settled between Lake Victoria and the north-flowing leg of the Kagera River, speaking variants of Kinyambo and Kihaya—languages close to Kirundi spoken in Burundi) had a word for “large cow with horns,” probably referring to the Sanga cattle so common in the grassland areas today. But, this was not the only, or even the earliest type of cattle in the area; cattle and herding skills were widespread there long before the arrival of the Sanga cattle (Newbury, 2001).

Furthermore, between 100 and 1400 AD many new terms appeared in this area pertaining to specialized cattle practitioners and these terms appeared among a vast range of language communities within the Great Lakes Bantu family. In fact, linguistic models suggest that an interest in cattle types appears to have developed earlier in languages belonging to the “Forest Group” (Kihunde, Kitembo, Mashi and others who are not related to the current Tutsi people) and only later in languages of the West Highlands group (Kinyarwanda and Kirundi). Therefore, neither the presence of cattle—not even of particular breeds of cattle—or the emergence of specialized cattle cultures can historically be associated with any particular cultural or social group immigrating from the north or east. This of course does not deny the immigration of pastoralist groups, it only challenges claims to the exclusive association of such groups with the introduction of cattle (Newbury, 2001).

One other account consists of the expansion of pastoralism into the depleted lands, and the elaboration of an entirely new culture of pastoralism, shown by the efflorescence of a new lexicon relating to cattle aesthetics (colors and horn shapes), reproduction (age and sex of cattle), and pastoral production techniques. This account suggests that these pastoralist communities became the Tutsi of Burundi. This account does not seem to be backed by empirical findings because not only did ethnic identities (Hutu and Tutsi) change over time (and vary

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in different regions), in more fundamental ways they also varied between Burundi and Rwanda. Indeed, social stratification and ethnic identity in Burundi differed in important ways from the Rwanda models (Newbury, 2001).

While regional identities were strong in both states, they were even more coherent and enduring in Burundi than in Rwanda, and this meant that in Burundi there emerged significant fragmentation even within the tripartite social model of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Among Tutsi, for instance, there were at least four clear internal distinctions that were often more salient than their categorical opposition to “Hutu”. First there was the Hima: a cattle group from the eastern region; second; the Baganwa: former kings who were themselves divided into two sometimes battling parts the Abezi and Abatare; third the Banyaruguru: common Tutsi from outside the eastern province; and forth the Tutsi Banyaruguru: wealthy Tutsis from outside the eastern province.

It is interesting to note that the Baganwa, descendants of the kings up to four generations, were often said to be of no other category—i.e. they were distinct from “Tutsi.” Yet although many saw the origin of the dynasty (and hence of the Ganwa) as Hutu, nonetheless, socially and politically the Baganwa were clearly associated with Tutsi, and when demoted from an aristocratic classification (after four subsequent reigns), Baganwa were accepted as of “Tutsi” status. (Newbury, 2001).

In addition, region and class conveyed powerful social distinctions among Tutsi, sometimes overriding the cohesion of ethnic affiliation alone. As such, even among the Tutsi these four groups were often struggling for political domination. This added to the Batare-Bezi struggle for power among the Ganwa ruling class.

Among Hutu in Burundi, too, there were important distinctions beyond the regional particularities. For instance, the rituals, court diviners, healers, religious personnel, and many others—often had separate status. An example is the role of the abashingantahe in Burundi. These are elders who serve as intermediaries to central power. Part judge, part ombudsman, part moral interpreters, the abashingantahe hold their status by their respect in the local community and they often serve to articulate local concerns. Although commonly (though not exclusively) Hutu, they are fully recognized within the Burundi political system and have considerable influence. In addition to these two groups, there were also other Hutu clans such as Abahanza, Ababanda and Abajiji who were also attempting to emerge as the most powerful Hutu clan in the country.

It was in fact the Belgian who put the most lasting mark on the current views of tribes in 1934. Issuing IDs for every citizen. The Belgians defined everyone as either a Hutu or a Tutsi and did not look to biological, historical, geographical or even cultural distinctions. They simply defined anyone who owned 10 or more cows as a Tutsi and anyone with less than that a Hutu.

In summary, ethnic labels did not apply to internally homogeneous corporate groups, but to broad collective identities that emerged in a given context, based on
Cows are both an inflation-proof and productive investment. They are one of the few assets which if owned by poor households can be a crucial support mechanism in times of crisis. They are central to farming systems used by the poor, providing highly nutritious milk to help feed families. As industrial fertilizer is rarely available and even when so, too expensive, cow manure offers an efficient and sustainable method for maintaining soil quality and water retention. In addition, cattle keeping integrated with crop farming can stabilize and improve overall farming and income generation. Pasture planted on terraces prevents soil erosion and thereby improves crop yields while at the same time providing food for both humans and animals. Cows, often called ‘African Banks,’ are largely inflation proof, interest free, profit generating, and can be sold for the equivalent of nearly two years wages.

There are other benefits of cows too. They provide hides and skins, transport, and their dung can even be used for cooking. In addition, cows (especially bulls) provide traction that is important in agricultural production. In Burundi cow dung was traditionally used in the process of making beehives and decorating houses.

Socially, cows play a very crucial role in the Burundian society. They are considered to be a source of social prestige and status. Giving someone a cow is an
expression of the tremendous respect one has for him or her. Cows were also used as bride price in traditional Burundian society. Though money is taking precedence as the newly accepted form of bride price, cows are still used as token of appreciation to the parents of the soon-to-be bride.

Cattle play another important role in ensuring food security among Burundians. Food security embraces food production, stability of supply, and access to food. The three most important dimensions of food security are ensuring a safe and nutritionally adequate food supply at the household and national level; a reasonable degree of stability in the supply of food from year to year, and ensuring that each household has physical, social and economic access to enough food to meet its needs. Cows play an important role in all three dimensions. They make a contribution to food production through the provision of high value protein rich milk and meat. They indirectly support crop production through draught power, soil aeration, and provision of fertilizing manure. They also stabilize food supply as they are a source of food year round in addition to being the most significant source of income and store of wealth for small farmers. As Burundi often experiences food insecurity periods domestic cattle play a crucial role in fighting back by increasing the availability of animal products and contributing overall food security to the population.

From This American Life and Planet Money:

Reporter: Daniel told us his cow cost about $400. He says it produces 2 liters of milk a day. His family drinks 1 liter and sells 1 liter for about $0.50. Caroline also bought a cow, but she says don't think of it as a cow. Think of hers as a bank.

Caroline: The cows are just like a bank. When we put it there, it's just as if we have saved it in the cow.

Reporter: And why buy a cow instead of putting the money in the bank?

Caroline: You know, money in the bank, sometimes you can just go and take it, small, small, small, small, until it got finished.

Reporter: A cow, on the other hand, you can't fritter away a few shillings at a time. If you want to get your money out of a cow, you have to take your cow to market and sell it.
Cattle Component

At its heart the project is simple. Open Hand will purchase at least eight female cows and provide startup funds as well as eight months of operational expenses. The local community organization will dedicate four hectares of land to grazing, volunteer to build the barns and setup a basic dairy processing plant. The project will hire two employes as well as retain the services of a local veterinarian.

When one of the project cows gives birth to a female calve, it will be given away at half the price of a normal cow to a member most in need selected by the association. When that calves comes of age its first female will be given back to the project, the remaining babies are theirs to keep. A male calve will be raised for meat and sold to cover operation cost and purchase more female cows. Milk will be gathered and sold daily to cover operating costs.

Cultural Component

The King had an immense herd of cows, something Burundians took great pride in. Today the legacy of the kings and the memories of the communities living in peace for hundreds of years are largely forgotten, both globally and within Rwanda and Burundi themselves. Today, the world knows mostly about the story of their declining into genocide and think it is rooted in ancient tribal hatreds that can never be fixed and this the genocide and any future genocides can not be prevented. This view is false and history shows that there is instead a long history of peace, community, and cooperation.

This project seeks to both remind Rwandans and Burundians of their peoples long history of peace as well as share that peaceful story with the world to combat the array of misleading stereotypes. Interviews and information on the peaceful past will be collected and shared including educational materials in multiple languages presented in both text and visual formats.

Project Details

Expected Social and Economic Impact

The overall objective of the proposed project is to improve the production of family farms with the integration of forestry and livestock sectors. This project intends to improve the revenues of beneficiary households but also those of neighboring villages thanks to the integration of forestry and livestock sectors. Members from the community itself will implement it. Members of the association have prepared themselves in terms of animal feeds and allotted the project four hectares of pasture grasses.

Specific objectives are to increase livestock production, to improve the production of available family farms and to increase income of the members. It is expected that with eight female calves at the beginning of the project, there would be additional 9 female calves in the third and fourth year and additional 14 female calves in the fifth year. This would bring to a total of at least 30 female cows in the fifth year of the project. The project will apply the practice of inter-breeding using local bulls at a fee.

Current statistics suggest that a local female cow can give about five liters of milk per day for about 200 days in a year. This means that milk production will be of about 8,040 liters per year, 10,080 liters, 15,840 liters,
22,400 liters and 43,200 liters in the second, third, fourth and fifth year respectively. The yield of the family plots will have increased thanks to organic manure from cow dung and the health and nutritional situation of beneficiary families will have improved thanks to both milk production and the improved yield of family farms. In addition, there would be increased social cohesion among inhabitants of Mihigo and other neighboring villages as they come together to take care of their cows and discuss development and culture in their district. Finally, there would be economic gains due to increase income from the sale of milk and of meat.

To achieve those expected outcomes, the following activities are planned:

- Purchase 8 female cows of local breed (which will be progressively improved with the practice of interbreeding to achieve higher production of milk) as well as related inputs;
- Construction of barns;
- Purchase equipment for milk collection before sale;
- Sale of milk to neighboring local markets including Kizungu, Giteranyi, Mugano and Kobero;
- Hire two workers to take of the cows on full term basis a contract regular services of local veterinary.

The project is expected to contribute to the some of the initial operational costs such as the labour to construct barns, the labour to plant grasses for hay and the cost related to the identification and purchase of female cows It is expected that some of the external support would also contribute to the initial operational costs before the cows start giving milk.

The main socio-economic impact of this proposed project is that members of the association will be able to acquire a female cow from the association that they can keep in their homes. The cooperative will give the cows away on a need basis and while the first female born will be returned, the remaining babies are the farmers to keep. Please refer to table below for more details on the number of cows over the years.

Educational Impact

Once the written and visual components of the project are complete we seek to share them widely. Our hope is to educate those interested in the region about the long, unique, and peaceful history of the area wit the goal of bringing better understanding to those working for a better future of this currently troubled region. Within the country we hope the projects helps foster peace among the communities by united them in their shared cultural past.
Sustainability analysis

The sale of milk will ensure that there is no extra funding apart from the initial investment required from donors. Revenue from milk will help to pay workers, pay the veterinary and buy food and medicine for the cows. In addition, the plot that will be provided for the construction of barns in enough to keep the cows as new calves would be taken care by the association members who would buy them at subsided prices based on the amount of money they have been contributing to the association. Nonetheless, there would be need for at least enough funds to run the project for 6 to 8 months before there is any sale of milk. These funds can be complemented by contributions from members of the association.

Male cows will be sold to cover costs as well as purchase additional females for the association. Females given out return their firstborn female back to the association. The remaining births are theirs to keep.

Monitoring and evaluation

The governing team of the association that comprises the president, the secretary and the treasury will ensure the day to day running of the project. There will be bi-weekly meetings will all the members of the association to brief them on the progress. The governing team will also ensure constant communication between the association and other stakeholders of the project including funders and potentials buyers of produce (milk, meat and skins). The veterinary will conduct daily checks to ensure the calves are in good health and have adequate and balanced food.
Case Study

Livestock Sector Rehabilitation Support Project
Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Farm animals are essential to many poor rural households in Burundi. They provide food and cash income, as well as manure to preserve soil fertility and improve yields of staple crops. The livestock sector in the country declined dramatically during the 12 years of civil war, and its recovery is slow, despite strong demand for animal products. Much of the population is too poor to buy livestock. Farmers who do own animals lack access to forage, animal health services and livestock support services.

As a result, productivity is low. The grant approved by IFAD under the debt sustainability framework helped to finance a project to raise livestock productivity and improve the food security and incomes of poor farmers. The project also helped add value to animal products such as meat, dairy products and honey by developing markets and processing technologies and facilities. It targets vulnerable groups, including women, returnees and landless people and other people with few assets.
Specifically the project will help:

• Raise the productivity of small-scale livestock farmers by improving fodder quality and small stock breeds, as well as providing training and participative learning in improved production and marketing practices;
• Improve community-based animal health and disease control by ensuring that vulnerable households have access to para-veterinary services and by reporting contagious animal diseases to higher-level animal health services;
• Improve private sector delivery of inputs and processing facilities;
• Empower community committees to manage local development and contribute to policy decisions on animal health and management.

As of March 2012, results included:

Health and nutrition: the project has helped improve the nutritional intake of children under 5 years of age; chronic malnutrition in the target area has fallen from 46 to 27 per cent; and severe malnutrition has declined from 5.6 to 4.4 per cent;
Capacity-building: the project has provided training and capacity-building for 292 hillside community development committees and 43 community development committees; and has created 76 farmer field schools with a total membership of 4,166 producers, 60 per cent of whom are women;
Livestock: 16,762 households have received livestock in the form of goats, pigs and rabbits, and beehives; 1,393 community agents for animal health have been appointed and trained; and 5,135 artificial inseminations carried out have resulted in the birth of 1,643 calves;
Forage cultivation: 16 farmers have been trained in seed production for improved varieties of forage;
Rural infrastructure: 4 collection centers have been constructed for milk and 7 for honey;
Improved incomes: Average incomes have risen from BIF 102,105 to BIF 3,063,150 per season for forage production associations; from BIF 21,000 to BIF 78,000 per month for pig farmers; and from BIF 11,833 to BIF 65,000 per month for the recipients of bulls for breeding.
Project Partners

L'Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l'Agriculture Familiale

L’Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l’Agriculture Familiale is an association of young people from Mihigo village, commune Giteranyi of Muyinga district, North East of Burundi. Given the rapid growth of the Burundian population and the increasing depletion of limited arable land, young people of Mihigo came together in order to find ways of dealing with those delicate problems facing not only their district, but also their country in general. The young people, through their association, are working to increase their income and that of their families through the promotion and preservation of family farming and animal husbandry. L'Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l’Agriculture Familiale represent 39 families from Giteranyi district (including the village of Mihigo) who would directly benefit from the project.

Open Hand Studios

Open Hand Studios is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating our world’s rapidly disappearing cultural heritage through innovative, collaborative educational and community development projects. We aim to serve as a creative lab to develop effective new strategies for heritage preservation, as a thought leader for public cultural education and research, and as a catalyst to spark locally-led partnerships for sustainable community development.

Contact Details

- **Name:** L'Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l’Agriculture Familiale
  (Association of Young People from Giteranya for the Preservation of Family Agriculture)
- **Village:** Mihigo
- **Zone:** Giteranyi
- **Commune:** Giteranyi
- **Province:** Muyinga
- **Date of establishment:** January 2013
- **Area of intervention:** Animal husbandry and protection of family farming
- **Contact persons and addresses:**
  Damien Ntahondi, President: +257 79 240 052 / + 257 76 984 515
  Isaïe Ndkumana, Secretary: +257 79 318 340, Email: isaiendikumana@yahoo.fr
  Emmanuel Kamiheto, Treasurer: +257 76 673 848

- **Name:** Open Hand Studios NFP (Studios de Main Ouverte)
- **Addresses:** 5061 North Kenmore #3 Chicago, IL 60640-7683
- **Date of establishment:** March 2008
- **Area of intervention:** Education. Preservation. Development.
- **Contact persons and addresses:**
  Paul Christians, Co-Founder, Director: prc@openhandstudios.org
  Jeff DeKock, Co-Founder, Director: jdk@openhandstudios.org
Budget

Open Hand Studios is covering the cost of setting up the project, purchasing eight cows, and covering the first eight months of operational costs. The local community is donating funds to help start the project and the cooperative is volunteering to build the barns and dairy processing plant.

The project will sustain itself and the two full time employees through three mechanisms: First the selling of milk, second the selling of male cows born to the herd, and finally through the contributions of the cooperative members.

If you would like to review the full budget please email us at info@openahandstudios.org

As can be seen in the chart below the expected growth for the original investment is from eight cows at the beginning to 35 after 5 years. These cows will have directly benefited 250 citizens of Mihigo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Cows</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Births</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male Births</td>
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<tr>
<td>Males Sold</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cow Deaths</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total cattle</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Cows have and continue to occupy a central role in the Burundian society. Way before the German and Belgian colonizers came to Burundi, local communities kept cattle for various uses ranging from the production of milk to providing dung for house construction and decoration, to skins for making drums and clothes, to cooking fat and farm manure. Cows were not only material possessions, but most importantly provided a very special social status in Burundi to the extent of defining who was a Tutsi or Hutu.

Unfortunately, with prolonged conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis, the population of cows had drastically reduced thus resulting into a socio-economic crisis in the country. As the country attempts to recover for decades of civil wars, the Government of Burundi in collaboration with development partners such as the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development is implementing “Vision 2025” in a bid to take the country out of the current socio-economic and political problems.

The proposed project by the Association des Jeunes de Giteranyi pour la Préservation de l’Agriculture Familiale and Open Hand Studios, aims to contribute to the long term objectives of “Vision 2025” by focusing on helping 39 families in the village of Mihigo. As the project grows, so will the number of families helped. Cultural preservation projects will bring greater understanding about the region and foster peace.
References and Recommended Readings


Credit:
Text by Yves Nyungura with Open Hand Studios.
Images by Jeff DeKock of Open Hand Studios.
All images taken in Mihigo village except the kings and the big cow which came from Wikipedia.