



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
RWANDA

Family Strengthening Program

PROJECT FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY IN GASAKA SECTOR, RWANDA. 2013-2015



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

February 2016

**PROJECT FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY IN
GASAKA SECTOR, RWANDA 2013-2015**

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------|--|
| CBO | Community Based Organization |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| FBC | Family Basic Care |
| FS/P | Family Strengthening Program |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LFA | Logical Framework Approach |
| MIGEPROFE | Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion |
| MINALOC | Ministry of Local Government |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OVC | Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children |
| PTA | Parents Teachers' Association |
| SOS | Societas Socialis |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| UN | United Nations |
| VSLA | Village Saving and Loan Organization |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The final evaluation of the project for “Strengthening the Families and community in Gasaka Sector, Rwanda” has been requested by SOS Rwanda which contracted two independent consultants in order to conduct the mission. The project had been formulated in order to address the crucial issue of children lacking access to basic needs and those at risk of losing parental care. The overall goal of the project was to strengthen the capacities of vulnerable households/families and community to respond to basic and developmental needs of children in Gasaka sector.

Purpose and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the progress made towards achievements of the specific objectives of the project, its outcomes and impact. In order to conduct the assignment smoothly, the evaluation team proposed a participatory approach by involving different categories of people involved in the project. Throughout the process, the five DAC evaluation criteria constituted the backbone of the exercise. Following a deep documentation review, the data collection through a questionnaire addressed to a sampled number of the project participants as well as interviews with different partners and project staff permitted to gather useful information for a critical analysis of the project management and achievements. In total, 140 people from different categories, children, parents, local leaders, the VSLAs and the CBO directly participated to this evaluation.

Project management and achievements

As a result of the analysis, the evaluation team confirmed that the FS Gasaka project has been a very good success as it achieved its three specific objectives at a very good level. The project relevance has been confirmed by its strong link with national and institutional policies but also by its responsiveness to the real needs. While, a good management of the project resources permitted to implement all the activities within the general time frame, a wide range of achievements illustrated its high effectiveness. It contributed to enroll and keep in schools the target children but also it created a sound awareness on child rights within the whole community of Gasaka. With regard to the empowerment of the families, the FS Gasaka project assisted its 177 participants in self-organizing into 11 Village Saving and Loans Associations which helped them to acquire knowledge in saving but also to access basic households and children needs through small savings. Over the two annual cycles, the 11 VSLAs could reach a turnover of over 10 million Rwandan Francs while they started without any external startup capital. This particular fact made their case a best practice among FS projects.

The great achievements of the project have resulted also of the involvement of an innovative Community Based Organization Girimpuhwe which worked as an active partner to SOS in

following up the Family Development Plan in each participant's family. The CBO's sense of initiative and their manual and financial effort to support the vulnerable people have received an outstanding appreciation from the participants themselves, the project team but also from the local leaders as well. There is no doubt that the umbrella of VSLAs already created together with the strong commitment of the CBO currently looking for legal personality will both sustain the achievements of the projects not only in terms of family empowerment but also in the promotion of child rights within Gasaka Sector. The project impact on child rights, health and self-organizing have reached the surrounding community where a large number of families got married legally, registered their children at civil status office, school drop out of reduced and family violence as well. From the same community, 28% non-participants people are counted among the VSLAs members while at least three groups were created under the example of the project supported groups.

Challenges

The Project did not face any serious obstacles that could affect irremediably the course of the activities. However, some observations can be made on some points: for some outcomes, there were missing indicators, the consolidated financial reports have been a difficult exercise with limited project staff and the status as well as the approach of the volunteer remains ambiguous to some extent. In the perspective of sustainability, different institutions created by the participants need to grow up with more independency from the project.

Lessons learnt

Among several good lessons left by the project, a particular attention should be given to the self-developed VSLAs which showed out by their three year experience that developing skills creates stronger impact than providing direct support. Another outstanding example was the very active CBO that demonstrated a good sense of initiative and compassion with neighboring vulnerable families.

Recommendations

SOS Rwanda has been recommended to improve the planning processes that take into account the changing context, reinforce the project team in terms of financial management, re-consider the status of the volunteers to keep them more neutral, and plan for additional training courses for counseling and business development modules.

The evaluation team addressed also the project team some recommendation related to the improvement of the use of the master list, development of a monitoring tool for the child rights abuse and enhancing the documentation tools for the project key messages.

The Sector authorities were requested to put in place strong mechanisms supporting the community groups while the CBO was recommended to clarify its structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Final Report

This Final Report is the last output of the final evaluation assignment of the Project for “Strengthening the Families and community in Gasaka Sector, Rwanda” implemented under the Family Strengthening Program of SOS Children’s Villages Rwanda from 2013 to 2015. The evaluation assignment has been contracted to a team of independent consultants. After submitting the Inception Report and discussing the Draft report in a debriefing meeting, the team came up with this final report. It contains the results of the document-based analysis, the field research data and integrate the comments and inputs provided by the project team. Four main parts make the structure of this document: firstly, an introduction that highlights the scope of the evaluation and the project background; secondly, the presentation of the detailed methodology that guided the process; thirdly, the presentation of the findings following the five standard evaluation criteria, and lastly the part compiling the key lessons, best practices and recommendations.

The evaluation team would like to take this opportunity to express their deep gratitude to all people who actively took part of this process including the respondents, different groups met, the project staff and the SOS management members for the valuable support all along the evaluation assignment.

1.2 Scope of the evaluation

This evaluation finds its place in the regular practice of SOS Rwanda over its different projects and programs. The concerned project is part of the SOS’s outreach programs aiming at preventing from children’s loss of care of their family. The program empowers vulnerable families by strengthening their capacity to change their economic status which will enable them meeting the development needs of their children.

1.2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

After three years of implementation of FSP/ Gasaka project in Gikongoro (Nyamagabe), SOS children’s villages Rwanda intended to assess the progress made towards achievements of the specific objectives of the project, its outcomes and impact. The evaluation was also expected to gauge the level of community and stakeholder’s participation and the ownership of the implementation by the participants. It was assigned to identify the intended and unintended outcomes, best practices, lessons learned as well as challenges arising from program implementation. In addition, the evaluation was requested to come up with conclusions, recommendations and the way forward for the project.

1.2.2 Specific objectives of the evaluation

With reference to the terms of reference of the evaluation task, the following specific objectives have been set :

- ✓ To assess the progress made towards the achievement of specific objectives

- ✓ To gauge the level of achieved progress according to the baseline survey
- ✓ To assess the positive changes and impact on the lives of the project target group as well as on the lives of surrounding community which has been directly involved in the project activities including the enrolled families, their children and partnering CBO as well
- ✓ To measure if the capacity building of the target group has contributed to reaching project's objectives as stated in the project document and also to the project sustainability
- ✓ To assess whether the project is relevant to the real needs of the intended participants
- ✓ To identify the best practices, lessons learnt, challenges arising from the program implementation as well as drawing conclusions and recommendations

1.3 Brief project background

The Project for Strengthening Families and Community in Gasaka Sector implemented between 2013 and 2015 and commonly known as Gasaka Project is a second phase of the Family Strengthening Program (FSP) in SOS Gikongoro. The first phase was run from 2005 to 2012 covering a wide range of direct supports to families and children including paying the community health insurance fees, school fees, school materials, housing for most poor, etc.

The second phase was designed in a full FS approach taking good lessons from two projects implemented in Kayonza zone. The project formulation started back in May 2011 with a series of meetings, studies and assessment of the managerial and technical capacity of the SOS RWANDA in a more or less new approach to support the children. Throughout the formulation process, SOS discovered its new role in relation to partnership will primarily be to facilitate and build capacity with local CBOs and other stakeholders. Thus, SOS RWANDA understood the necessity to identify existing capacities and resources within community and work together with relevant stakeholders to develop networks and strong social support systems for children and their families.

A deeper analysis of the project context was conducted within Nyamagabe district taking into account the vulnerable family conditions, the status of the children's rights, the situation of literacy and the enrollment in formal education, the family income level, the access to health services, etc. Against the general situation, the key problem in relation to SOS mission has been identified as a relatively high number of children lacking access to basic needs and without parental care due to a number of factors making their family vulnerable. Among those factors, some of them are orphans phenomenon, families lacking access to nutritious needs, families lacking land and other job opportunities to increase their income. Another big challenge with regards to children rights was the relatively big number of couples living with illegal marriage which had among other consequences a big number of children not registered at civil status office, various family conflicts including heritage related cases, and family-based violence.

In order to address those problems, the project adopted a participatory approach which involved a wide range of stakeholders at grassroots level. The overall goal of the project was to strengthen the capacities of vulnerable households/families and community to respond to basic and

developmental needs of children in Gasaka sector. The basic strategy has been the capacity building and empowerment of the families so that they take full responsibility of care provision to their children while providing strategic assistance in terms of school materials and health insurance fees. The family empowerment passed through the development of the Village Saving and Loan Association while the Family Development was strongly supported through the voluntary services of the Community Based organization initiated by the Project.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

An evaluation exercise needs to be participatory in order to produce learning processes not only to the Project staff but also to all involved partners. In that regard, the consultant team followed the standard evaluation criteria and emphasized the information sharing throughout the whole process. The 5 DAC criteria are shortly explained below before presenting different methods and techniques used in order to produce a critical picture of the project's implementation and achievements.

2-1 Standard evaluation criteria

The general approach of the evaluation was guided by the five standard criteria of projects evaluation as adopted by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. Indeed, they constitute the spine of the findings presented in this report. We would like to shortly recall them below for referral purpose of the reader.

- ✓ **Relevance:** with regard to the real problems of the participants, project approach and objectives, alignment with SOS policies and National policies regarding family promotion and children rights
- ✓ **Efficiency:** with reference to the use of resources, financial means versus the results achieved
- ✓ **Effectiveness:** with regard to the achievement of the chain of results and objectives. Level of achievement of the objectives, results and verification of the indicators
- ✓ **Impact:** referring to positive and negative changes intended or not occurred within the project context. The project capacity to produce the multiplier effect.
- ✓ **Sustainability** which refers to the capacity of continuation of achievement from the institutional, managerial, financial, technical points of view.

2-2 Methods and techniques used

Different methods and techniques were used to conduct this final evaluation. The following have been chosen for their proven effectiveness in data collection and analysis.

- **Documentation review:** The document analysis technique is the art of studying relevant business, system and project documentation with the objective of understanding the project

background and identifying requirements or opportunities for improvement. In our case, the documentation review covered a wide range of resources including the international child related tools, the national policies, the SOS global and local policies, the project reports but also modules, brochures, guidelines and by-laws produced during the project implementation.

- **Questionnaire:** the questionnaire prepared as set of questions which are used to collect information from the direct informants. In this research, the questionnaire includes the closed-ended questions as well as open-ended questions the general attitudes to be expressed and respondents to give free responses by providing their own answers to the enumerator. A specific questionnaire has been addressed to a sampled group of the project target families.
- **Interviews:** interview is an instrument where the researcher has access to the respondents, interviews them and fills in the interview guide. This technique helped us to get the feedback about the project from the SOS management, the project staff, and the local authorities.
- **Focus group discussions:** A focus group is qualitative research that asks participants for open-ended responses conveying thoughts or feelings. During this evaluation the focus group discussions have been organized for the group of target children, the sampled teachers, the VSLA groups, and the CBO members.
- **Quantitative and qualitative analyses:** The combined analysis has helped during the evaluation of this Project where data provided through the responses from the questionnaire have been summarized in light of the results of interviews and discussions in order to give out an opinion about the project added-value in the community.
- **Qualitative research** is considered to be particularly suitable for gaining an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons and motivations. It provides insights into the setting of a problem. At the same time, it frequently generates ideas and hypotheses for later quantitative research. Interviews, discussions, visit to households, opinions from different categories of respondents provided a complex picture of the project that reflects not only the facts but also the feelings, the impressions and the psychological effects produced by the project at the level of the individual, the family and the community as well.

2-3 Sample population for the evaluation research

In order to conduct the data collection form different categories of the direct and indirect project partners/participants, the team based its calculations on the population provided in different documents. The sampled groups have been reached as follows :

- Twenty six (26) children gathered in a focus group representing 5.2% of 500 children supported by the project

- Five (5) teachers representing 5 out of 9 partner schools, met the evaluation team
- 38 families responded to questionnaire representing 21.4 % of the 177 families targeted by the project
- Two VSLA groups composed of 50 members were visited and shared their experience with the project. These groups are Twiteze imbere Nzega (26 members) and Dukoranumurava (24 members)
- 15 members of the CBO Girimpuhwe were reached in focus group discussions representing 33.3 % of the 45 members. All the three zones Nyabivumu-Ngiryi, Nyamugari Remera and Nzega-Kigeme found its representatives in the focus groups.
- In the category of local authorities, we interviewed : the Executive Secretary of Gasaka Sector, Civil Status in charge and notary, education in charge, social affairs; three (3) executive secretaries of cells (Nyamugari, Remera and Ngiryi), and 2 chiefs of village (Imidugudu)

In total, 140 people from the project partners and participants took part of the evaluation by sharing their feedback about the project. Our report tried at best to respect all opinions before considering the critical point of view of the evaluation team.

In addition, three (3) Project direct staff, three volunteers, the Program Director and the National FS Coordinator have been interviewed.

2-4 Schedule of the field data collection

After determining the participants and partners to take part of the evaluation process, the consultants' team followed the schedule as per the table below:

Table 1 : Schedule of the field data collection

| Day | Category | Number | Location |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Day 1 - Tue Dec 29, 2015 | -Children -Teachers | 26 5 | SOS Office |
| Day 2 - Wed Dec 30, 2015 | -Project team - Program Director -Target families -Local authorities | 3 1 13 4 | SOS office Villages Target Cells |
| Day 3 - Thu Dec 31, 2015 | -Target families -Project team -CBO -Local authorities | 14 3 5 6 | Villages SOS office Nzega-Kigeme Sector office |
| Day 4 - Sunday Jan 3, 2016 | -Target families -CBO VSLA (2) | 11 10 40 | Villages Cells Nzega Ngiryi |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------|
| Day 5 - Wed Jan 6, 2016 | National FS Coordinator | 1 | Kigali |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------|

2-5 Data collection tools

The Consultant team prepared different tools of data collection which helped to gather the information from different categories of respondents including target families, children, teachers, sector and cell officials, Village Saving and Loan Association, Community Based Organization as well as the project staff. They permitted gathering very important information presented under the chapter 3 of the report related to the findings, especially on the component of the effectiveness.

3. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

3.1 General findings

3.1.1 Place of the Family Strengthening Programme in the SOS global mission

From its roots, SOS Children's Villages pioneered in family-based child care (FBC) for children who have already lost the care of their own family. More recently, building on the strong experience in child and family development, the global organization emphasized the focus on addressing the situation of those children who are at risk of losing the care of their biological family. This translates the preventive strategy which has taken shape in the development of the family strengthening programmes. Having this combination of service delivery with FBC and the prevention through FSP has been a very innovative strategy within SOS global mission which has a double merit of aligning most perfectly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on one side, but also making a wider impact in terms of number of children and families reached and long term changes in the environment on the other side. SOS RWANDA started the FS projects in 2005. Currently, the Programme supports 5002 children country wide against 952 children under the traditional FBC programme in four locations. SOS was used to have a direct day-to-day involvement in the communities where they implement FSPs. But, in the concerned project, the organization understood more the responsibility of having a more facilitating and capacity building role.

3.1.2 Characteristics of Gasaka Project

Gasaka project concerned by this evaluation was not the pilot one of this programme. It followed the experience of Kigali site, two projects in Kayonza, and the phase one that laid the foundation and first experience in Gikongoro site since 2005. Though the approach of all projects follows the same model as defined by the FS Policy, Gasaka Project has experienced distinctive points that made it a model case for its pairs for the following reasons:

- The project opted for mindset changing, an approach that worked over a relatively short period through trainings and mass campaigns.

- The direct support and financial inputs to families and partners have been deliberately very limited. While other projects are providing start-up funding to VSLA, a set of direct assistance to families, Gasaka Project did not but recorded some interesting results in terms of community and family empowerment
- Looking at the great efforts made by the Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) as well as the level of the initiative taken by the Community Based Organization (CBO) Gimpuhwe, Gasaka project confirmed the skeptic opinion that the self-help is possible if people are given chance and trust.

3.1.3 Appreciation of project approach by local authorities

Based on the feedback of the local authorities interviewed at cell and Sector levels, who compared the FS Gasaka project to other interventions they received from different partners, the Project has had the merit of being intensively consulted among stakeholders at all stages. They appreciated the way it kept closer to the people or the participants better than other similar projects. It also utilized the mass communications channels most used by the local leaders including Umuganda and the evening family gatherings (Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi). They were also very much satisfied with the legal marriages that have reduced a number of family conflicts and permitted children enjoying their rights after being registered in civil status office.

3.1.4 The project duration

All project partners including authorities, participants and staff agree on a fact that the duration of three years is relatively short to produce the necessary changes in empowering families and promoting child rights. Some activities required high frequency and repetitions that could not be done during the limited time of project period. Furthermore, some of the expected effects on family empowerment could not be measured with enough elements within three years.

3.2 Findings and discussion on the Project Relevance

3.2.1 Alignment to the international tools and national policies

The evaluation team noted that Gasaka project activities and approaches are in line with the UN Convention on Rights of Child which reads in its preamble that “for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”. It adds that the family, as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

In addition, the Project was in perfect alignment with the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) notably the goal 1 (eradicate the extreme poverty) as it economically empowered vulnerable families, the goal 2 (universal primary education) by helping the school age children to access and

pursue their basic education, the goals 4&5 (reduce mortality of under 5 children and promote maternal health) through the provision of community health insurance support.

On the other side, the Project finds its strong linkages with national policies as amended to date. The national OVC policy of 2003 stated among its specific principles that “a focus is being placed on community based approaches which include the community and children in research of solutions and decision making; care and protection for vulnerable children should remain within the family and community; institution based solutions should be the exception”(p7). Later on, the National Policy for Family Promotion (2005) has confirmed the necessity of “raising the parents’ awareness of their responsibility in the education and social management of their children” (p 11). The most recent National Integrated Childs Rights Policy (2011) describes under its second principle about family and alternative care, the commitment of the government to support families in order to prevent abandonment or negligence of their responsibilities to caring their children. Supporting the child from the extended family or from the community remains the preferred option to the institution based care considered as last resort solution and transitional.

Based on the above references, the project activities have been and remain appropriate responses to the requirements of the children’s rights according to the country’s policy.

3.2.2 Alignment to the donor policy

The Gasaka FS project received all its funding from the Danish Government through SOS Denmark. They have been partnering with SOS RWANDA over the last 20 years. The donor has been happy to see that from the one-way funding partnership, a program based approach was introduced in 2009 and permitted the Rwandan partner to increase step by step its focus on working as a development organization, building community capacity, and implementing sustainable strategies. The Project itself included one component of organizational capacity building and received missions from Denmark experts for exchange and learning opportunities including a participatory mid-term review and different trainings. While the traditional partnership was based on fundraising for FBC programs, this project permitted to develop the capacity of management of Danish public funding. The SOS RWANDA was able to get familiar with the Danish civil society strategy including the approaches of development triangle and the logical framework (LFA).

3.2.3 Consistency with SOS policy and strategies

For many years, the SOS programme structure was defined from a facility-based perspective... Over the years, the SOS Children’s Village programme policy changed to stress a programme-oriented approach putting the child’s development needs and rights in the center of the programme. The fundamental idea is that children and their families are part of the community. SOS then set its second general policy principal to be “strengthening the social support networks

for children & their families” (SOS Programme Policy 2009). Recognizing the role, capacity, resources and existing initiatives of all relevant stakeholders within the community, SOS decided to work together with these stakeholders to develop strong social support systems for children and their families. In accordance to that new policy, the FSP have been initiated around the year 2000 (51 years from the foundation of SOS). The FSP key processes are about empowerment of community for empowerment of families which are responsible for children development. According to the FS policy (2007), the programme is built upon four principles :

- The best place for children to grow is within their biological family
- Care-givers are responsible for the development of their children
- Communities are a direct source of support for children & their families
- The goal of development is the realization of human rights

From the principles, the programme defined six standards:

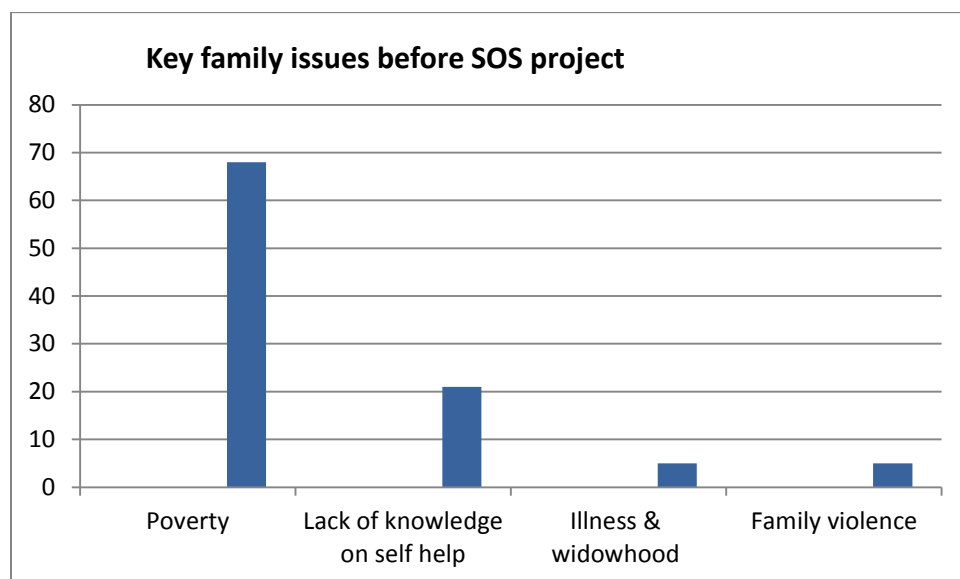
- Children most at risk of losing the care of their family are the target group
- Children have access to essential services for their healthy development
- Families are empowered to build their capacity to protect & care for their children
- Communities are empowered to respond effectively to the situation of vulnerable children & their families
- Partnerships are built to achieve common goals
- Ongoing planning, monitoring and evaluation makes programmes relevant & effective

The evaluation has confirmed that from the planning phase until the implementation, Gasaka project has been referring the FS policy and guidelines including falling under the area of intervention related to capacity building. If the service delivery package was limited, it was a deliberate choice not a fact of negligence. Moreover, the evaluation team noticed that the partnership requirements were well fulfilled not only on CBO with which an annual formal MoU was signed but also with Sector authority where separate agreements were signed to formalize the collaboration and synergy mechanism on specific activities including adult literacy trainings.

3.2.4 Responsiveness to the real needs of the target group

Both the study that led to the formulation of the Project and the baseline study conducted at the beginning of the project confirmed the high level of children’s rights abuse in Gasaka Sector. They were linked to different factors including the lack of access to basic services resulting from the poverty of their biological families or care-givers. Different categories of vulnerable families have been identified including widowers and widows, elderly, children head of families, etc. From those categories the target families have been selected in close collaboration with all community members and local leaders.

Figure 1 : Key issues faced by families before the SOS/FS project



The project activities were decided in order to respond to the real needs related to the poverty and ignorance about children rights as confirmed by our respondents.

It has been noticed that beyond the physical needs, psychological problems have been indirectly overcome. The impact paragraph will develop further below.

3.2.5 Appropriateness of the project approach

The Project did not develop its own particular approach. It implemented the FS general approach that emphasizes the participation of the family and the child to their empowerment or development processes. As the project was succeeding to a largely service delivery focused program, the new project made a logical choice of focusing on skills and capacity development for self-help with a very limited support in terms of service. The biggest evidence of the appropriateness of the approach is the sound ownership by the project participants which led to tremendous results in CBO organization and VSLA success story.

3.3 Findings and discussion on the Project Efficiency

This part presents the findings with regard to the use of financial, material and human resources in order to achieve the project objectives.

3.3.1 Availability and use of project funding

The Project was allocated the total amount of 259.539.793 Rwf (equivalent to 2.458.880 DK at the exchange rate of 100 RWF=0.9474 DK) including the project auditing and administration in Denmark representing 7.3 %. The project expenses in Rwanda were allocated 240,449,651 Frw.

The analysis of the project budget execution shows that the funds were well managed as shown in the table below.

Table 2 : Project budget execution 2013-2015 in Rwf

| Year | (1)Budget | (2) Disbursed | (3) Executed |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 2013 | 66,811,838 | 66,811,838 | 65,725,572 |
| 2014 | 74,902,125 | 60,465,911 | 67,064,290 |
| 2015 | 74,225,216 | 82,448,687 | 77,689,017 |
| TOTAL | 215,939,179 | 209,726,436 | 210,478,879 |

Extra funds on disbursement which were spent in 2014 have been compensated on the funds received in 2015. Thus, the project financial status kept a balanced picture over the three years with a good performance in terms of budget execution.

With reference to the project proposal, the major budget lines included the activities which were allocated 45.8%, the local staff budgeted for 25.8% and the project monitoring representing almost 9%. The budget margin was reserved a standard percentage of 10%. The cash flows permitted to control regularly all budget lines as well as providing the signal to project staff about the funding management. A simple check of the annual cash-flows shows that the funds have been utilized for the eligible expenses which have been planned and executed at realistic costs.

3.3.2 Respect of the time frame

While the general chronogram or plan of operation of the whole project was not available, our analysis of the efficiency in terms of respect of time frame was based on annual plans and reports. Taking the example of the second year 2014, the project team has made big efforts to accomplish most of the planned activities except three of them which could not be implemented due to the annual budget limitation. In addition, different bi-annual reports confirm that every activity suspended at the end of the fiscal year was reported to the following fiscal year. Briefly, all planned activities were executed by the end of the project period.

3.3.3 Assessment of material resources utilized for different activities

The option of concentrating the activities within one administrative sector was a big advantage about the material means required to execute different activities. The transport was assured mainly by hiring motorbikes and rent car services some times. In that regard, the project saved resources and money which were allocated to direct support in kind to families.

3.3.4 Performance of the project staff

The Project employed three permanent staff including a coordinator and two field officers. That small team could successfully organize, lead and report the project activities over the three year period. Looking at the workload of identifying 180 families gathering more than 500 children and the big task of visiting households to follow up the Family Development plans, there is no doubt that for every staff member has been very busy. In that regard, achieving the project results with such a small team required tremendous efforts from every member. Of course, it is worth mentioning the big role played by the volunteers as supporting intermediaries between the project staff and the participants.

It is also commendable to have annual performance contract for every staff. The format of that tool has the merit of combining in one plan the tasks from the job profile with the annual project activities. The evaluation team found it an important planning and monitoring tool for the improvement of the staff performance.

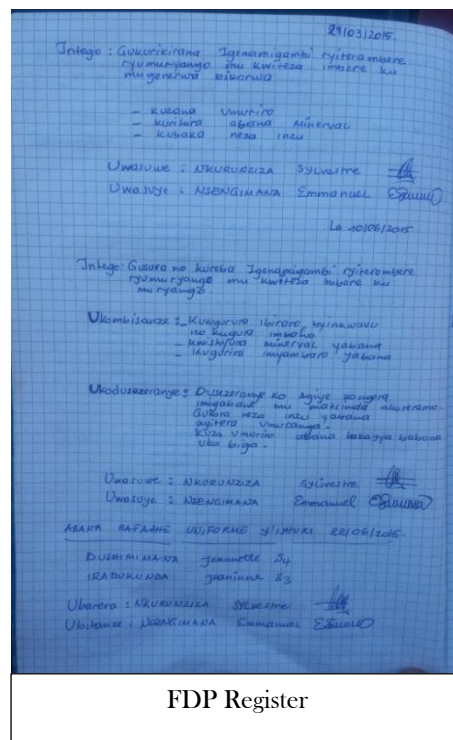
3.4 Findings and discussion on the Project Effectiveness

The main purpose of this part is to discuss the quality of project cycle management, the level of achievements of the objectives and the indicators taking into account different forms of partnership as well as the level of participation into the process as required by the terms of reference.

3.4.1 Project cycle management

The evaluation team appreciated in general the project cycle management. From the Project formulation up to the present evaluation exercise, several stages of the standard project cycle have been followed. The Project application was documented by a comprehensive analysis of Nyamagabe district. The baseline survey conducted further analysis of the context and helped to formulate concrete indicators. The mid-term review and the final evaluation were also planned and effectively implemented.

In order to facilitate the project implementation, some tools for monitoring and evaluation were developed which included mainly the following: Family Development Plan, CBO weekly report, different registers by volunteers, staff weekly plans and reports, project bi-annual report. Most of these reports follow a common format which eases their compilation and analysis. The FS coordinator organizes a self-evaluation sessions three times



FDP Register

per year. The master list has played also an important role not only as a tool that helped to identify and summarize the characteristics of the project participants but also for monitoring their status and movement towards the end of the intervention.

3.4.2 Project logical framework

The project proposal contained a logical framework that guided the project over the three years. The logic of intervention included the overall objective, the specific objectives, the outcomes, the indicators, and some main activities. Different tables provided also the inputs in terms of budget. The project document included also a wide risk analysis. Apart from a tentative re-formulation or adjustment of indicators done by the mid-term review mission (without being approved), the logical framework remained unchanged.

3.4.3 The assessment of the project participants

The evaluation team appreciated the criteria (different categories of vulnerable families) applied to select the project participants as well as the participatory approach that involved not only the community but also the local leaders. We also analyzed the Master list which is the main reference for the project participants notably families and children. The tool is very important for this type of intervention. The following table provides the picture of the number of participants as a result of consultation of the master list and the interviews.

Table 3 : Number of participants to the project

| Year | Initial number of families | Exited families | Exited children | Accepted children | Actual families | Actual number of children |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 2013 | 180 | (0) | 0 | 0 | 180 | 500 |
| 2014 | 180 | (0) | 0 | 0 | 180 | 500 |
| 2015 | 177 | 12 | 24 | 14 | 177 | 500 |

3.4.4 Project indicators against the achievements

The evaluation team assessed the achievements against the plan in different aspects of the interventions.

Table 4: Checking the level of achievement of project indicators

| KPI | Baseline | Target/Revised + additional indicator | Achievement (cumulated as of Dec. 2015) | Observations |
|---|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Objective No 1 : By June 2015, at least 70% of children enrolled in the project attend school on a regular basis and have access to essential basic services in Gasaka Sector</i> | | | <i>95% of children enrolled attend the school on regular basis (refer to reports 2014 and 2015)</i> | |
| School going age children regularly attending formal or informal education | 56.9% of children aged under 5 | 70% | 100% | The report does not specify whether it's under 5 or children from supported families |
| Children have access to medical services | 37.7% | 70% | 100 | The report states participants' situation, while baseline considered all vulnerable families of Gasaka sector |
| Caregivers and stakeholders (rights bearer) have increased knowledge on the right to education and the importance of education for their children | Ambivalent | Clear | Interviews with children and parents/caregivers have confirmed a far increased knowledge of the child rights | |
| <i>Objective No 2 : By June 2015, at least 70 % (80%) of the households/families of children participating in the project are economically empowered and have the capacity to meet the developmental needs of their children in Gasaka sector</i> | | | <i>22.5% achieved empowerment level and can be exited, 40% needs 1 year support and follow up while 37.5 % still need full support in the next phase of project</i> | |
| # of caregivers has been trained in VSLAs and # VSLAs are organized | - | - | 11 VSLAs formed, trained and operational | 69 out of 182 members of VSLAs are not among project participants |
| Caregivers have increased knowledge on children's rights and protection (including child protection communication lines) | - | - | All participants families trained several times on child rights | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Objective No 3: By June 2015, SOS Rwanda and local CBOs have increased organizational capacities to implement child rights based approach and participatory advocacy activities</i> | | <i>SOS Rwanda strengthened the CBO Gimpuhwe which is operational with autonomous management. It is taking various initiatives in supporting the vulnerable families.</i> | | |
| SOS Rwanda and local CBOs working with child's rights have established network | - | CBO work as strong and equal civil society partners of SOS Children's Villages Rwanda | One CBO Gimpuhwe gathering 45 members established | CBO Statutes drafted, but structure not clear (NGO, Cooperative, or association) |
| SOS Rwanda and local CBOs have organized at least three (once a year) campaigns on children's rights on district level | - | Three campaigns in three years | One awareness campaign organized in 2014 including competitions on child rights | Was limited to Gasaka Sector |

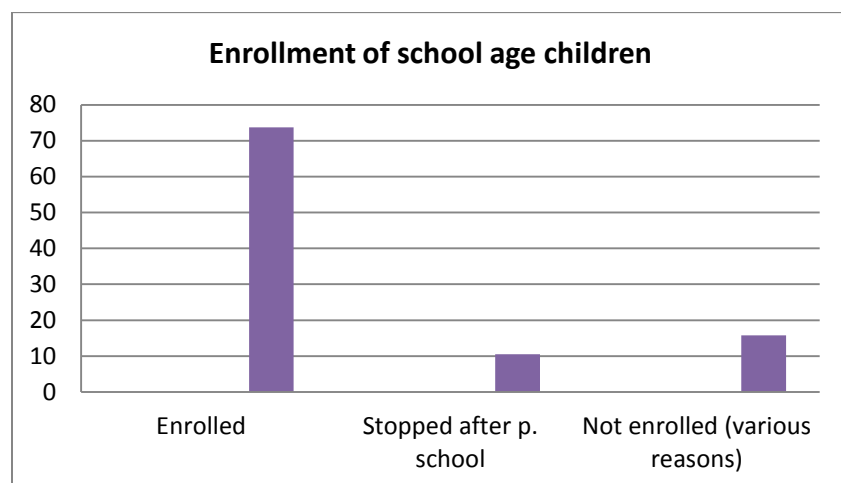
From the results in the table above, we can conclude that the project's objectives were achieved. Some other pertinent indicators showed out that the capacity of families to take over the responsibility of caring their children has improved. For example, among project participants, up to 61.5% of the families were able to pay themselves the fee for community health insurance against 38.5% whom the project paid for in the second year of the project (Report 2014).

3.4.5 Level of achievement of objectives

Objective No 1 : By June 2015, at least 70% of children enrolled in the project attend school on a regular basis and have access to essential basic services in Gasaka Sector

The results of the questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of 38 families of the participants families have confirmed the achievement of the first objective as displayed in the figure below.

Figure 2: Enrollment of school age children in participants' families



In 28 families (73.6%), all school age children are enrolled. Some of the children stopped the studies after completing the primary school due to lack of school fees.

The project registered also various achievements related to the promotion of child rights including putting in place the clubs for child rights in 9 schools of Gasaka Sector. The children, teachers and PTA from those schools participated in different trainings of other teachers and children from neighboring schools.

The sensitization on legal marriage and birth registration was among key activities conducted in order to promote child rights which find a firm basis in a stable family. The table below shows out the results achieved by the project over the three years.

Table 5 : Legal marriage and birth registration

| Year | Legally married couples | Children registered |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 2013 | 84 | 2.845 |
| 2014 | 58 | 251 |
| 2015 | 120 | 466 |
| TOTAL | 262 | 3.562 |

Objective No 2 : By June 2015, at least 70 % (80%) of the households/families of children participating in the project are economically empowered and have the capacity to meet the developmental needs of their children in Gasaka sector

The economic empowerment was promoted through the VLSAs' activities. Their situation at the end of the project is presented in the table below.

Table 6 : Situation of the VSLAs in 2015

| No | VSLA Name | Cell | # of project participants | # of attracted persons from community | Current membership | Total cash shared out / May 2015 Rwf |
|----|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | EJOHEZA MWANA | Nyabivumu | 16 | 4 | 20 | 339,012 |
| 2 | TWITEZIMBERE SUMBA | Ngiryi | 17 | 10 | 27 | 1,479, 723 |
| 3 | DUKORANUMURAVA | Nyamugali | 14 | 10 | 24 | 1,810, 745 |
| 4 | TUZAMURANE | Remera | 8 | 2 | 10 | 265,750 |
| 5 | ABADAHEMUKA | Remera | 24 | 0 | 24 | 1,233, 850 |
| 6 | DUHARANIRE KWIGIRA | Nyamugali | 15 | 12 | 27 | 1,472, 838 |
| 7 | TUZAMURANE Ngiryi | Ngiryi | 17 | 2 | 19 | 562,145 |
| 8 | ABISHYZEHAMWE | Kigeme | 14 | 4 | 18 | 554,250 |
| 9 | IMBEREHEZA KIGEME | Kigeme | 15 | 10 | 25 | 913,770 |
| 10 | TWITEZIMBERE Nzega | Nzega | 18 | 6 | 24 | 1,248, 490 |
| 11 | IMBEREHEZA Kigarama | Nyamugali | 17 | 9 | 26 | 699,720 |
| | TOTAL | | 175 | 69 | 244 | 10,580,293 |

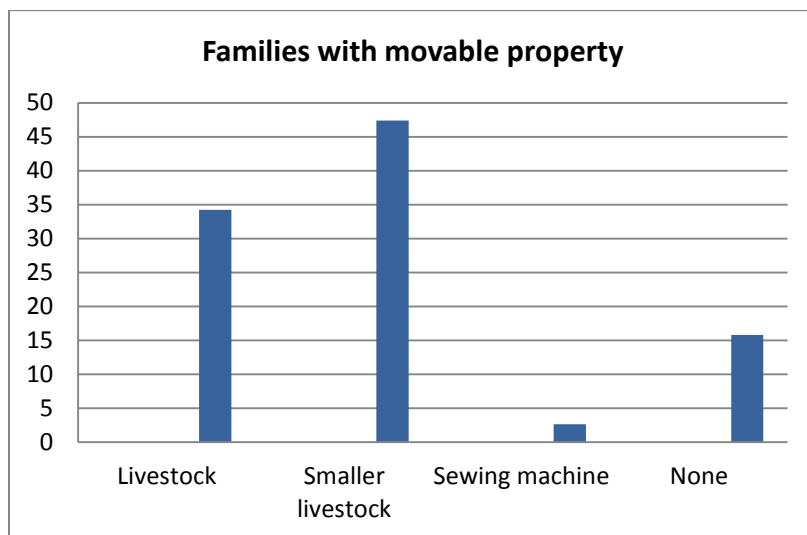
From May 2014 to May 2015, the 11 VSLAs' turn-over reached 10,580,293 Rwf. The highest performance of the VSLA was 1,810,745 Rwf almost doubling the initial year performance where the highest performance was 915,790Rwf over a 12 month cycle. On the other hand, the internal organization is also commendable.

They are very strict on time and rules. In addition, the VSLA's good performance attracted up to 69 (28.2% of the total VSLAs members) non-participants to join the groups. Theoretically, only two (2) participants resisted to adhere to VSLAs despite the insistence of the CBO, volunteers and project staff.

However, there are also very few members excluded due to misconduct.

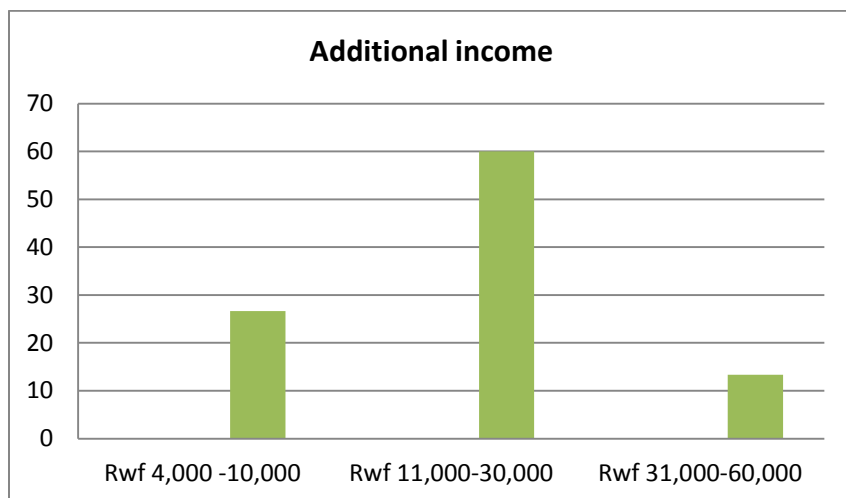
The financial performance was reflected in their daily life and changed their economic status by buying livestock and household materials, rehabilitating houses and developing different businesses. The figure below shows the families which acquired additional movable property among the respondents.

Figure 3: Acquired movable property



With regard to the income, the participants started off-farm businesses and increased significantly their income. Among 39.4% of the families, some people started income generation activities other than agriculture which make additional revenues varying between 11,000 to 30,000 Frw per month (60% among those families) and between 31,000 to 60,000 Rwf per month (13.3 % among those families).

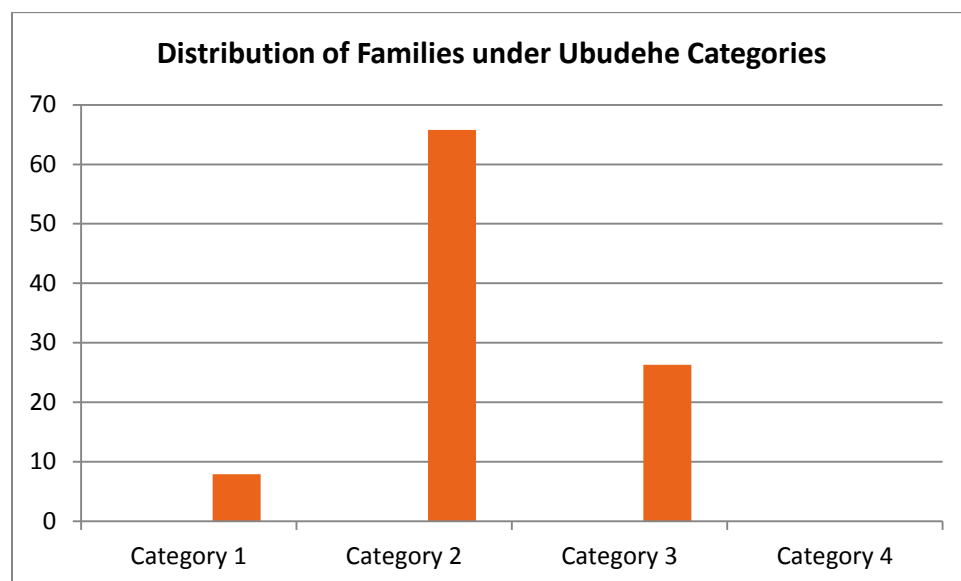
Figure 4: Additional monthly income by participants



On the other side, the new positions of the families under the revised categories of Ubudehe¹ show out the economic change among the participants.

¹ Category 1 : No house, cannot afford basic needs; Category 2 : Can rent a house, rarely find full time job; Category 3 : have a job, farmers beyond subsistence, SMEs owners; Category 4: owners of large scale businesses public servants and international organizations staff. (source: www.rwandapedia.rw)

Figure 5: Distribution of families into Ubudehe categories



In order to ensure a real participation of illiterate participants into VSLAs activities, the project organized the basic literacy training for 301 adults from late 2014 as per the table below.

Table 7: Literacy training for adults

| Year | Participants trainees | Non-participants trainees | Total trainees |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| 2013 | - | - | - |
| 2014 | 53 | 247 | 300 |
| 2015 | 54 | 247 | 301 |

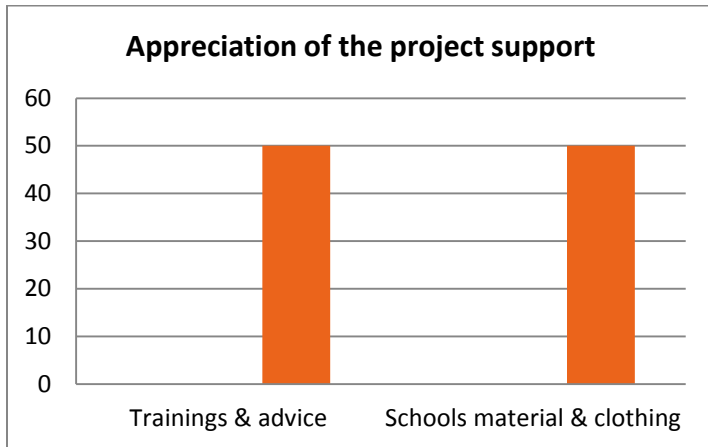
However, at the end of the project only 85 trainees (28.2%) successfully passed the tests and received certificates. In fact, the training period was too short to allow most of people to acquire enough reading and writing skills since most of them are busy with survival activities. The training should then continue so that the remaining people could also reach the required level.

Objective No 3: By June 2015, SOS Rwanda and local CBOs have increased organizational capacities to implement child rights based approach and participatory advocacy activities

With regard to trainings, all categories of participants (families, children) and partners (CBO, local authorities, schools, PTA, teachers, NGOs, churches, etc) of the project received different trainings. The main themes covered include the child rights, the education policies, the management of VSLAs. Volunteers received also short courses on psycho-social support, counseling, social work techniques, and child rights. Both the staff and the participants also attended some study tours which helped them to learn from other experiences either from the local or from the international context. The combination of trainings and real practice on the ground created a strong capacity in advocacy for child rights but also in self-help and

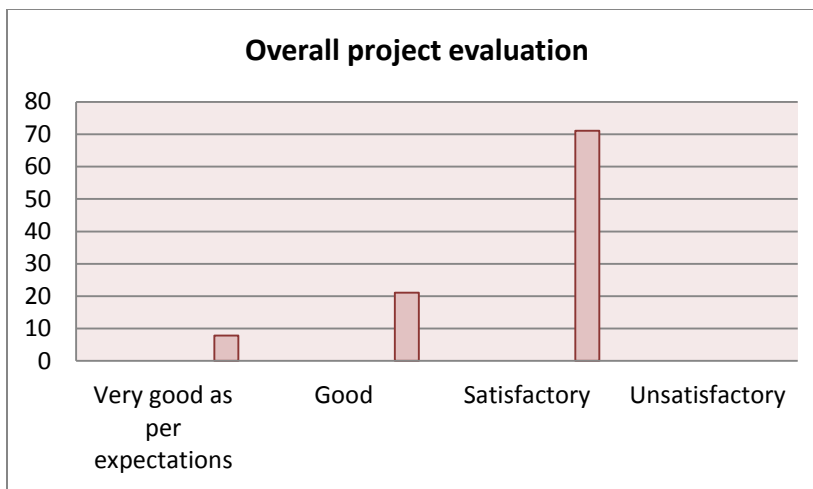
empowerment approaches. Indeed the capacity building activities have been ranked equally important as the provision of direct support in terms of school materials as shown in the figure below from the results of survey.

Figure 6: Appreciation of the support provided by the project



As overall evaluation of the project achievement, most participants confirmed that the project achieved a satisfactory level with regard to its objectives.

Figure 7: Overall project evaluation by participants



3.4.6 Quality of partnerships

SOS RWANDA is used to have a direct day-to-day involvement in the communities where they implement FSPs. The role of having a more facilitating and capacity building role is still somewhat new to SOS RWANDA. For the same reason there has been a strong focus on this role in the

project. The experience from the two FSPs funded by the Project Fund shows that SOS RWANDA is most capable of partnering with local leaders, authorities and institutions. The partnership with the local CBO produced very good effects for the project. The new formed CBO has been enrolled in trainings and processes that took it quickly to the level of following up the changes within participants families. Their rapid adaptation was also due to a very active and conscious membership with high sense of initiative. Two examples (belated if you consider the project period) can illustrate their proactive behaviour: they developed their own VSLA and are planning to construct and equip their own office.

While analysing the status of partnerships, we've also referred to the recent Feasibility Study (September 2015) which found "that there are a number of key stakeholders with interests in children and youth in the (Nyamagabe) district. Several examples who could provide potential collaboration opportunities included agencies such as the African Evangelistic Enterprises (AEE), Pentecostal Churches of Rwanda (ADPER), Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC), World Vision, Care International, CARITAS Rwanda, Gikongoro-based project and Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA). The project management could consider the possibility of collaboration according to the added-value that could be drawn from each one.

3.4.7 Participation of families and children in the decision making

The evaluation team assessed the level of participation of the participants and children in the decision making along the project. The approach of the project itself is a built on intensive involvement of different participants. Several factors illustrate the strong participation of the project participants :

- (1) Children testify that they discuss now with their parents and teachers about their rights. They are even intervening in families where parents are getting into conflicts with children about their rights.
- (2) The internal organization of the VSLA where everybody has free space to share his/her ideas and also promote one of the guiding rules of the group at every time that he/she takes the flow to speak. Groups and individuals decide independently on the target to achieve (kurasa ku ntego) at the end of the saving and Loan cycle.
- (3) The autonomy in decision of the CBO that accepts new members or exclude those who fail to abuse their values. Creation of their own VSLA and taking initiative to support most poor people from their own appreciation
- (4) CBO members that provide advisory services to non-participants families on request without any involvement of the project team

It is worth mentioning that the participatory mid-term review made a significant impact on the participation of different categories of partners of the project. All participants acquired a certain level of confidence which they demonstrate in their life especially project related activities.

3.5 Findings and discussion on the Project Impact

The FS Gasaka Project produced around its participants and partners a series of impact that can be categorized into intended /direct impact and unexpected/ indirect impacts while considering the particular sector of family and children life they are changing.

3.5.1 Expected/intended impact resulting of the project implementation

With regard to child rights and family stability, the following direct changes are observed:

- (a) Significant decline in the number of out-of-school children and dropouts and school desertion of school age children.
- (b) Significant decrease of cases of violation of the rights of children by parents and teachers, local authorities and other adults in general because of the awareness-raising and trainings related to the knowledge and recognition of child rights
- (c) The Sector authorities have been fighting the street children cases for long. They have been relieved by the campaigns on child rights which encouraged and also empowered families to take care of their children. Since then, the cases on street children significantly reduced around Gasaka town.
- (d) Almost complete elimination in Gasaka town of cases of children who drop out because of remunerated or domestic work
- (e) A rise in the number of legal marriages and children registration in the civil status out of the project participants
- (f) The creation, use and providing feedback on suggestion from ad hoc boxes installed in schools.

With regard to the relationship between authorities and citizen, the following direct changes were observed by our respondents:

- (g) Improving the level of cooperation and trust between local authorities and FS Gasaka officials.

With regard to the family empowerment:

- (h) Creation of new forms of solidarity, peer support, self-organizing, self-management and creation of income-generating activities through savings and credit groups, CBO, etc.

3.5.2 Unexpected / unintended impact resulting of the project implementation

Along the analysis, the evaluation team identified the unexpected impact which includes the following points.

With regard to the economic empowerment of families:

- (a) Creation of 3 other VSLAs in the Kigarama Village community just inspired by the performance of SOS supported groups.

With regard to the family health:

- (b) Participants themselves said that some diseases reduced in their homes because of the cleanliness including physical, clothes, food and housing.
- (c) The same participants and also local leaders testify that the cases of malnutrition reduced due to the improvement of food quality and quantity.

3.6 Findings and discussion on the Project Sustainability

3.6.1 Policy environment

As confirmed while discussing the relevance, the National Integrated Child Rights Policy (MIGEPROFE, 2011) remains valid. It will continue to support all initiatives oriented in child care and child rights promotion. Especially, the Rwandan Government emphasizes the support to the child within the family or the community instead of taking him/her out to some institutions. In that perspective, the FSP fully aligns the government of Rwanda policy. The aspect of policy environment constitutes a crucial factor of sustainability of the project achievements because if the policy changes, there is a great risk to see whatever was built falling apart.

3.6.2 Institutional aspects

Having strong institutions that will pursue the activities and initiatives is another important factor that assures the project sustainability. As far as the children and schools are concerned, the clubs for child rights should continue to operate and keep up the sensitization on child rights. The school authority and the teachers bear that responsibility of keeping the flame alive.

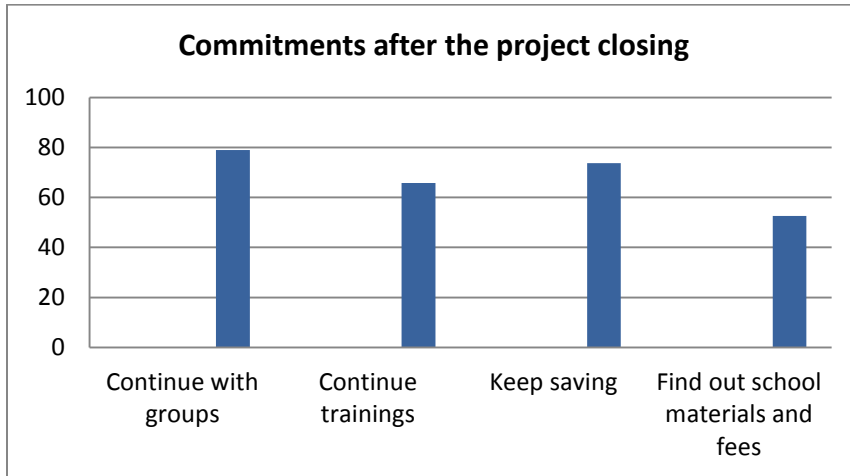
On the other hand, the basic foundation lays in having all the VSLAs legally recognized and registered at the competent authority level (cell). The commitment of all members to keep working together as group will be re-enforced by the official recognition. The umbrella of VSLAs will at another level guaranty the continuity to the individual group in case of managerial and financial difficulties. In addition, the CBO has demonstrated strong autonomy in management, development of its own VSLA and strong sense of initiative. The CBO's commitment to voluntarily support the groups assures once again the continuity in terms of supporting the development of the vulnerable families.

The Fund for Community Health Insurance "Tubehoneza" created by the participants and their groups is very practical example leading to sustaining the basic services offered by the project. Under that framework, poor members could make continuous saving in order to be able to pay the community health insurance fees for both themselves and their children.

3.6.3 Capacity to sustain the achievements

The technical capacity is also another important factor to keep the achievements alive. A certain capacity has been surely acquired through a series of trainings benefited to CBO members and VSLA members or committees which will sustain the achievements. That's what is illustrated by the commitments made by our respondents according to the figure below:

Figure 8: Commitments after the project closing



However, the fact that CBO group itself is still young and the VSLAs' problems are always reported to the project team justifies that the capacity is not yet enough. The VSLAs are growing fast in terms of turn-over and initiatives. Shortly, they would need to link with other financial institutions like commercial banks or SACCO in the purpose of accessing more financing. At that stage, they would need to shift into another level of management which requires professional skills. As the groups expand, the turn-over grows and the risk increases. The umbrella of VSLA should then think about employing an accountant from the very beginning to prevent high risks at the early stage which would be fatal for the group's future.

3.6.4 Financial viability

It is very much commendable that the project led the startup of the 11 VSLA without an initial capital. Another positive point is that the CBO's operations do not depend on the project money. Both factors constitute a good foundation for the financial viability. But beyond that, the groups need to make enough money to cover their expenses as they grow up.

4. MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PROJECT

The Project did not face any serious obstacles that could affect irremediably the course of the activities. However, some observations can be made on some issues related to the project cycle management, the human resources and the requirements for the sustainability.

4.1 With regard to the project cycle management

- There is no doubt that the project as designed was responding to real needs expressed in Rwanda and specifically in Nyamagabe district. However, the periodic planning did not always reflect the changing context such as considering the demand of the children who successfully completed the primary schools.
- There was no clear indicators formulated for the component related the family empowerment and the capacity building of the CBO and staffs under the baseline survey. The evaluation took only into account the data reported by the project team and the general feedback of interviewees. The mid-term review deliberately conducted under a participatory approach did not provide any corrective measures or additional indicators for the empowerment.
- Against the baseline survey, the project needs to collect comprehensive data on all aspects it touched. That exercise can be done separately as one of the last project activities or be combined with the final evaluation and effectively be reflected in the terms of reference.
- As a monitoring tool, the master list was not updated regularly. Over time, some information could miss accuracy.

4.2 With regard to the resources management

- The centralized financial management of the programs under the software Navision is a good practice for a big organization like SOS. And the management made a wise decision to recruit a grant manager to support all FS projects. However, holding the cash flow book is not enough for the project team if they are to monitor the budget implementation and learn the efficient management of funding. The project should avail consolidated financial reports where the plan can be continuously compared to the execution
- The Project coordinator combined the technical tasks with relatively big financial management load. That situation did not allow her to dedicate enough time to the target group or capitalize the experience and learning from the project process itself. From the evaluation team point of view, some additional staff either for financial reporting or for field work should have been considered
- The evaluation team noted that the utilization of volunteers is part of the FS global policy and practice. Indeed, their support is crucial to make the project reaching more easily and frequently the participants. However, their double role as volunteer and members of the CBO does not allow a comfortable relationship rather a kind of suspicion. To our point of

view, their role of messengers of both the Project and the participants requires to keep a certain level of neutrality. In addition, the concept of volunteer having a different understanding on the side of the donor and on the side of the Rwandan context linked to the employment conditions, SOS management should consider a rotated selection of the volunteers in order to avoid precedents for employment-related legal cases.

4.3 With regard to the partners and participants institutions

- Both the CBO and the umbrella's statutes reflect a strong relationship and dependence from the project. They should evolve into independent entities which develop only a relationship of partner with the project so that once the project stops, they will feel confident to continue on their own or even get into partnership with other institutions.
- The relationship between the CBO and the recently created Umbrella of VSLAs, as per the statutes, reflects some ambiguity. The umbrella placed full control power under the CBO whose committee members have full right to be elected as umbrella's committee members while the CBO does not contribute to the umbrella's business. Logically, the CBO members do not have any right of control since they are not shareholders. In reality, the CBO should keep an advisory role, with more or less neutral position in order to provide a balanced support and stay distant from any bias in case of conflict management.
- The Fund for Community Health Insurance "Tubehoneza" remains a very new initiative (3 months) that needs to be set up, organized and which approach and strategy need to be defined. In case the project does not continue to pay for insurance for the most poor, it would be even difficult for this fund to start delivering the expected services (paying health insurance fees for the vulnerable families in advance) by the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 2017) unless if it receives a start-up capital. Unfortunately, not only the principle of start-up capital has been abandoned but also the project (even if it continues) did not plan for that support. The evaluation team came up with the idea of entrusting the health insurance mission to the Umbrella of VSLAs which allows the concentration of efforts into a single institution.

5 LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The process of evaluation including the documentation review, the interviews, the sites visits and the close check of the project results permitted the team to draw particular lessons from the project. The chapter also explained write down in a box two main best practices retained from the project experience before summarizing general recommendations of the study.

5.1 Key lessons learnt

- ✓ Joint identification of the participants by the project team with the community and their leaders
- ✓ Developing skills makes stronger impact than providing direct inputs or resources

- ✓ Supporting the child requires a long cycle until they could be productive people for the country
- ✓ Mainstreaming project messages into local community communication channels
- ✓ Get them together, Give them trust, they will develop themselves
- ✓ The healing of inner wounds is a prerequisite for the development and reintegration of socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalized people.
- ✓ The population discovered much more the importance of trainings, study tour, and other mechanisms to enhance the capacity, rather than quick material aids.
- ✓ The effectiveness and sustainability of FS Gasaka project results rely mainly on women's involvement. Their leadership in all groups is remarkable.

5.2 Retained best practices

Among several good lessons that can be learnt from the project, the evaluation team identified two outstanding practices from the three year experience that could serve as reference for other projects.

5.2.1 Self-developed VSLA

Self-developed Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) in Gasaka Sector, Nyamagabe District



“We’ve learnt to work, to organize and develop ourselves. We no longer form groups because of SOS. We do it for ourselves and we can access to micro-finance up to 250,000 Rwf within our group”, confidently expresses Mrs Francine INGABIRE, 38, Chief of Kigarama Village. No one could expect to hear those words from one vulnerable rural woman three years ago.

When the Project for Strengthening Families and Community in Gasaka Sector started early 2013, SOS Children Villages,

Gikongoro identified 180 vulnerable families as target group or participants of the project. In the perspective of building their economic capacity to take care of their children needs, the project had decided to go for family empowerment rather than distributing quick aid. All the participants received the initial trainings on child rights before engaging into self-development with Saving and Loan Associations at Village (Umudugudu) level.

They understood very early that they are the ones to find out solutions to their poverty and to the needs of their children. Indeed, SOS Gasaka Project did not plan any coin to start up the VSLA. Eleven (11) groups were formed gathering 8 to 20 people, mostly women. They started bringing together on a strict weekly schedule, 50 francs for emergency support deposit and one to four shares of 500 Frw per person as main saving. The money counted and registered in bank and cash books is kept in wood-made safe sealed with a double key lock. At the very first meeting, the start -up capital was collected. Four to ten thousand Rwandan francs per group at minimum which increased gradually in the few following weeks. The Loan is open on written request read in plenary. Everybody must borrow. Otherwise, he/she gets fined. It could even lead to exclusion if the whole annual cycle passes without borrowing. The rules are very strict. Punishment immediately executed. Every member memorized one rule that he bears and remind it to fellow at every occasion of speaking or releasing the due. Time is money. The meeting takes one and half hour maximum. The belated pays, the absent likewise, according to the rules.

An elected committee organizes the group and oversees the operations. It is composed of a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and two cashiers who count together the money. The detailed record of operations and figures matters and assures transparency and accountability. At the end of one annual cycle, savings are returned with interests calculated accordingly. Time to spend for the initial saving purpose, as agreed within the group. Kurasa ku ntego (get to the target). When the project team organized the training on the module Savings with education toolkit, it was just to consolidate what everybody firmly believes that small saving can change life. It's true. The National FS Coordinator is happy to share one strong lesson drawn from that experience: *“Trust them, those vulnerable people. They are able to change their life. Give them only a chance”*, releases Mr Amon NKURUNZIZA.

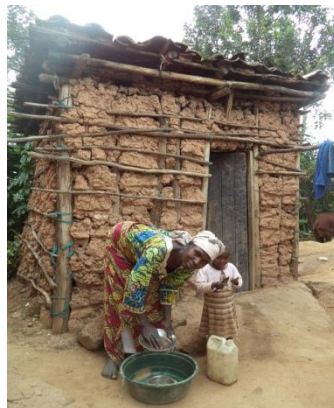
5.2.2 Innovative CBO

An innovative Community-Based Organization (CBO) Girimpuhwe in Gasaka Sector, Nyamagabe District

Working with Community Based Organization is one of the strategies of SOS Family Strengthening Program. Through the CBO, the community is empowered to take the lead in providing the community - based responses to the children at risk of losing the parental care. In order to be able to support the program activities, the program policy provides for a development and empowerment plan which is signed between the CBO and the FS Coordinator.

Since its establishment early 2013, the CBO Girimpuhwe, 45 members, demonstrated special commitment toward Gasaka project. It was their first experience as CBO. The selection of its members was done in close consultation with local leaders. The main criterion was integrity while the acceptance by the community could play an important role to put the candidate on the final list. The team could learn very fast on different trainings offered and got rapidly into the task of supporting the vulnerable families. *“From the time we were selected by the community, we felt the responsibility to support poor people as it is one of the values of Intore. We support them to find out solutions. They should not despair. Everyone shall strive for self-reliance”*, explained Mr

Sebera Tharcisse from Nzega. Motivated by the Rwandan cultural values, they accomplished a lot of commendable actions. They organized themselves to support the genocide survivor by planting trees in his parcel. By their own hand work, they constructed a three room house for one of the most vulnerable mother, Mrs BUNANI Agathe, identified



from the project participants. Number of other initiatives were conceived by that group including a special VLSA for the 45 members which reserve 2 out of 5 francs of perceived interest to the good will actions toward poor families. They helped in setting up the umbrella of the VSLA as well as the Fund for Community Health Insurance.

The CBO is planning to construct their office in 2016 in order to accommodate their files and meetings. Internally, they have a strong organization that is able to evaluate the behavior of members. Those who fail to fulfill the CBO's mission are excluded.

Among their outstanding actions in the community, the Cells' authorities appreciate their influential campaigns on child rights during monthly community works and the parents evening sessions (Umugoroba w'ababyeyi). They are also recognized as good facilitators of family-based conflicts not only for projects participants but also community members in general.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the lessons learnt from the project as well as the observed challenges, the evaluation formulated a number of recommendations addressed to key players for continuous improvement in the future project.

5.3.1 To SOS Rwanda

- (a) Improve the planning process by considering the changing context within the community and involving the local authorities/leaders as means to increase the ownership of the project processes and achievements.
- (b) Reinforce the financial management team for projects in order to be able to produce financial reports that serve a well-informed operational management.
- (c) Consider more or less longer period for such project (between 3 to 5 years) so that the promotion of child rights could be monitored at different levels with enough time for family empowerment activities.
- (d) Re-consider the status of volunteers to keep the minimum required neutrality and install a rotated selection in order to avoid precedents for employment-related legal cases
- (e) (For the next phase) Consider including more complete modules of the following training courses for the staff :
 - Conflicts management
 - Counseling techniques
 - Business development and entrepreneurship

5.3.2 To Project team

- (a) Keep updating the Master list data in relatively shorter periods (6 months) in order to ensure maximum accuracy of the tool.
- (b) Develop monitoring tools with regard to recording cases of the abuse of child rights in the target zone in close collaboration with other interested institutions (security, women council, children council, youth council)
- (c) Develop documentation and promotional materials including documentary films but also linking with media about the project activities not only for continuous reference of different partners in charge of delivering messages but also for reaching the general public.
- (d) (For the next phase) Conduct the capacity needs assessment for the CBO and formulate an appropriate development and empowerment plan in the perspective of reinforcing the position of the CBO as an independent partner.

5.3.3 To Local authorities

- (a) District and Sector authorities should reinforce the service in charge of grassroots associations and CBOs in order to keep providing advisory assistance after the projects closing

5.3.4 To local partners and participants

- (a) The CBO shall define a clear legal form and structure to go for, either an association, an NGO or a cooperative so as to clarify its long term position in partnership with the project and/or the local associations.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this final evaluation of Gasaka project, the team of consultant would like to present their sincere thanks to all people who were involved in this exercise for their kind support. The evaluation has shown that Gasaka project achieved a lot and changed the life of several people and also improved the situation of child rights in the area by preventing hundreds of children from losing the family care. Most importantly, it initiated the community and family empowerment mechanisms through the Village Saving and Loan Associations. The continuous support from committed Community Based organizations and the initiatives of establishing an umbrella of the VSLAs have laid a good foundation for the continuity of the achievements. It would require further coordination from the district and sector authorities to ensure the sustainability of the actions. On the other hand, SOS Rwanda has acquired good capacity in community-led approaches which will be a good reference for continuous improvement of the project management.

The evaluation team understands that the results of the evaluation presented in this report should be considered as only suggestions which could help the concerned departments or competent authorities inside SOS or outside the institution taking appropriate measures with regard to the improvement of the project management.

REFERENCES

- 1- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, June 2010
- 2- MIGEPROFE, National Integrated Child Rights Policy, August 2011
- 3- MINALOC, National Policy for Family Promotion, December 2005
- 4- MINALOC, National policy for the protection of orphans and other vulnerable children, 2003
- 5- SOS Children's Village Programme Policy, May 2009
- 6- Family Strengthening Programmes. Manual for the SOS Children's Village Organization, January 2007
- 7- Gikongoro Feasibility Study for SOS Children's Villages in Rwanda, by Lifetime Consulting, September 2015
- 8- USAID/GLOBAL COMMUNITIES, Savings with education toolkit, developed by Higa Ubeho Project, June 2013
- 9- SOS, Baseline study on the child rights situation in Gasaka project assisted families, September 2013.
- 10- Amategeko Shingiro ya CBO Girimpuhwe (draft Statutes of CBO)
- 11- Amategeko y'itsinda (model statutes for a VSLA)
- 12- Amategeko-shingiro ngengamikorere y'ikigega cya mutuelle de sante cy'abagenerwabikorwa ba PRF

ANNEXES

- 1- Questionnaire No 1: Target families
- 2- Interview guide No 2: Sector and cell authorities
- 3- Interview guide No 3: Headmasters and Teachers
- 4- Focus group discussion No 1: Children/ students
- 5- Focus group discussion No 2: Community Based Organization members
- 6- List of contacted people

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Detailed work schedule

ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TARGET FAMILIES

OF THE PROJECT FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY IN GASAKA SECTOR, RWANDA. 2013-2016

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

- (1) Full name of the head of the household

- (2) The head of the household is: (Woman/Man/Child)

- (3) What is the relationship between the child(ren) supported by SOS project?

- (4) Date of Birth

- (5) Education level

- (6) What is the basic career of the head of the household?
 - (a) Does he carry out any associated occupations apart from agriculture and animal husbandry?
 - (b) If yes, what are they?
 - (c) What is the social categorization assigned to the household?

- (7) Married, widow, officially divorced, (yes/no) still single

- (8) Household location:
 - (a) Village:
 - (b) Cell

- (9) How many people living in the household:
 - (a) Adults (number of males and females)
 - (b) Children (number of males and females)
 - (c) How old are the children?
 - (d) All of them go to school
 - (e) If some do not go to school, give the reason, how many years have they spent since they have dropped out?

B. FAMILY PROPERTY AND INCOME

- (10) Family property:
 - (a) What your immovable property is made up of ?
 - (b) What you moveable property is made up of ?

(11) Do any adult members in the household have any other occupation apart from agriculture and animal husbandry? How many are they and what is their occupation? According to your estimation, what is their monthly income?

C. COLLABORATION WITH SOS

(12) When and how did the family hear about SOS project?

(13) For how long has the family been supported by SOS project?

(14) How many children in the household are going to school with the support of SOS project?

(15) What kind of support are they receiving?

- (a) Cash
- (b) School material
- (c) Clothes
- (d) Advice and trainings
- (e) Other (what?)

(16) What types of support are more useful for the family among all these listed above? Why?

(17) Apart from the support provided by SOS project, are there any other types of support received by the family from third parties? If yes, who are the providers, from when and what this support is made up of?

(18) What were the key issues the family was facing before being supported by SOS project?

(19) Among these issues, which ones the support provided by SOS project helped address?

- (a) Once for all
- (b) Within three to five years
- (c) Within one to three years
- (d) Within less than one year
- (e) Issues that could not be addressed.

(20) Is there any outstanding achievements that the support provided by SOS project helped reach? If yes, what are they?

(21) Which activities the support provided by SOS project to your family was focused on that you can keep on carrying out when the support will not be available anymore?

(22) Did your family members acquire any skills or new ideas during the time of collaboration between your family and SOS project? If yes, what are they?

(23) If SOS project should have not supported you, no one could provide to you the same support? If yes, why?

(24) If you compare how your family manage to meet its needs economically speaking and in terms of joining other people in participating in development activities with the situation before you benefited from SOS project support, you can conclude (choose one answer)

- (a) the current situation is very good
- (b) the current situation is good
- (c) the current situation is pretty good
- (d) the current situation is the same like before.

(25) If you have a look back in the past and assess how SOS project supported you, what can you say in general (choose one answer)?

- (a) Things happened very well the way we expected
- (b) Things happened well even if some of our expectations were not met
- (c) Things happened pretty well
- (d) Many things did not happen well (example...).

(26) What is a tangible and a sustainable thing you can show to prove that your family living, in terms of economy and development in general, has improved since SOS project has started to support you?

(27) What are you ready to do to prevent your achievements from being destroyed or damaged in order to avoid to go back to the situation you were living in before SOS project started to support you?

(28) At the level where you are now, if possible what kind of support would you like to receive from SOS project, from other sponsors'organization or from the government, in order to make a step forward?

- (a) Cash assistance
- (b) Cash loan
- (c) Livestock and equipment
- (d) Advice and trainings
- (e) Other

Make a list of types of support you need according to their importance.

(29) According to your collaboration with SOS project, which ideas or advice one can give to SOS project authority, in order to enhance their collaboration with the participants/participants who are involved in the development projects that SOS project backs in your area of Gasaka sector?

Thank you!

ANNEX 2 : Interview guide No 2 : Sector and Cell Authorities

Target : Executive secretary of Sector, Education officer, executive secretary of Cell

Questions :

- 1- Describe your collaboration with SOS Gikongoro
- 2- What do you know about the Family Strengthening Program ?
- 3- How do you think it's in line with the Government Policy on family promotion and children rights ? How is it complementary with your own initiatives or other partners actions ?
- 4- How has the Sector/Cell supported the FSP activities ? Can you quantify your support in terms of money on annual basis ?
- 5- What changes the FSP has made on your population ? Can you illustrate your by some figures (if any)?
- 6- What positive or negative impacts the FS project has had in your sector/ cell ?
- 7- The project is closing soon. Do you think the target families could continue providing necessary care to their children (at the same level or more than the project did) ? how could they make it ?
- 8- What actions are being taken by the Sector/Cell to sustain (institutionally, technically, financially) the project achievements ?

ANNEX 3: Interview guide No 3 : Target Schools staff

Target : Headmasters and teachers

Questions :

- 1- Describe your collaboration with SOS FS Project
- 2- What trainings have you received ?
- 3- What support have you received ? as a school ? as club of children's rights ?
- 4- What knowledge that acquired that is important for the school activities ?
- 5- What positive changes the FSP has made on the target children ? Any difference from other students ?
- 6- How will you continue the initiatives started without the project support ?
- 7- If the project will continue in another phase, what kind of support do you request ?

ANNEX 4: Interview guide No 4 : Children

Target group : **Students**

Questions:

- 1- Can you describe your relationship with SOS project ?
- 2- What kind of support have you received from the project ?
- 3- Do you know children's rights ? How are they respected at school ? at home? In the community ?
- 4- Did the support help you to succeed your lessons ? Explain
- 5- What do you plan to do in order to keep the level you achieved ?
- 6- What have you appreciated most in the project ?
- 7- What do you appreciate on the side of your parents or care-givers ?
- 8- What problems you consider they have been solved so that you no longer need the support ?
- 9- What other type of support do you expect in the future ?

ANNEX 5: Interview guide No 5 : Girimpuhwe Community Based Organization

Target group: **CBO members**

Questions :

- 1- Describe your partnership with SOS /FS Project ?
- 2- What trainings have you received ?
- 3- What is your role towards the families supported by the project ?
- 4- Describe the impact of the project with regard to the family income ?
- 5- How do you keep the record of the progress of the family's situation ?
- 6- What changes have the families achieved with regard to the care of children ?
- 7- Can you tell us the positive and / or negative impacts that resulted from the project activities?
- 8- Can you explain the management system of the Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) and how they help to solve family problems ? What is their relationship with other financial institutions ?
- 9- How will you continue the initiatives that empower your families once the project closes ?

**ANNEX 6: List of interviewees during the evaluation of the Project For Strengthening Families and
Community in Gasaka Sector
From December 29, 2015 to January 3, 2016**

| Nr | Full name | Position | Observation |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | SOS MANAGEMENT | | |
| 01 | NKURUNZIZA Amon | National FS Coordinator | Individual interview |
| 02 | MUNYANKIKO Dieudonné | Program Director | Individual interview |
| | PROJECT STAFF | | |
| 01 | Uwizeyimana Thérèse | Project Coordinator | Individual and collective interview |
| 02 | Kariza Jacqueline | Field Officer | |
| 03 | Muhayimana Védaste | Field Officer | |
| | VOLUNTEERS | | |
| 04 | Gatoya | Volunteer | Individual interview |
| 05 | Mukamana Anita | Volunteer | Individual interview |
| 06 | Nsengimana Emmanuel | Volunteer | Individual interview |
| | LOCAL AUTHORITIES | | |
| 07 | Bayiringire Jean | Executive Secretary of Gasaka Sector | Individual interview |
| 08 | Mbera Livuze | Civil Registrar of Gasaka Sector | Individual interview |
| 09 | Mukaremera Agnès | Civil Servant in charge of Education in Gasaka Sector | Individual interview |
| 10 | Kayisire Samson | Civil Servant in charge of Social Affairs in Gasaka Sector | Individual interview |
| 11 | Uwingabire Joséphine | Executive Secretary of Ngiryi Cell | Individual interview |
| 12 | Nyirakanani Emmérence | Executive Secretary of Nyamugari Cell | Individual interview |
| 13 | Uwamahoro Jean-Marie Vianney | Executive Secretary of Remera Cell | Individual interview |
| 14 | Ingabire Francine | Kigarama Village Leader | Individual interview |
| 15 | Kayijuka Théophile | Munyeye Village Leader | Individual interview |
| | CBO Girimpuhwe MEMBERS | | 45 CBO Girimpuhwe members including 24 females and 21 males |
| 16 | Kanamugire Innocent | Kigeme-Nzega CBO | Interview conducted in three groups in different locations. |
| 17 | Mukagasana Faith | Idem | |
| 18 | Mukamana Agnès | Idem | |
| 19 | Mukandashimye Dative | Idem | |

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 20 | Mukansanga Judith | Idem | |
| 21 | Ndacyayisenga Emmanuel | Idem | |
| 22 | Nkurunziza Sylvestre | Idem | |
| 23 | Nyirahabimana Dancilla | Idem | |
| 24 | Nyaminani Jean-Pierre | Nyamugari-Remera CBO Zone | |
| 25 | Sebera Tharcisse | Idem | |
| 26 | Banzusenge Evangeline | Nyabivumu-Ngiryi CBO Zone | |
| 27 | Iyakaremye Cassien | Idem | |
| 28 | Mukantwari Françoise | Idem | |
| 29 | Niyitegeka Epiphane | Idem | |
| 30 | Wibabara Alphonsine | Idem | |
| | VSLAs | | 50 members |
| | Dukoranumurava | | 24 members, including 22 females and 2 males |
| 31 | Mbahinyuze Janvier | Group Chairman | Group met in their regular meeting at market place |
| 32 | Niyonsaba Joséphine | Treasurer | |
| 33 | Uwimana Xavera | Auditor | |
| | Twitezimbere-Nzega | | 26 members, including 20 females and 6 males. Group visited at Nzega during their regular meeting |
| 34 | Mukandashimye Dative | Secretary | One of Interviewed CBOs |
| | INTERVIEWED FAMILIES | | |
| 35 | Kantengwa Marie-Goretti | ML139 | ML= Master List |
| 36 | Kanteteri Médiatrice | ML116 | |
| 37 | Kayitesi Rosette | ML87 | |
| 38 | Mukakamanzi Françoise | ML117 | Head of Nzamurambaho Albert's household |
| 39 | Mukamana Claudette | ML106 | Head of Semanyana Anastase's household |
| 40 | Mukamfizi Christine | ML137 | Head of Rwigema Anastase's household |
| 41 | Mukaneza Francine | ML51 | Head of Baziki Enock's household |
| 42 | Mukankundiye Eurelie | ML39 | |
| 43 | Mukanyangezi Jacqueline | ML92 | |

| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 44 | Mukarusagara Alphonsine | ML84 | |
| 45 | Mukarutesi Thacienne | ML159 | Head of Gatwa Antoine's household |
| 46 | Mukaruyonza Agnès | ML101 | |
| 47 | Mukasirikare Devotha | ML17 | |
| 48 | Musabyimana Espérance | ML57 | |
| 49 | Mutuyimana Claudine | ML136 | |
| 50 | Muzima Jean-Marie Vianney | ML140 | |
| 51 | Ndagijimana Alphonse | ML10 | |
| 52 | Ndahimana Vénuste | ML109 | |
| 53 | Niyonsaba Joséphine | ML72 | |
| 54 | Niyonsaba Véstine | ML2 | Head of Sindikubwabo Aloys' household |
| 55 | Nkurikiyimana Patrice | ML23 | |
| 56 | Nkurunziza Sylvestre | ML 42 | |
| 57 | Nshimiyimana Boniface | ML69 | |
| 58 | Nyinawumuntu Anastasie | ML63 | Head of Mbahinyuze Janvier's household |
| 59 | Nyiraguhirwa Hélène | ML68 | |
| 60 | Nyirantezirayo Odette | ML127 | |
| 61 | Nyiranziza Gaudence | ML40 | |
| 62 | Nyirasangwa Bellancilla | ML129 | |
| 63 | Nyirimabazi Aloys | ML97 | Barakagwira Consolée's husband |
| 64 | Segikwiye Michel | ML107 | |
| 65 | Uwamariya Géneviève | ML20 | |
| 66 | Uwimana Christine | ML80 | Head of Rurangwa Boniface's household |
| 67 | Uwimana Consolée | ML163 | Head of Habyarimana Joël's household |
| 68 | Uwimana Savera | ML174 | |
| 69 | Uwizeyimana Bonifride | ML56 | |
| 70 | Uwizeyimana Emmanuel | ML61 | |
| 71 | Uwizeyimana Thérèse | ML158 | |
| 72 | Yabaragiye Mariette | ML16 | |
| | PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS | | |
| 73 | Nsanzimfura Emmanuel | A grade six Teacher Gasaka Primary School | |

| | | | |
|----|--|--|---|
| 74 | Semanzi Célestin | A grade six Teacher Sumba Primary School | |
| 75 | Shumbusho Védaste | A grade three Teacher Remera Primary School | |
| 76 | Umutanguha Marie Christine | A grade two Teacher ACEPER School | |
| 77 | Uwaremye Philogène | A grade one Teacher SOS Primary School | |
| 78 | GROUP OF 26 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE | Primary and Secondary Schools | 90 minutes collective Interview. Meeting at the occasion of the children's end of the year day |

ATTACHMENT 1

Work schedule for the final evaluation of the Family Strengthening Program/ Gasaka project in Nyamagabe District

Period : December 22, 2015 - January 13, 2016

| TASKS | Days | December 2015 | | | | | | | | | | January 2016 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | 22 nd | 23 rd | 24 th | 25 th | 26 th | 27 th | 28 th | 29 th | 30 th | 31 st | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th | 5 th | 6 th | 7 th | 8 th | 9 th | 10 th | 11 th | 12 th | 13 th |
| Introductory meeting | | ■ | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | |
| Documentation collection | | ■ | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Documentation review | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Drafting Inception report | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission Inception Report | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Field data collection | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data analysis | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | |
| Writing Draft Report | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Debriefing meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Final report (revision) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Submission of final report | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ |

Key:

- December
- January
- Sunday
- Consultant task duration
- SOS Review for feedback