



Food for Thought

August 2009

One Acre Fund

Rwanda

I am happy because I have an opportunity to improve my family's life.

– farmer Elmina Marium



AUGUST'S EDUCATIONAL THEME: WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Rural women produce half of the world's food and, in developing countries, 60% to 80% of the world's crops.ⁱ Women are more likely than men to spend their income on the well-being of their families, including nutritional foods, school fees for children, and healthcare.ⁱⁱ Thus, the productivity and resulting income of rural women farmers benefits the entire community. From gender analysis in Africa, the researchers learned that women face significant barriers in agriculture, especially in inequalities in access to and control

over crucial resources and inputs such as land, labor, fertilizer, and formal finance. Women in Africa access only 1% of available credit in the agricultural sector. Additional constraints to productivity that African women face are barriers to membership in rural organizations and cooperatives as well as to agricultural training in effective techniques, technology, and marketing services. Their success in higher value agriculture depends on their ability to participate knowledgeably and effectively in the market system.ⁱⁱⁱ

GENDER BARRIERS THAT WOMEN FARMERS EXPERIENCE

- Greater time constraints than men, based on the gender division of labor in childcare and household responsibilities
- Less mobility than men, due to responsibilities in the home and socio-cultural norms that limit their mobility
- Less educated than men and illiteracy, hampering their access to technical information and their ability to understand^{iv}

How do gender disparities and barriers to education inhibit the productivity of African women farmers?

FOOD INSECURITY IN RWANDA

Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa. This fact, combined with the return of large numbers of war refugees every year, perpetuates the food insecurity of many. High population density and growth have led to deforestation, soil erosion, and decreased agricultural productivity. At least 28% of households

Fast Facts

90% of Rwandan workers are agricultural

60% of the population lives below the poverty line (compared to 12% in the U.S.)

The literacy rate for women is **59.8 %** (compared to 71% for men).

25% of women have never attended school (compared to 17% of men).

Women farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa spend **90%** of their incomes on their families and communities compared to 40% of men.

Women have at least a **90%** loan repayment rate.

(2.1 million people) are food-insecure, and another 24% are highly vulnerable to food insecurity. Food utilization is also a problem, as reflected in high levels of maternal and child malnutrition in many parts of the country. Over 40% of children are chronically malnourished, while one child in four is underweight. Several NGOs such as the United Nations' World Food Programme work to supplement the minimal governmental assistance.^v

APPROPRIATE APPROACHES: SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS

One Acre Fund focuses on one-acre subsistence farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa –one of the largest groups of "forgotten poor" in the world. They provide a complete, functioning market system—making it possible for even the poorest and most rural farmers to generate more income and permanently solve their own hunger problem. Through their four-part "market bundle" system, One Acre Fund assists farmers and empowers them to improve their lives and well-being and those of their families and communities.

The first component of the "market bundle" is to **empower local groups** of farmers. One Acre Fund finds existing self-help groups (made up mostly of women farmers). Bringing farmers together makes it possible for them to interact economically with markets. The second component of the "market bundle" is **farm education**, provided by field officers. They teach the latest practices, adapted from top academic agronomists and translated into simple, easy-to-understand lessons.

The third component of the "market bundle" is **capital**, environmentally-sensitive planting materials and fertilizer. One Acre Fund's planting materials-- commercial seed professionally graded, stored, and selected--are a significant improvement over old food kernels currently used for seed, and the fertilizer provides badly needed nutrients to soil that has been stripped bare over decades of poor management.



A Rwandan farmers' group during a field education session

The fourth component of the "market bundle" is **connection with harvest markets**. These markets invite bulk-selling agents, allowing members to earn much higher prices than would be possible otherwise. This cash creates a savings-and-investment cycle that leads to self-driven, permanent growth out of hunger.

The final component of the "market bundle" is **crop insurance**. It is estimated that only 0.3% of Africa's poor are insured in any way. One Acre Fund has pioneered a crop insurance product that pays farmers in the event of critical drought or disease.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *When we think about these barriers to women farmer's productivity and solutions to them, it seems like a lot of common sense. Why haven't these issues and solutions been discussed on a larger scale?*
- *What do you know about aid to Africa? With the pervasive issues of hunger and malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, why aren't more funds being allocated to self-sufficiency programs like this?*

VOICES

Emelda believes her family will have enough to eat this year, thanks to the lessons she learned from One Acre Fund.

Emelda Mutenyo and the Sikuma farmers' group attended One Acre Fund training sessions designed to teach them about proper planting methods. At these training sessions they were provided with special tools and shown how to space their seeds properly and to measure correct amounts of fertilizer. This instruction has resulted in high seed germination rates and plants just the



right distance from each other for optimum growth.

Now the group's maize reaches three feet high, and their beans are flourishing. Emelda reports that her group has many more plants germinating than last year, thanks to the use of correct planting methods. As the time comes for the Sikuma farmers' group to weed their fields and harvest their maize and beans, One Acre Fund will continue to support them with training and tools.



Francine has five children, ranging from six months to twelve years old. Her family, like most Rwandan farm families, suffer a three-month annual "hunger season" when her children simply do not have enough to eat.

Last season, Francine Mukasine planted a half-acre of land with One Acre Fund, using 140 pounds of seed potato, 80 pounds of fertilizer, and 40 pounds of climbing-bean seed.

She estimates that at harvest time, she will earn \$200 more in profit than last year, even after repaying One Acre Fund for program fees. That might not sound like a lot, but it is more than doubling her farm income and enough to send all of her children to school.

MEETING RESOURCES

WEBSITES

<http://www.oneacrefund.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUCRK18JW5I> One Acre Fund short Youtube video



BOOK CORNER

Non-Fiction:

Land of a Thousand Hills: My Life in Rwanda Rosamond Halsey Carr and Ann Howard

Halsey, 2000. Whether chugging up the Congo on a paddle-wheel steamboat, rubbing elbows with pygmy chiefs (or wealthy colonial neighbors), being pursued through the dark by a stalking leopard, or visiting friend Dian Fossey and her mountain gorillas at Karioske, Carr found herself living a life of cinematic proportions. In the process, she witnessed a

half-century of the politics of a deeply troubled country and saw firsthand the decline and fall of colonialism, the wars for independence, and the relentless clashes between the Hutus and Tutsis. And, finally, having been caught in the crossfire of 1994's horrific genocide, Carr provides an unparalleled personal account that underscores her continued devotion to the country by her decision to turn her plantation into a shelter for Rwanda's lost and orphaned children.

Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe, Gerard Prunier, 2008. The Rwandan genocide sparked a horrific bloodbath that swept across sub-Saharan Africa, ultimately leading to the deaths of some four million people. In this extraordinary history of the recent wars in Central Africa, Gerard Prunier offers a gripping account of how one grisly episode laid the groundwork for a sweeping and disastrous upheaval.

Culture and Customs of Rwanda, Julius Adegunde, 2007.

Rwanda has been in the news for the genocide of 1994 and its aftermath. This volume exposes Western readers to the fuller picture of Rwanda. Early European travelers attested to Rwanda's beauty, describing it variously as the Switzerland of Africa and the Pearl of Africa. Rwanda has also been referred to as the Land of a Thousand Hills and the Land of Gorillas. The spectacular volcanoes, mountains, and natural resources are significant assets. The nation has been dominated by two colonial powers: the Germans and Belgians. In spite of these political upheavals and acts of ethnic violence, Rwanda remains a country with rich culture and customs.

We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families, Philip Gourevitch, 1999. This prize-winning book depicts the anatomy of the killings in Rwanda and gives a history of the genocide's background and accounts of what it means to survive afterward.

As We Forgive: Stories of Reconciliation from Rwanda, Catherine Claire Larson, 2009. Can a country known for its radical brutality become a country known for an even more radical forgiveness? More than a decade after the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan government has released tens of thousands of murderers back into the communities they ravaged. Survivors and perpetrators have had to learn to live again as neighbors. Inspired by the award-winning film *As We Forgive*, this book explores the pain, the mystery, and the hope through stories as victims, orphans, widows, and perpetrators journey toward



seven compelling reconciliation.

SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS SHOPPING

Macy's now sells items from Rwanda: jewelry, baskets, and textiles

http://www1.macys.com/catalog/index.ognc?CategoryID=28733&PageID=123409156686657&CURRENT_PAGE=3

Fair Trade Coffee: <http://www.paramountcoffee.com/brand/rwanda.php>

DINING WITH WOMEN RECIPES

Rwandan food is, shall we say, not the most exciting cuisine we have visited, but the following recipes use some seasonal ingredients like tomatoes and new potatoes, as well as the ultimate summer method of cooking, grilling! Since only a limited number of interesting Rwandan recipes are available, one fun thing to do might be to try cooking a menu prepared with the ingredients used most commonly in Rwandan cooking, such as corn, peas, beans, rice, millet, potatoes, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and tropical fruit. Eggplant and avocado are also eaten frequently, and chicken and fish are the most popular meats, as well as goat. So, choose some fresh seasonal ingredients and make up your own menu, or try one of these that follow. Do as they would usually do in Rwanda: have some fresh fruit for dessert. Enjoy!



Grilled Beef Brochettes

Adapted from <http://morganinafrica.blogspot.com/2006/07/brochettes-and-potatoes-national-dish.html>. This is as close as you can find to a Rwandan national dish. Traditionally made with goat, but beef works just fine. Serves 6

1 ½ lb. tender beef (I used purchased kebabs), cut into 1-inch cubes

½ onion, chopped into big pieces

½ onion, minced

5 fresh Roma tomatoes, crushed, or ½ can crushed

½ small can tomato puree

1t salt

Pili-pili chilies (in absence of pili-pili, you can use Tabasco or some cayenne, or even minced jalapeno, but it will not be as authentic! You can also order pili-pili oil online)

Vegetable oil

Skewers

Heat a little oil in a small saucepan and sauté the minced onion for about 5 minutes. Stir in the Roma tomatoes, pili-pili or Tabasco, jalapeno or cayenne to taste, salt, and the tomato puree. Add water and about a tablespoon more oil to make a medium-thick sauce (if it's too thick, it will taste like a tomato brochette—if it's too thin, the brochettes won't turn a nice reddish color). Remove from heat and allow to cool a bit. To prepare the brochettes, alternate between one piece of meat and 2-3 flakes of the chopped onion. Brush vegetable oil over the brochette and lay skewer over the grill. Cook for 2 minutes. Turn and brush the sauce on the brochettes 2-3 times while roasting. Brush oil on brochettes again once or twice more. Remove from grill when brochettes are just cooked through, about 7 minutes total. Serve with potatoes and with a pile of salt and chopped pili-pili in oil, or any hot chili oil.

Sauteed Potatoes

Adapted from a recipe from the same page as above. This is one way to prepare potatoes to serve with the brochettes. Feel free to make potatoes any way you like, but do serve potatoes with the brochettes if you want to eat an authentic Rwandan-style meal. Add some grilled corn and the bean recipe that follows and you are all set. Serves 6

Small red potatoes, about 1 pound--or more if you love potatoes
Tomato sauce, recipe above
Vegetable oil

Heat 3 tablespoons vegetable oil in a medium-large skillet. Slice the potatoes into ½-inch slices and brush sauce on both sides. Add to the pan when oil is hot. Fry the potatoes about 2 minutes on each side. Reduce heat to low. Carefully add some sauce (about ½ cup or so) to the pan; it will splatter some. Cover and let simmer about 5 minutes or until potatoes are tender but not falling apart.

Rwandan Fried Beans (Ibiharage)

Adapted from <http://www.ivu.org/recipes/african/rwandan.html> .This is a traditional recipe from the central African nations of Rwanda and Burundi. Serves 4 -6

2 tablespoons vegetable oil 4 cups cooked white beans (canned or homemade)
3 onions, finely chopped salt and pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced cayenne

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions & garlic. Stir and saute until onions are soft, 3-5 minutes. Add beans, salt & pepper to taste, & red pepper to taste; stir, reduce heat to simmer and cook for 7-12 minutes to heat through, adding a little water as necessary to prevent sticking. Serve as a side dish.

Ndizi na Nyama – Plantains with meat

Adapted from *The Congo Cookbook* at www.congocookbook.com



Ndizi is that Swahili word for plantains, which are widely used in Rwandan cooking, and Nyama is the word for meat. It is difficult to find recipes that are specifically Rwandan, but dishes similar to this one, as well as variations of it, are made frequently by Rwandans and their neighbors. Normally, though, it would be made with meat only for a very special occasion, as meat is too expensive to buy for most people, and cattle are thought of as a status symbol. So, in the spirit of “bush meat,” it is made here with venison. Beef, lamb, or even chicken thighs would work, too. Don’t be intimidated by the plantains if you have never cooked with them before, and if you use green plantains, they are JUST like potatoes, which are a reasonable substitute since Rwandans also cook with those. Just make sure you do not get plantains that are yellow and ripe – they will not work. Enjoy – this is really delicious!!

1c hot water
1 to 1-1/2 lbs. meat, your choice –
venison, beef stew meat, lamb shoulder,
boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
1t salt, more or less
1/2t black pepper
1/2t curry powder
cayenne pepper to taste
4T cooking oil (red palm would be most authentic, but
whatever you normally use is fine)
1 large onion, thinly sliced

1T flour
½ to 1 - 14 oz. can of chopped tomatoes,
drained, the higher amount if you like things
tomato-y
1T tomato paste
1c regular or light coconut milk
1 bay leaf
2-3 green to very slightly yellow plantains,
peeled and cut into large dice

Heat 2T of the oil in large heavy pan over medium heat and add about half of the salt, pepper(s) and curry powder. Cook briefly and add meat. Stir to cover the meat with the spices, and then add the bay leaf and hot water, being very careful as it may splatter. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook about 20-30 minutes. While meat is simmering, heat the other 2T of oil over medium heat in a skillet and add the onions.

Cook the onions until they start to get soft, add the flour and stir well, continuing to cook for another minute or two. Reduce heat, add tomatoes and tomato paste, stir well and cook for about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to lowest setting, stir

in coconut milk, cover and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. It will be thick. Turn off heat. Add plantains to the meat and cook about ten minutes until the plantains are done and the meat is tender. When the meat is done, remove the bay leaf and stir the onion mixture into the meat; adjust seasonings to taste. Serve with rice.

Rwandan Cabbage

I threw in a few frozen peas since peas or beans are used at nearly every meal in Rwanda. A nice mild, delicious side to any meal. Sort of like winter coleslaw without the dressing.



1 onion, diced
½ head cabbage, cut into 1- inch pieces
a few collard or kale leaves, cut into one-inch pieces
4 carrots, diced but not too tiny
½ can chopped tomatoes, drained, or more to taste
Handful frozen peas
2-3T oil of choice
Salt and lots of black pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a very large skillet over medium heat and add the onions. Saute for 5 minutes or so, then add the carrots, kale or collards, and cabbage, salt, pepper and a few tablespoons of water to prevent sticking, stir and cover. Turn heat up just a little and cook for about 10 or 15 minutes, stirring periodically and making sure nothing is burning or sticking, adding a little more water if so. Stir in the tomatoes and cook another several minutes, until all vegetables are cooked to your liking. Adjust salt and pepper. Serve warm.

Chicken with Tomato Sauce (serves 4) Very easy to make and good comfort food

1 chicken, cut into pieces
3T oil
1 onion, thinly sliced
3 large tomatoes, mashed
2 stalks celery, cut into thin rounds
1t salt
1 hot pimento or chili pepper

Fry the chicken in hot oil until golden. Remove chicken pieces and cook onions in the same pot. When they, too, are golden brown, return chicken pieces to the pot and add tomatoes, celery, salt and hot pepper. Reduce heat and simmer until chicken is tender. From [Africa News Cookbook](#)

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— Changing the world one dinner at a time.

www.diningforwomen.org

ⁱ FAO Focus on Women and Food Security. <http://www.fao.org/focus/e/women/susin-e.htm>

ⁱⁱ Mehra, Rekha and Mary Hill Rojas. "Women, Food Security and Agriculture in a Global Marketplace" *International Center for Research on Women, 2008.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Mehra and Rojas 2008.

^{iv} Mehra and Rojas 2008.

^v From the World Food Programme website <http://www.wfp.org/countries/rwanda>