



ZOE

Empowerment beyond charity.

**Urukundo “Love” Empowerment Group, Cyeya; Rukomo District, Rwanda
July 2016 – June 2019, In Shared Partnership with
The Brand Family, St. Luke’s UMC, Orlando, and an Anonymous Donor**

A Summary Report on Second Year Groups in Rwanda

May 2017 - April 2018

The following report was written by Rwanda staff. It provides an overview of the activities and achievements all 16 groups have experienced during the second year of the ZOE empowerment program. These groups began meeting July 2016 and include 403 households with 1,290 children. Following this information is some general background material on how ZOE addresses issues of health, education, and housing.

PRIMARY TRAININGS HELD DURING THE PAST YEAR

[Note: The first year of ZOE’s empowerment program is training intensive. During the second and third years, ZOE provides less formal trainings while members of the groups take a more active role in advising each other. The ZOE program facilitators and group mentors provide assistance as required or requested.]

August 2017: Income Statement. All heads of households attended. They learnt how to calculate the profit or loss of their business to determine if the business is profitable enough; if they need to change businesses or take steps to improve their business; and how to create the most sustainable and profitable projects.

April 2018: Training on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS. All heads of households attended. The objective of the training was to create awareness on the reproductive system and the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. In collaboration with medical clinics in the community, the youth were offered the chance to take a voluntary, HIV status test. They learnt all HIV risk factors so that they can take control over them.

According to a survey conducted by ZOE staff for these groups, it was found that 65% of the girls had unwanted pregnancies before entering the ZOE program, as a result they had babies at a young age. Some of them even had more than one baby by the age of 18. Also some had already contracted HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Awareness of reproductive health and birth control methods were the key knowledge that they have been missing to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

ACTIVITIES IN AREAS OF ZOE EMPOWERMENT

Agriculture and food security: The families in this region have had a significant improvement regarding food security because they applied standards according to ZOE’s empowerment program which include having a store of dry food (beans, maize, cassava flour, wheat, soya bean) and a vegetable garden/farm of food crops which are cooked fresh such as potato, sweet potato, banana, fruit trees, fresh cassava, and arrow root among others.

All households plant vegetable/kitchen gardens and 390 households are planting crops individually. There are also 13 families that have joined together to rent land for farming; at harvest time they take some for family consumption and sell some and share the money. There has been two farming seasons and the harvests have been generally good. However, the season of March-June will give poor harvest because of the flooding that devastated crops.



In addition to growing their own food, the families are able to buy food thanks to the profits make from their businesses, vocational projects, and livestock projects. In terms of food security and nutrition, 90% of families are food secure, they can eat two or more meals per day. Ten percent reported that they are sure to have at least one meal every day and by chance they can find two meals per day.

Livestock management: Apart from the pigs distributed by ZOE (403 pigs for 403 families), each family bought at least one to five more animals on their own. The groups' merry-go-round funds played a crucial role in allowing youth to save to buy animals. The number of families keeping each type of livestock is as follows: hens, 383; goats, 264; pigs, 85; rabbits, 52, cows 14; and sheep 6.

Income generating activities(IGAs)/businesses: After the training on income statement, youth received grants to boost existing businesses which started previous year with the support from ZOE. Most began individual businesses, but some joined with other groupmates to conduct joint income projects. The youth who attended vocational training received start-up kits to begin their respective businesses.

Individuals' IGAs	
Sorghum juice selling	34
Animal selling	31
Fruits and vegetables selling	95
Boutiques	14
Bicycle taxi	18
Retails selling	29
Food store	29
Nuts and eggs selling	14
Banana juice selling	3
Shoes selling	2

Individual participating in Group IGAs	
Sorghum juice selling	28
Bicycle taxi	5
Food store selling	35
Shopping bags weaving	23



Vocational Training	
Tailoring	13
Knitting	8
Hairdressing	7
Masonry	2
Vehicle Mechanics	2
High school level training (professional and regular)	70



Health and hygiene: Since the youth have received training on hygiene and disease prevention, the following improvements have been recorded:

- They drink boiled and clean water
- They live in clean homes
- They put on clean clothes
- They built latrines (ZOE provided roofing materials, groupmates provided labor help)
- They no longer sleep on dry grass or old clothes; instead they made wooden beds that stand above ground and ease the cleaning of the bedrooms
- With the support of ZOE, four houses were built

The youth in these groups still face challenges of having to walk long distances to get water and high transportations costs to reach the health centers which are a distant from the communities ZOE serves.

Networking: There is a quarterly forum organized for all groups to discuss the outcomes of the program and share stories and experiences of the best IGAs/businesses. This forum helps the groups to learn from each other.

Community service: During the past year, all youth 18 years and above participated in community work organized by the government where they cleaned public places, rehabilitated the local roads, cleaned the water sources, boreholes, channels and planted trees on the slopes of mountain and hills.

Special events: June 16th is the Day of the African Child. The OVC happily celebrated it as they are no longer stigmatized thanks to the ZOE program. They also celebrated Christmas where each group organized a party of singing, dancing, and praying followed by refreshments.

Awards: ZOE received the Certificate of Merit of best practices in achieving the performance contract at district level.

Challenges: Heavy rain and hail damaged crops. This hindered agricultural production and caused food shortages. The ZOE youth were encouraged to put more efforts in doing businesses and raising livestock to overcome this challenge. ZOE provided top up grants for their businesses.

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ZOE's approach to empowering children is comprehensive, touching on all the areas that hold them in poverty. Only in this way can the children truly break free from the extreme poverty which holds them back. In ZOE's empowerment model there are eight areas in which ZOE helps the children to help themselves. Listed below are explanations of a few of these areas.

Focus On: Health and Disease Prevention

ZOE's goal is to address immediate health needs, teach the children how to live healthy lives, and connect them to medical resources. Preventative education includes basic hygiene practices such as encouraging children to wash their hands, boil water, and keep their home and surroundings clean. The trainings also include in-depth instruction on topics such as:

- Nutrition (especially important for children who may have had access to only very limited diets in the past)
- How diseases are transmitted and prevention and treatment of diseases; especially for malaria and HIV/AIDS
- Dangers of substance abuse
- Specialized training for girls personal health and safety

As a reward for meeting certain basic health and hygiene standards in their homes, ZOE will initially provide mosquito nets (after training on how to use them appropriately), blankets or other hygiene related resources depending on the needs of the children in their specific region. ZOE also assists the children or group in obtaining soap, water storage tanks, and pots for boiling water, especially during the first year of the program. In later years the children need to purchase or replace items out of their own profits. Similarly, ZOE will help the children enroll with health insurance plans or access medical care by providing partial initial financial assistance, but the children are taught that they need to save money to cover these kinds of expenses on their own. As needed, ZOE will also help with the cost of constructing toilet facilities.

Part of the health training also involves helping the children understand the importance of improving their physical appearance and keeping their home clean and attractive (in Rwanda the children are encouraged to plant flowers on their property) in order to increase their status in the community. When the children look "smart" their confidence increases, they feel better about themselves, and others in the community begin treating them with respect and acceptance. Although once stigmatized by the community for their ragged appearance, after a year or two in the program, you can actually pick out the ZOE children because they are often the cleanest looking children in the village and hold themselves with pride and dignity.

Throughout the African countries in which ZOE serves, HIV/AIDS continues to be a scourge on the lives of the young. Many misconceptions about the transmission of the virus and how to treat the progression of the disease remain, as does the stigma attached to infection. ZOE program facilitators take a multifaceted approach to addressing these impediments. First, all children are encouraged and assisted to be tested for the HIV virus. If the results are positive there are options for treatment that can slow the progression and allow the individual to lead a productive and relatively symptom-free life. Second, ZOE educates all children about how the virus is spread and what steps they can take to protect themselves. And third, ZOE encourages the children to share what they have learned with others in the community so that the overall rate of infection can decline.

Focus On: Housing

Often, children entering ZOE are living in houses left by their deceased parents that are in disrepair. At other times the orphans and vulnerable children are working in fields or other tasks in exchange for a room. This leaves them little time for any other activities or to earn money for food. There are also street children in the program who sleep homeless each night. Without a safe and secure place to live it is difficult for children to achieve and maintain economic and social stability in their lives. For emergency situations, ZOE provides a housing grant to the working group. This grant is not enough to pay for the entire cost of a home, but covers expensive items like windows, doors and roofs. The working group then meets to decide who in the group has the greatest need and plans a work day to construct a home for that member and their family. In some areas ZOE is able to partner with local governments or villages to find housing for these children or to supply land and other resources. ZOE's emphasis is on helping the children find appropriate housing while also teaching them how to save money to repair or purchase their own home. Sometimes this means they move in with another group member or find a reasonable renting situation while they save profits from businesses to buy land and build their own home.

Focus On: Education

ZOE does not need to teach the children and young caregivers who join working groups about the importance of education. These children desperately want to attend school. Prior to joining ZOE, many children participated in school, but were forced to drop out due to chronic illness, hunger, social ostracism, lack of clothing, and/or lack of money. Once in the program, the young heads of households (many of whom have been out of the educational system for too long to be reintegrated) are eager to see their younger siblings back in school as soon as possible.

So that children can quickly return to school, ZOE will meet with school administrators and assist with some of the expenses such as uniforms, fees, and materials. The working group can also help to secure some of these materials to help their members return to school. As with all other aspects of the ZOE program, the emphasis is on empowering the children to pay for their own educational expenses. It is a great source of pride and self-esteem for the children to be able to share how they are able to work to send their younger siblings to school. It is like hearing parents brag about the accomplishments of their children and it is very moving to see in a sibling.

The following report highlights the activities and achievements of one family from your group. Although each child is unique, most of the children in the Urukundo Group have faced similar challenges and are making comparable progress through the ZOE empowerment model. Included with this case study is some general information about ZOE's "Dream" approach to helping children set their goals.

Head of Household: Vestine, 20 (in blue vest sweater)

Dependents: sisters Olive, 17, Marie Grace, 15, Diane, 11 and Fillette, 5; brother Albert, 14; cousin Clarisse, 19

Challenges: Although Vestine's parents are alive, they are negligent and do not support the children. So, it has fallen to Vestine's young shoulders to care for the family. Before ZOE, she did the best she could, often working on neighbor's farms for miniscule amounts of money or food. When there was no work, she and the others had to resort to begging to get the little food they had, often only a sweet potato. Sometimes they went to bed without having had anything to eat all day. They had no money to pay for school uniforms or supplies so all of the children had to drop out of school. No one came to visit them or help them. Because of their terrible poverty, they could not keep up their house and it fell into disrepair; they could not keep their environment or bodies clean. Their clothes were rags. They had health problems like bronchitis, cracked heel (due to poor sanitation), and the youngest sister suffered from malnutrition. They felt like God had abandoned them, just as their parents had, and were hopeless about their future.



When ZOE invited Vestine to join ZOE's empowerment program, she and her family began their journey out of extreme poverty. And it started with a dream.

Focus on: The Dream



Most orphans and vulnerable children entering the ZOE empowerment program face a daily struggle to survive. With their energy consumed by the need to find food for themselves and their siblings, there is neither time to think about the future nor reason to hope for something better. But through ZOE and your partnership, the children learn to imagine a new life and prepare to make it a reality.

During one of the early group meetings, the ZOE program facilitator leads members through an exercise called the Dream process where they explore their current situation and then consider what they want and how to get it. After discussing hopes and goals with their siblings, the family leader creates a poster of responses to a standard set of questions from the ZOE program facilitator. To the left is an example of the Dream chart.

The head of each family presents their Dream to the rest of the group members who express support and give feedback. These Dream charts help the program facilitators better understand the conditions of the children's lives so they can address specific needs or traumas suffered. The family keeps a copy of their Dream, often displaying it in their home to provide daily motivation as they strive to create their new life. As they progress through the empowerment program they will often update their Dream.

The following are Vestine's most recent responses to the Dream questions:

- What makes you feel sad? *Negligent parents*
- What makes you happy? *Eating a sufficient meal*
- What happens in the community that you do not like? *Quarreling*
- What is your dream for the future? *To buy a cow*
- What will be your guiding principles to achieve your dream? *Working hard; saving; praying*

Family Specific Achievements Because Of Your Partnership

Food Security: Although the needs of the children in this area of Rwanda are pervasive and overwhelming, ZOE's first priority is to help the heads of households like Vestine to become food secure. Vestine's family had been hungry for a long time - certainly all of Fillette's life - so food was a priority for her also. With the help of her group and the grant of seeds and tools and fertilizer from ZOE, Vestine planted a kitchen garden of vegetables and then a small crop. ZOE also gave her and her group the grant of goats to raise, and she now has two goats of her own to provide milk for the family. With money from the group's merry-go-round (savings) fund she bought two hens that she is raising for eggs. The family is now eating two healthy meals a day, including beans, various vegetables, sweet potatoes, and sorghum juice. It is like a miracle for them.



Income Generation: Only growing food is usually not enough for economic progress and sustainability, Vestine also needed a way to earn money so she could buy other necessities for her family. During the business training, her group discussed possible businesses they could start in their community. Vestine chose to sell sorghum juice, which is a very popular drink in her community. ZOE gave her a grant for the materials to make and sell the juice. She makes enough profit from this small business that she is able to provide things like new clothes and pay school fees for her siblings.

Health: All of the children were in poor health due to their poverty, and they had no access to health care. The Rwandan government provides health insurance for vulnerable children at no cost or on a sliding scale. However, because of their isolation, Vestine's family had not been identified by local officials. ZOE remedied that situation by educating the children on their rights and instructing them about how to apply for the insurance. Vestine and her siblings now have health insurance and medical care. The children also received training on how to improve their daily hygiene practices and keep their home clean in order to prevent health problems. With the help of her groupmates, Vestine will construct a pit latrine with enclosure and washing station. She will also receive assistance to make improvements to the family's home, or if more appropriate, to build a new one.

Group Involvement: Being in the Urukundo Group has been transformational for Vestine. Overwhelmed by her responsibility and isolated by her poverty, she was worn down by life although she was barely out of her teens. When she joined the other young people in her group, she discovered that she was not alone in her struggle. Others had similar experiences that they shared— stories of abuse, exploitation, loneliness, and hunger. Together the group members have learned to support one another, working together on projects like their kitchen gardens and sharing in prayer and devotions during meetings.

Community Connections - Education and Faith: One of the successes that Vestine is most proud of is that her siblings are now back in school. First ZOE provided the funds to reintegrate the children in school, now she can pay for their uniforms and supplies with her business profits. School provides access to community involvement so the children are no longer isolated and stigmatized. Because of the teachings about a loving God, Vestine and her family have returned to church. She is even singing in the choir!

Since entering ZOE's empowerment program, Vestine and her sibling's lives have changed dramatically. They now have clean clothes and visitors come to their home. One of the miracles for Vestine is that her cousin who had been living away from them was able to return to their home. She is an amputee who now has support for making her way in the community, instead of having to beg or be dependent. Vestine says of her life, *"I had a dream to keep at least one hen, but with ZOE I keep goats."* Her life is so much better than she could have ever dreamed, and for that she is thankful to you, her Angel Investor. She asks for you to *"Pray for my siblings to feel interested in school."*



A Summary Report on First Year Groups in Rwanda as of May 2017

The following report was written by the ZOE staff in Rwanda. It provides an overview of the activities and achievements all working groups have experienced since their first meeting in July 2016. Following this information is some general background material about ZOE's empowerment approach to achieving income and food security.

Primary Training Sessions

July 2016: Group formation and the “Dream” process (aka Family Action Plan)

This was the very first regional meeting and it focused on group formation and creating a plan for future success. The members selected their group leaders and mentors, discussed and chose a group project and selected a day for weekly group meetings. The youth learned how to develop short term objectives by creating a “Dream” document of the challenges they currently faced and what they wanted to achieve. The young family leaders took the Dream documents home to share with their siblings and to keep for inspiration and motivation. The youth are encouraged to periodically update their Dreams while still keeping the original.

September 2016: Income generating activities (IGAs)

All 403 heads of households learned how to create small businesses which would generate enough money to meet daily needs. Included was information on small business options, how to assess feasibility of potential business ideas, and what kind of marketing and bookkeeping methods could be used.

January-February 2017: Livestock

This training focused primarily on the care and breeding of pigs and goats. It was facilitated by an expert from the government veterinary agency at the community (sector) level.

March 2017: Training on food and nutrition

With the assistance of ZOE staff, children identified food security standards and nutritional requirements that should be applied to their family's daily diet. The following are the goals set out for each family to achieve:

- To have a sustainable kitchen garden that regularly provides vegetables
- To plant/have at least one fruit tree (e.g., papaya, avocado, orange, banana)
- Create a store of dry food staples (e.g., beans, soya, groundnuts, peas, rice, corn, sorghum)
- Plant a farm or a plantation of crops (e.g., cassava, potato, sweet potato, plantain, arrow root)

April 2017: Hygiene and diseases prevention

With ZOE staff, children identified the following standards of hygiene to be applied by every family in the program to improve their living conditions and prevent illnesses:

- Boil water for drinking
- Use a sanitary toilet (i.e. deep with a cover, roof and solid floor)
- Wash hands after using toilet; before and after eating
- Clean home and surrounding area, eliminate bushes
- Wash clothes and body regularly
- Keep animal in a shelter separate from the living area
- Sleep under mosquito nets and on above floor beds, not just on grasses
- Use a dish dryer table to keep dishes off the ground and dried in the sun where they can be naturally sanitized

Food Security



Yvonne in her kitchen garden

Since the groups formed in July 2016, there have been two planting seasons: September-December 2016 and March-June 2017. All 403 families have participated in agricultural activities. In the first season, they planted vegetables, beans, maize, wheat, sorghum, potato, sweet potato and cassava. In the second season larger crops were planted of beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, millet, Irish potatoes, sorghum. The second season is not yet harvested, but the growing conditions have been good and ZOE children are expecting to harvest large crops and have excess to sell. Within this first year of the program, 302 out of 403 families (75 %) are now food secure meaning they eat at least one, nutritional meal every day which features at least three different food groups such as beans with potato (or cassava or sweet potato) and vegetables.

ZOE provided vegetable seeds (cabbages, carrots, green beans, green paper, tomatoes, onions, amaranth, spinach, beetroot) and manure so that all the households could plant their kitchen gardens. Additional resources were provided to plant crops.

Livestock

After livestock training, ZOE provided 330 (82%) of the families with either a pig or a goat. Additionally, all families bought at least one animal using funds they received from their merry-go-round project.* This included 250 hens; 300 rabbits; and two sheep. Some families have continued to increase their livestock holdings by using their own earning to buy additional animals.



(*A merry-go-round fund is a group activity through which, during meetings, all members contribute a small amount of money into a fund which is then given in lump sum to one individual. Each member has an opportunity to receive the full amount which serves to both encourage meeting attendance and make saving easier.)

Income Generation

Each head of household was provided a small grant to begin an income activity. Below is the list of individual projects:

- Restaurant/canteen (19)
- Bicycle taxi (9)
- Shoes selling (2)
- Produce selling (104)
- Sorghum juice selling (24)
- Banana ripening and selling (22)
- Food stock (grains/cereals) (24)
- Retail selling/groceries (15)
- Eggs, peanuts and chapatti (flatbread) (22)
- Poultry/hen raising and selling (45)
- Other animals breeding and selling (83)
- Animal trading (34)



Martin sells sorghum juice



On the left, Alina sells fruits and vegetables; on the right Yvonne has a business selling a variety of things including corn flour, dried fish, cooking oil, soap ball, onion, and ground nut (peanut) sauce.

The most successful businesses were sorghum juice, running canteens, and shopping bag weaving (a group project). Thanks to the profit from these successful businesses, owners were able to invest in additional activities such as buying cows, growing vegetables to sell, supporting their siblings to start small businesses, and renting land for planting crops. Thirty one of the youth began vocational training in tailoring, knitting, and basket weaving. To the right some ZOE participants attend training in using knitting machines. Later they will receive a grant to purchase their own machine and other items necessary to start a business.





These youth are starting sorghum juice and canteen businesses and so received start-up kits of water containers, jugs, pans, flasks, tables, benches, cups, etc.

Health and Hygiene

In addition to being taught about proper health and hygiene the working groups are encouraged to organize weekly mutual help activities to support each other in cleaning up around their homes, making repairs and completing projects like building a drying rack or digging a latrine.

At the beginning of the program, there were many children suffering from malaria, poor hygiene related diseases, and malnutrition. ZOE provided emergency medical assistance and assisted the neediest with medical insurance. There were 27 families with 139 children who were assisted with medical insurance and care, and one child received help with medical treatment after being injured in an accident.

Community Participation

As busy as they children are, they also make an effort to participate in community work projects that take place on the last Saturday of every month.

Challenges/Solutions

- As with others in their communities, a large number of households are facing water supply challenges. This has affected their ability to implement the hygiene standards required by the program and leads to diseases caused by poor hygiene. At minimum they have adopted the concept of boiling water before drinking, ZOE staff are continuing to help them develop good habits for other self-care.
- Because they were vulnerable and felt they had no other choice, almost 25% of the girls have been sex workers or victims of sexual abuse and ended up with unwanted pregnancies. ZOE started working with other institution/organization working on these issues and also those involved in child rights protection to find a durable solution.
- In the area where these new groups are located there is some difficulty obtaining large sections of land for farming. As a result, ZOE emphasizes small business development so the children can earn money as an alternative source for procuring food.

Becoming food secure and generating an income are usually the most urgent needs of the children identified for ZOE. The information below discusses ZOE's empowerment approach to overcoming these challenges.

Focus On: Food Security

Children entering the ZOE empowerment program struggle every day to alleviate their hunger. Usually they try to find work, but because they lack status or an adult advocate in their community, they are paid extremely low wages or small amounts of food. They might try growing their own food, but they do not have the resources or knowledge to succeed. It is not unusual for these children to go two or three days without eating. Occasionally they must resort to begging or even taking from a neighbor's field just to survive. Even those children who do manage to eat daily suffer health consequences from the poor nutritional value of their meals.

With guidance from ZOE program facilitators, new working groups learn what foods they need to eat as well as explore different ways to attain a stable food source. Because ZOE is an empowerment program, the children are not told what to do, but are instead given options and training so that they can devise their own approach to becoming food secure and self-sufficient.

Children in rural areas who can access land will learn about the best agricultural practices for their region and then be given the seeds, fertilizer, and tools to begin vegetable gardens and/or plant crops like corn. Other ZOE households might start with raising small animals, like rabbits or chickens, after learning about animal husbandry. All children are encouraged to begin earning money as soon as possible to increase their food security.

Focus On: Income Generation

Young family leaders are encouraged to develop multiple income sources. Working groups usually take on a joint business project, like growing a cash crop, raising small livestock, even running a restaurant. These projects will produce profits that all can share. Individual households also start small income generating-activities like buying and reselling food items, phone calling cards, clothing, etc. Later, ZOE helps the children dream larger dreams about how they can provide for themselves and their siblings in more secure ways. For example, ZOE may help a child enroll in vocational classes to start a trade business (like tailoring, auto mechanic, or hair styling), open a kiosk business to sell dry goods or enlarge their farm or livestock breeding to produce surplus they can sell. It is typical for an ambitious young person in the ZOE program to run several income-generating activities simultaneously.

Before being given resources to start these small businesses, ZOE trains all working group members on how to craft a business plan and manage money. After this training, the group takes the following steps:

- Discusses what businesses could succeed in their community and how they can cooperate to serve the market if multiple children want to try the same business.
- Creates individual and group business plans, presenting these to the group for discussion.
- Votes to approve the proposals or help the members create a better plan.

Once the business plan is approved, the individual will receive a micro-grant and/or a start-up kit to begin. Throughout this process the ZOE program facilitator is available to provide guidance, but not to tell the group what to do or make decisions for them. In this way the children begin to learn how to make their own decisions while assisting one another so they may continue this process beyond the three-year ZOE program.

Focus On: Group Formation

When ZOE first enters a community to help children, we begin by engaging the local leaders. ZOE staff members explain how ZOE is an empowerment program, helping the children to help themselves. Although different from the usual relief approach, it resonates with leaders who want to see sustainable change in their village. Since staff are indigenous to each country in which we operate they understand local customs, challenges, and resources available so when they meet with the community leaders they quickly gain trust and support.

The children in your working group began their amazing journey of transformation in July 2016. During the first meetings they experienced understanding, compassion, and acceptance from the other children. They elected leaders, made rules to guide their meetings, chose a group name, and decided when and where to hold weekly gatherings. Within the first six months, the children began training on the topics of food security, health and disease prevention, business management, and child rights. If they had access to land they were provided seeds to start gardens and plant crops. If siblings were not attending school, ZOE provided uniforms and other resources to get them back into classes. Children who had skills were provided grants so that they could start small businesses, others began vocational training. Most importantly, all began to experience God's love and realize that though many are orphans, they have a Father in heaven who loves them.

Name List: ZOE staff members make home visits to record information about the children, their dependents and caregivers. They assess if any emergency interventions are required to alleviate health issues, abusive conditions, or inadequate shelter. Once they have confirmed who is eligible for the ZOE program, and have allowed children who are not interested to drop out and others to join, then the staff creates a name list of the children. Please note, children joining the ZOE program often have no parents or birth documentation, and have suffered multiple traumas in their young. Sometimes they are suspicious of the outsiders asking questions. For these reasons, the children occasionally provide erroneous information which we later correct.

On the following page is the list of names and a picture of your specific working group. The names in bold are heads of household, followed by their siblings and dependents. Although ZOE records both first and last names, we use only first names in public lists to preserve the privacy of children in the program. The ages of the orphaned and vulnerable children in the ZOE program range between infant and college age; however, the youth who is the head of household must be old enough to manage a small business and so is usually between the ages of 14 and 21.

Some of the children live with an elderly grandparent or disabled caregiver. Most often such arrangements include shelter only and the caregiver is unable to provide food, education, health care or other support which children need. Child rights are especially important in such situations so that the children are not abused.

The children are encouraged and strengthened by the knowledge that their Hope Companion is not only supporting them with resources, but also with prayer and in the belief that they are capable of great things. Thank you for making this journey of transformation with them.

Urukundo Working Group, Rwanda

21 households and a total of 85 children



Rachel 21

Soline 17
Vumilia 12

Regine 20

Pascaline 18
Cécile 15

Salomon 21

Josiane 20
Divine 18
Angelique 16

Sandrine 17

Gisèle 7
Francine 4
Denys 1

Seraphine 20

Fabiola 5

Sandrine 14

Rosine 12
Jeanne d'Arc 10
Janvier 7

Liliane 5

Yvonne 2

Sophie 18

Nadia 9

Valentine 21

Claudine 18
Confiance 5
Esther 2

Barinabo 18

Esperance 15
Ildephonse 13
Lambert 10
Niyomukiza 1

Barinabo 19

Mukandayisenga 12

Olive 21

Donatha 20
Donatien 15
Anitha 10
Domotille 8

Valentine 20

Jeannette 18
Betty 16
Fiston 14
Samuel 10

Mugabarigira 16

Richard 14
Samuel 12
Patrick 10
Gilbert 6
Solange 2

Vestine 19

Clarisse 18
Olive 16
Marie Grâce 14
Albert 13
Diane 10
Fillette 4

Josiane 22

Nsengimana 20
Sandrine 12

Olive 19

Sophie 20

Ratifa 16

Emmanuel 14
Immaculée 12
Charlotte 10
Evariste 8

Solange 16

Félix 12
Julienne 9
Aline 7

Théogène 17

Diane 15
Valens 13
Evariste 11

Théoneste 21

Jean Baptiste 17
Jacqueline 20
Yves 12

Hagenimana 20

Uwiringiyimana 17
Nsabimana 15
Habumuremyi 10
Nambajimana 8

From the trip leader's notes taken during a ZOE Trip of Hope to Rwanda, July 2016

Thursday, July 14 Rukomo District New Groups

We traveled from Kigali to Rukomo district. This was a long trip to a very remote area. Epiphanie shared that no other NGOs come to this area because it is difficult to get to. Here we met with a large combined group of new ZOE orphans. There were twelve groups which included 434 households and a total of 1302 orphaned or vulnerable children. All of the groups were represented at the meeting. Not all members were able to attend because of the distance and some were in school. Some walked for 1 to 2 hours to get to the district office where the meeting was held. We were surprised to find that the children were so clean and well dressed. Epiphanie shared that this was a requirement for visiting the district office. Most of the children had borrowed or even rented clothes from others to wear.

This was one of their first meetings with ZOE and they had spent the morning learning about developing a dream sheet. A representative of each group shared their dream sheet with the entire assembly. We arrived in time to see two of the orphans share their dream sheets.



Marceline is a part of the Unity Group.

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* Abuse of children, wicked women, dropping out of school
- *What makes you sad?* Father has been in prison for a long time, members of her family have died, father repeatedly beat her
- *What makes you feel happy?* Mathematics at school, babies, being in church where she can tell all of her sorrows to God
- *What is your dream for the future?* Wanted to be a nurse but was unable to complete school. Plans to donate blood. Wants to ride in a car. Main goal is to have a proper home.
- *What will be your guiding principles toward fulfilling your dream?* Self-confidence, time management, and commitment



[Unidentified]

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* People who make me sad
- *What makes you sad?* Death of mother at 8 months old
- *What makes you feel happy?* Eating pineapple, attending church, the word of God
- *What is your dream for the future?* To buy a bicycle, to buy new iron sheets to re-roof his house, to have enough to eat
- *What will be your guiding principles toward fulfilling your dream?* Pray to God because he can do all things, saving, hard work



Alice, the ZOE social worker for the groups also shared her dream sheet.

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* Children being abused
- *What makes you sad?* Alice was 15 years old at the time of the genocide. She lost five family members, including her parents. One brother and one sister survived.
- *What makes you feel happy?* Music. She likes to listen to music and sings in a choir.
- *What is your dream for the future?* She wants to be able to farm her family's land and continue her education.
- *What will be your guiding principles?* Saving

The children were encouraged not to put their dream sheets in a drawer but to look at them every day. They will be updated. The dream sheet will help them to stay focused and can be used as a tool for self-evaluation and motivation. They were encouraged to pray about their dreams.

Following the training regarding development of the Dream Sheet, a number of the ZOE children shared their stories with us.

Patrice is 20 years old. She cares for 7 siblings and her 2 month old daughter. We all fell in love with little Emily. As Patrice began to tell her story, she became very emotional and our hearts were broken for her. Patrice lost both her parents. She lived with her grandmother until she died. Their house collapsed and they became homeless. She was in secondary school when she had to drop out. She began working for food. After about 1 month she was raped by her employer and became pregnant. During her pregnancy, she was too weak to work. Now they survive by begging. They are starving and have no shelter. She feels bad that the baby does not get enough milk because of her lack of food. She walks an hour to come here to the meetings.



Dativa is 16 years old. She has lost both parents. She cares for two young sisters and a 15 year old brother. There is also an older brother that they lived with until he married and there was conflict with the sister-in-law. She has been working for food since she was 7 years old. She has been head of household since she was 8 years old. There is not much work for food in the dry season. All have had to drop out of school because they were struggling for food. They sometimes eat leftovers from sorghum beer production. She dreams of running a business; of selling food because they are so hungry.



Beatrice lost both of her parents in the third year of high school and had to drop out. She has 6 siblings. She is the oldest sister. Beatrice has been raped and has a child. "I have to provide everything for them, yet I have nothing." She begs or works for food. Their home is partially collapsed. They cannot sleep when it rains for fear that the house may come down on them. They need a place to stay because it is difficult to work with no home. They have no land. It is hard to discipline her siblings because they judge her for having the baby. They eat whatever they can find, usually 3 meals per week.

Regina is 18 years old and has 9 siblings. The children were hosted by a relative where she was repeatedly raped by two boys. She became pregnant and does not know which of them is the father. The baby is now 1 ½ years old. Because of her small stature, she had a cesarean section which resulted in an infection. They must beg for food and cannot afford medical care. She and all but one of her siblings have dropped out of school due to inability to pay school fees. He borrows school books. Their house is collapsing. "I have hope because at least people can sit down and listen to me."



Delphine is 19 years old. She cares for 5 siblings. After the death of her parents, the children lived with their grandfather until he died as well. She had to drop out of school when she was in the third year of high school. She went to work as a housekeeper. She was raped by her boss and became pregnant. Then she was chased out by the wife. That child is now 15 months old. They also eat waste from sorghum drink production. She has little milk for the baby due to lack of food. She wishes for sorghum flour to feed the baby. She cannot pay for health insurance. The baby's father does not help. She prays that by God's mercy they will survive.



Everest is an illegitimate boy. His mother has mental illness. She was 17 when he was born. His father left before he was born and he has never met him. Because of her mental illness his mother was sexually abused by many men and she was unable to care for him. He was raised by his grandmother. She died when he was 15 years old and in Primary 6. He continued to secondary school but it was very hard because he had to do labor and fetched water for food. Because of these hardships, he failed Secondary 3 and dropped out. He would beg or steal food to survive. Everest met other street kids and began



to abuse drugs and alcohol to forget that he was helpless and alone. He is stigmatized because of his illegitimacy. Neighbors tell him to go and find his father. "It shocks me to see my mother in the street and know that she does not care for me." A friend lent him clothes to put on to come here today.



Immaculate is 19 years old. There are 9 in her family. She is called rubbish, like an animal, not even human. Her mother was married to the father of the oldest child. He died. Each of the other children has a different father. Her mother abandoned them and they do not know where she is. She is able to earn about 2 kgs of beans per month. Other times they may eat cassava or sweet potatoes. They stay somewhere different every night, sometimes sleeping under banana trees. They have no land, no money, and own nothing. They survive by God's grace. She wishes for one room for them to sleep in. She wants her siblings back in school. She borrowed clothes for the meeting today.

One important aspect of the ZOE program is trauma healing. Being able to share their stories with one another and to know that they are not alone is an avenue to begin healing. It was so very difficult to hear the stories that these young people shared and be unable to do anything to relieve their suffering immediately. Next week they will have teaching on income generation and starting businesses. Their journey out of poverty and hopelessness has begun and their stories will remain with us always.

Focus on: Faith

Often the isolation that the children feel when they begin the ZOE program extends to their thoughts about God. Because they are abused and discriminated against by their community - and often this includes Christians in their village - they believe God has also abandoned or even cursed them. At other times they believe that maybe God does not exist, or if God does exist that they are somehow beyond God's love. In the very first meeting the staff often address the Lord's prayer with the children, and talk about what it means, as an orphan, to call God "Father." They learn that they are not truly orphans because they have their heavenly Father who loves them.

ZOE shares the gospel with these children, but this sharing goes beyond words to deeds. The children both hear and see the very best of the Christian message, and often respond to this in inspirational ways. At each meeting they begin with Scripture readings, prayer and devotions given by a group member, but while this is available to the children they are never coerced into the Christian faith. ZOE's program is religiously non-restrictive, but offers a compelling view of the love Christians show to others.

One of the most powerful parts of the empowerment program is the way these children put their faith into action in their own community. They forgive those who have harmed them; feed others who are even poorer than themselves; adopt other children and share their resources and knowledge with them; pray and care for one another; and pay fair wages to those who had once taken advantage of their situation with hard labor and poor pay. These children return good for evil and can be examples to all of what it means to live our faith.

Focus on: First Connections

One of the biggest disadvantages orphans and vulnerable children face is isolation from peers and the larger community. Struggling on their own, the children lack moral support, access to community resources, and a network of people to help them progress and face challenges. ZOE creates connections.

Peer group. Even though there may be hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children living in a community or village, they often self-segregate because of the conditions of their poverty, disease, and/or the stigma of HIV/AIDS. When each new member tells their story during the first working group meeting, they are greatly encouraged to find that there are others who share their same struggles. Then ZOE introduces the children to young people who already graduated from or have made significant progress through ZOE's empowerment program and the new ZOE participants are inspired and energized to begin the work of transformation.

Program facilitator and mentor. Each working group is assigned a program facilitator/social worker. These ZOE staff members usually speak the mother tongue of the region, hold a diploma in social work or related fields and have experience working with children. Additionally, the working group members select a person from the local community to serve as a mentor and advocate for the children within the community. Mentors receive training from ZOE and then attend weekly meetings, make home visits and help ZOE resolve challenges the group may face in the community.

And a powerful connection is you! All ZOE working groups know the opportunities they receive are from God, through the love and concern coming from their partners far away. They are amazed that you would care for them without ever having met them. This powerful connection is further strengthened when a Hope Companion visits the children to witness what they have achieved. In many ways you stand in place of their parents, and to hear that you are proud of what they have accomplished is transformative for these children. Thank you for being a part of building God's Kingdom in this way.