



Strengthening social entrepreneurship in Burundi

CARE Burundi

CARE10x: Partnerships for Accelerating Impact
November 2023

Introduction

Through working with the local social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Burundi, CARE worked with 26 social entrepreneurs by offering training in social entrepreneurship and design thinking in turn strengthening their capacity for sustainable, scalable, and inclusive impact.

Through the eight-month engagement, CARE Burundi successfully piloted partnerships with three social entrepreneurs (SEs), with the objective of scaling their solutions through the network CARE has built with its Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).

How did we get there?

In a period of eight months the team led the following process:

- Identified two CARE programs (TUBAKARARORERO and GEWEP III) that would form the basis of the partnership and identified the priority needs facing their program participants who are VSLA members.
- Sent out a national call for applications for social entrepreneurs with the aim of scoping the ecosystem, testing CARE Burundi's newly designed social entrepreneurship module, and identifying innovations with a proven ability to meet the priority needs of CARE Burundi's VSLA network.
- A total of 1,748 SEs applied, and of these, 26 were selected as semi-finalists. This group received training in social entrepreneurship, design thinking, and personal initiative aimed at promoting proactive behavior that overcomes barriers to achieve a set goal. Based upon their performance in this phase, three SEs were ultimately selected to pilot and scale their innovations through a partnership with CARE Burundi.

The three social entrepreneurs

Cooperative Isuku

The problem: Lack of access to affordable sanitary pads (period poverty) constrains women and girls' educational and livelihood opportunities, and overall health and wellbeing. It may also contribute to increased risks of sexual exploitation, as some women and girls exchange sexual services for sanitary pads.

The solution: CARE provided financial support to acquire raw materials, conducted entrepreneurial training through the GEWEP program who also supported alignment with VSLA's to join Cooperative Isuku. CARE also provided continuous technical support through local implementing partners as they scaled their solution. The enterprise was scaled through CARE's VSLAs whose members are both the target market for the products and the same people who will earn an income from this production.

Pilot updates: 34 VSLAS were recruited to join the cooperative, with 15 women and 6 men being trained on production. Consequently, there was an increase in the production of sanitary pads with a new record of producing 600 pads in 2 weeks vs. 60-80 pads per month (20x increase).

"When we learned about social entrepreneurship, we were told that we shouldn't consume our profits, rather we should invest them in other projects. Since our project to make sanitary towels also requires soaps to wash them, we now have a project to manufacture soaps to facilitate our customers' access."

***NIYUKURI Hermenegilde**, supervisor in a health club for one CARE's past project and social entrepreneur.*

Cooperative Twaranyuzwe turwanye inzara

The problem: Limited income-generating opportunities and market linkages for women in VSLAs and Farmer Field and Business Schools (FFBS) trap communities in a cycle of poverty.

The solution: CARE partnered with a community that had successfully used the cooperative model to advance their productivity, market access, and incomes. Through the partnership, Cooperative Twaranyuzwe turwanye inzara was able to share their experience with peers in a nearby community, Masango, and help the community replicate their proven cooperative model. Cooperative Twaranyuzwe turwanye inzara also provided training on crop diversification (e.g., how to grow new vegetables like mushrooms and vegetables) and other livelihood opportunities (such as hair-cutting).

Pilot updates: 10 VSLAs in Masango Colline were engaged; 1 cooperative was set up for the Colline with 10 VSLAs and a membership of 250 members to drive economic activities for the cooperative. VSLAs were trained in the cooperative approach; offered agricultural training on farming onions, mushrooms, and carrots, and they opened a salon for the cooperative.

Size Cut Saloon

The problem: Gender-based violence (GBV) is highly prevalent in Burundi, with young people in schools and rural areas and women in their households at greatest risk. There is a need to raise awareness, create safe spaces for victims of GBV, and tackle norms that promote toxic masculinity.

The solution: CARE partnered with Size Cut Saloon to raise awareness amongst customers who come to the barbershop on the fight against GBV, as well as provide new livelihood opportunities for those who have experienced GBV. CARE provided Size Cut Saloon with additional equipment for the barbershop, GBV visibility material to engage customers in creating spaces for discussion, and then facilitated a series of trainings.

Pilot updates: The Size Cut Saloon team completed a series of GBV capacity-building workshops conducted through the TUBAKARARORERO program to improve their skills around GBV messaging for their businesses and build capacity to train other businesses on how to replicate this proven model for raising awareness on GBV and creating safe spaces for community members.

What changed?

- **26 social entrepreneurs strengthened their capacity for sustainable, scalable, and inclusive impact.** Many reported to CARE that they changed their way of doing business, such as customizing their products to generate greater revenue. They also learned how to make business plans and had evaluation sessions with the trainers.
- This project was aligned to **CARE Burundi's strategy of being a pioneer in promoting social entrepreneurship in the country.** As part of the innovation hub, the country office developed a training module on social entrepreneurship. This project made it possible to test this module with the training of 26 social entrepreneurs.

"What we're doing is having a positive impact on women's lives in our community. We're increasingly respected in our homes and communities, and people can't wait to see what we produce. They recognize us as women who have knowledge, who have zeal, and that we are like examples for them. Even the chief of our hill supports us in all our initiatives, and I have the support of my husband; he supports us in our cooperative."

Fides Mbonimpa, Cooperative Leader and program participant

- The project contributed to **scaling the activities of two VSLA cooperatives**. Aligned with local government policy, CARE Burundi is working with VSLAs to create new cooperatives, to further enable VLSA members to increase their savings. By policy in Burundi, cooperative members enjoy additional benefits that increase their access to credit.
- The project contributed to the **achievement of the goals of the two CARE programs - GEWEP and TUBAKARORERO**. Both programs were focused on women economic empowerment and were able to test the cooperative approach as a pathway for increasing economic empowerment for VSLA members.

What have we learned?

- The call for applications **provided insight into the Burundi social entrepreneurship space and increased visibility for many local innovations**. However, the concept remains strange for many people and additional investments are needed to continue strengthening the local social entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- There is great **potential for collaboration between social entrepreneurs and CARE programs**. Building on existing VSLAs made it easier for entrepreneurs to scale their businesses. The two scaled-up cooperatives (Isuku and Masango) are made up of project participants from CARE programs TUBAKARORERO and GEWEP III.

What's next?

- Social Enterprises are being provided with continuous technical support from the local implementing partners to sustain the solutions.

CARE10x is bringing best-in-class innovations to our global network of smallholder producers. We are partnering with social enterprises—a growing source of innovative solutions to today's most pressing global development challenges. These social enterprises often struggle to access the networks, resources, and technical expertise necessary to scale their solutions to 'last mile' communities where their solutions are most needed. CARE is uniquely positioned to address this challenge. By leveraging CARE's last mile access in 100+ countries, technical expertise in gender-transformative humanitarian and development assistance, and global reputation for excellence, we are helping proven social enterprises tackle global problems at scale.

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