ACT-ON-POVERTY-REDUCTION-IN-20FAMILIES-LIVING WITH-HIV&AIDS-RWANDA:

Summary:

20 cooperative members, living with HIV and AIDS in Nyagatare district (eastern province of Rwanda) plan to grow mushrooms on a commercial scale to lift themselves out of the poverty trap and to improve their health status through increased mushroom consumption.

Help them build a mushroom growing house, a furnace for sterilising the substrates and buy a crushing machine for the production of powder substrates.

Problem:

In Rwanda cooperatives are very instrumental in the country's food security programmes. Agriculture contributes almost a third of the country's GDP. However, HIV and AIDS has become a big challenge. This has caused loss in terms of labour, minimised production and reduced incomes for the affected people. Most people living with HIV and AIDS in Rwanda's rural communities sold off the little land they owned in desperate attempt to meet their medical expenses. The district of Nyagatare in the eastern province of Rwanda is no exception as it has a fair portion of people living with HIV and AIDS. Loss of land and poor nutritional levels in people living with HIV and AIDS in Nyagatare is pushing them deeper into poverty. Antiretroviral drugs are available but poor nutritional diets seem to be reversing the positive gains of the drugs. The problem of land is also compounded by bad climatic conditions in the area. Rainfall in this area is highly unpredictable to satisfy the needs in agricultural production. Mushroom farming remains the only viable alternative. Mushrooms are a good source of nutrition for people living with HIV and AIDS, can also be a source for income generation and creation of food security. Unlike other agronomic crops, mushroom production is cost-effective, requires small space, uses limited fertilisers and so are pesticides. The market price of the crop is relatively high and profit margins higher than traditional

crops. This makes mushroom growing the most viable project as it takes limited space and produces returns within a short period of time.

How will this project solve this problem:

The cooperative members do not have the capabilities needed to kick start the project neither do they have sufficient land. They need to be financed and trained in skills relevant to mushroom cultivation. RDO's interventions will focus on putting in place infrastructures that would enable a sustained generation of required spawn. With the participation of cooperative members Rwanda Development Organisation will build a 8m x 6m brick and mortar under thatched roof mushroom growing house with cement flooring finish. Initial capacity building trainings in substrate preparation, production of spawn, harvesting, post harvest techniques, packaging and marketing of the produce will be facilitated by RDO. Cultivation techniques will be shared with the cooperative members through participatory demonstration methods by RDO hired experts. RDO will source and with the help of an expert install the required machinery and such inputs required for the operation of spawn centre to run smoothly.

RDO will also offer supportive role to link these farmers to the product market and continuous accompaniment whenever necessary.

Potential Long-term impact:

The project will have a direct impact on the 20 cooperative members who will receive skills training and opportunity for employment.

Furthermore the project is expected to

- Raise incomes of the 20 participating members, creating financial stability in the families hence moving them out of poverty
- Increase food security for the 20 families participating in the project and the immediate community they serve

- Improve the health of members living with HIV and AIDS through increased consumption of mushroom.

SUSTAINABILITY:

This project will be sustainable due to the personal dedication of those involved and the community's support of the project. The mushroom cooperative has a vested interest in the growth of their enterprise because as the members of the cooperative increase so will their bargaining power and their earning potential in the market