



## News from my sponsorship in Rwanda

December 2013

### A day in Kirwa for Jeannette our intern

*Jeannette von Däniken is currently interning with FH Rwanda. She spent a day accompanying Emmanuel, head of the sponsorship program in Kirwa.*

«It is 9 a.m. We head out on a motorcycle after drinking a large cup of warm milk in a small canteen. It will not be possible to have lunch at the site. But with the milk, we will not go hungry. It takes an hour to reach Kirwa from the FH office in Muhanga.

First, we stop by the local government office to announce our visit and speak with the agronomist in charge of this area. He takes the time to show me a new variety of banana tree that is well suited for the demanding agricultural conditions in the region. Kirwa is located at an altitude of almost 2,000 meters, and the soil is not very fertile. We continue our journey on the dirt roads, and I begin to understand that a motorcycle is a good way to get around here! We visit two families. FH supports them through payments for the health cooperative and their children's school fees, as well as through training in setting up a vegetable garden, hygiene at home, starting a collective investment group, etc. The first family is looking forward to receiving a calf. The established system of cooperation provides that families who do not directly receive a cow eventually obtain one when another family's cow gives birth to a calf. We also go to see the cow stable. Just behind the stable is a lush field of beans, clearly benefiting from the manure available nearby as a source of fertilizer.

As I accompany Emmanuel, I notice how much he loves working with the community in Kirwa. He knows everyone and takes the time to talk with families to catch up on local news. He also inquires about problems they are facing and tries to find solutions with them. It is clear that the families know Emmanuel well and trust him. His work not only provides financial assistance; it goes much further and includes moral support.

At the end of the day, Emmanuel shows me the school at Kirwa, deserted for the moment since it is in the middle of Rwanda's long school holiday. At 3 pm the rain starts to fall. We hurry back, since with two people on a motorcycle the muddy roads will quickly become dangerous! «



*Jeannette with Kirwa's kids.  
Emmanuel visits a family.  
The cowsheds.*

**Read Jeannette's entries on our blog:**  
[www.fh-suisse.ch/blog/](http://www.fh-suisse.ch/blog/)



*Kirwa's area.  
Work in the garden  
The circular garden*

### **Promoting home gardening**

Having a vegetable garden has many benefits for families. A garden allows them to vary their diet, to gain more self-sufficiency, and even to earn extra income by selling surplus crops. That is why FH encourages families to cultivate their own small garden and provides training on a profitable circular gardening technique. Manure is deposited at the center of the garden in a vertical tube in a manner that provides ongoing nutrients to the crops. Manure can be added whenever it is available, and it will gradually decompose. This technique also allows reuse of waste water; the families pour it into a small canal carefully placed near the kitchen that leads directly to the garden. Using this method, the garden has enough water even during the dry season. Another advantage is that you can grow several varieties of vegetables on different levels: cabbage, carrots, onions, peas, etc. So far, 65% of beneficiaries have such a garden.

### **Strengthening the activities of tontines**

Tontines, or collective financial self-help groups, are starting to show positive effects. Most families have been able to buy small domestic livestock (chickens, pigs, rabbits). In addition, FH teams are negotiating with local authorities, to allow tontines access to bank credit, which would let them better meet the needs of their members.

### **Training**

In collaboration with local veterinarians, families participate in training on raising cows and goats. Through regular meetings with the heads of families, they are also trained in domestic hygiene and environmental protection. FH also continues to provide training on how tontines function, in order to educate families about the benefits of saving

# **Thank you for your faithful support!**

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