

Mixed Method Research on the first pilot village Bisagara/Rugarama in Rwanda - DRAFT

This document deals with the research on the development of the first pilot village.

1. Exploratory Phase:

In October 2020, the founder of the foundation spent 3.5 weeks in Rwanda. With the support of the mayor of Bugesera district in Eastern Province, several villages that have challenges with electricity, water and cooking energy were visited. The twin village Bisagara/Rugarama in Juru sector south of Rwanda's capital Kigali was chosen. The twin village consists of 598 households and is not connected to the national electricity grid neither to the national water system.

At the same time, the founder met potential partners, e.g. companies which deal with offgrid electrification, water purification and cooking devices as well as NGOs and potential donors.

The visit in January 2021 was of limited success because of the total lockdown in the city of Kigali and partial lockdown in the districts. The founder could only visit the village for two days. He met the Juru sector executive secretary, the Juru cell secretary, the Juru Primary School director and teachers of the school. Meetings in Kigali were not possible.

It is not clear when face-to-face meetings will be possible again in the village and in Kigali and when more relevant stakeholders in the village, the cell and the sector can be identified and met. The date of a one day needs' assessment workshop cannot be planned yet because of the Covid restrictions. So it is also not clear yet, when the first project can start. Goal is still to start in Q1/2021.

The discussion with technology suppliers and NGOs/donors will be continued via virtual meetings.

So far, the registration process at Rwanda Governance Board / Ministry of Local Government has not been launched yet because not 100% clear whether necessary at this point in time or at all.

The foundation is looking for one or two local persons to work for the foundation and support the process.

2. Participatory process (Planning with the villagers):

After identification of local key, the next step is the implementation of an analysis process with strong participation of the village: what is needed in which order, what are the expectations of the village, how can the key players contribute and, if necessary, earn their living with the projects. Goal is to have a clear way forward which project to start with and in which way, as a result of the analysis and participation.

Key goals are:

- Develop trust and interest in the project activities
- Communicate roles and responsibilities of the villagers
- The role of the foundation (it is can and cannot do)
- Provide the Timeline and development of a sustainably strategy for the project with the villagers;
- Based on the Baseline study and the current situation in the village what considerations needs to be taken into account to ensure the acceptance, ownership, effectiveness and long-term viability of the project?
- Define first projects.

The target is to carry out a one day needs' assessment workshop in the village in early 2021. It is assumed that participation is an iterative process that will be repeated once in a while.

Purpose: This can provide an opportunity to align the current ideas of the foundation with the needs and expectations of the villagers and their current realities.

The outcome of the process will be documented.

3. Baseline Study:

Purpose:

- Analysis of the current situation to establish the status quo and to set a bench against which future progress can be measured and comparisons made.
- Identify in more detail the needs and expectations of involved and relevant stakeholders
- Demographic data (how many people are in the village? Average Age, gender, level of education income level, social economic status social and economic status and income generating activities?)
- Understand the interest of the villagers in the project

The outcome of the baseline study will be documented.

Goal is to have the baseline study carried out in early 2021.

4. Project implementation phase and documentation

Provided that the participatory process will identify electrification as one of the top development priorities, implementation is meant to start asap, if possible in Q1/2021. Basic household electrification (offgrid solar system with three lights and phone charging in line with minimum specifications applicable in Rwanda) might be a low hanging fruit as there is a new World Bank program that gives subsidies of over 100 USD to low income households (category 1). School electrification is more challenging in terms of cost and technology.

In parallel to the project(s): a scientific analysis of the success, effectiveness and social sustainability of the project is to be carried out. Questions like “To what extent are the project activities implemented?” and “Who is included? Who is not included?” must be looked at.

This is very important to correct mistakes short term, and of the finalized project retroactively, if that is still possible. It is also important to learn from these mistakes for the next project in the pilot village (so to incorporate it into step 1 of the next project). Last but not least when solutions are scaled to other villages, it is important to avoid transferring bad solutions and mistakes.

Basic household electrification can be carried out in a couple of months. Target is to have some more key projects implemented in the pilot village within 1 to 1.5 years from start. The timeline might be affected by the Covid 19 crisis.

4.1 Assessment of success of first project / possible questions

It is assumed that the Foundation will not be able to carry out everything at the same time, but will do project by project. Projects might overlap on the time line though. For simplicity reasons, it is assumed that the first project is about electrification on microcredit basis, see above. After three months a first progress assessment could be conducted.

The collection of questions below refers to the example of electrification. They must be adapted accordingly for projects that have another subject.

Some remarks on the terminology: rather commercial expressions are used in this document. The foundation does not aim to distribute gifts, but to help improve the local economy. So it supports “entrepreneurs”, who have “customers”, who in their part pay the entrepreneurs for products and services. Ideally, the entrepreneurs to be are people from the village.

4.2 Possible questions at customer household level:

- Were all inhabitants of the village reached by the project (at least those who were planned to be reached in the initial analysis process with participation of the village)?
- Did the household’s living conditions improve (and yes: how) with the help of the project? Can this further be specified by household member (e.g. wife, husband, children, and other members of the household)?
- Did the social life of the household change through the product/services? If yes, how and do you rate it positively?
- Can the household bear the cost of the microfinancing? What are the challenges?
- Is the household happy with the product/service? What is good, what is not so good?
- Does the household generate any income with the help of the product/service? If yes, how and how much?
- Does the household have financial means to buy other products/services (if necessary on microcredit)?
- What would be the next most wanted improvement of the household?
- What is going well? What is not going well?
- What should be improved? How? And by whom?

4.3 Questions at Entrepreneur level:

- How many systems have been sold
- How many people are involved in selling, installing, maintaining, repairing the systems?
- Could they make a living on this and will they be able to make a living on it once all houses are electrified? What were and are further challenges?
- What is the further perspective of the business after electrification is done? Live on maintenance and repair? Specialize on upgrading systems and sell appliances? Extend business to other topics? Sell systems in neighbouring villages? Any other?
- How do they rate the product used? What can be improved? If they used more than one product: what are the differences and which one is better and why? Proposals to use other products? If yes: which?
- How well is the payment of instalments by customers working? Any major problems? Is the Pay-As You-Go software used good enough – what are possible improvements? Any proposals for improvement of the entire microfinance topic for the product/service?

4.4 Possible questions at village level: leadership/ change agents maybe/ some household reps / community leaders

- What is the overall opinion in the village about the project (if not everybody participated: ask this question also to those who did not participate)?
- Do people who did not or could not be part feel left behind? Do they want to be included in the future? What do they think how they best could be included?
- What do people like the village chief, the headmaster etc. think about the project?
- Was anybody negatively affected by the project? If yes: how? Specific question: did anybody lose income and if yes, was it substituted by other income, e.g. income generated through the project?
- Were there any conflicts with neighbouring villages because of the project? Was the geographical area and boundaries of the project well chosen? Is change of the boundaries needed?
- What would be the most beneficial next project for the village (e.g. continue with projects that benefit households or rather continue with projects that benefit common infrastructure, e.g. school, health center)

5. Next steps on research / funding of research

Obviously, research needs funding. At this point in time, the means of the foundation for research activities are not there yet. So external funding is required. An estimation of how much money is required for the status quo ante documentation and the first project together with a description of the research activities planned need to be produced. This short non-scientific document is meant to be a starting point for the discussion. At the same time, possible donors need to be identified. This process was just started.

This will be a mixed method research study which will need the researchers to spend some time in the village - with the help of local well- trained research assistants. To be discussed whether there should be a local partner organization in terms of research to cooperate with and which organization this could be.

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