# CONTRIBUTION OF IRRIGATION SCHEMES ON THE LIVELIHOOD OF FARMERS IN RWANDA: A CASE STUDY OF KANYONYOMBA IRRIGATION SCHEME

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Abstract: Irrigation farming is one of the most important rural development investments that can have both direct and indirect impacts on poverty and food security. Irrigation schemes is said to be the dominant contributor to the total irrigated areas. Despite the contribution of irrigation systems in enhancing rural agricultural production and poverty alleviation being widely recognized, this contribution has not been evident for small scale holder farmers at Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme. The purpose of this study was to establish the contribution of irrigation schemes on livelihood of farmers in Rwanda. a case study of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme. The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population under study was 350 households that has benefited on the rehabilitation of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme and 15 Agricultural extension officials from the ministry of agriculture. The study used both primary and secondary data, where questionnaires, interview were used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed through SPSS version 21. Data analysis involved statistical computations for averages, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression method of analysis was adopted to determine the inferential statistics. The results indicate that households with large cultivated land size where less likely to participate in the irrigation scheme. Negative coefficient of cultivated land size showed this (-1.63) and significant at 1% significance level. The utilization of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme has been a success to farmers in Gatsibo district. This is a clear testimony that irrigation schemes can be successfully operated and managed by the farmers themselves. In view of that Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme has enhanced the employment availability as many people have engaged themselves in agricultural activities something that has reduced the possibility of falling into hunger, address climatic challenges as well as avoiding rural urban migration among the youths.

Keywords: Crop diversification, Irrigation schemes, Livelihood of farmers, Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background:

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, have realized the important role of irrigation in food production, and irrigation investments have increased in the region. You et al. (2010) reported that the average rate of expansion of irrigated area over the past 30 years was 2.3% in Africa. Total irrigated land in Africa is estimated to be about 12.2 million hectares and six countries, namely Egypt, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Sudan account for nearly 75% of this total irrigated land (FAOSTAT, 2012). Despite some notable irrigation expansion, the developmental impact of irrigation in Africa has been limited and below expectations (García-Bolanos *et al.*, 2011).

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Irrigation is said to be the dominant contributor to the total irrigated area in many African countries (Mwakalila & Noe, 2009). There seems to be a consensus that improving agriculture and enhancing agricultural productivity through irrigation will remain a key strategy for rural poverty alleviation in most of the low-income countries, where most the rural poor depend directly or indirectly on agriculture (Hillel, 2007). A few studies such as those conducted by You *et*, *al*. (2010) in different countries show that irrigation has served as the key driver behind growth in agricultural productivity and in increasing household income and alleviating rural poverty.

Lipton *et al* (2013) state that irrigation can reduce poverty through increasing production, income, and reduction of food prices. This helps very poor households meet the basic needs associated with improvements in household overall economic welfare, protection against risks of crop loss due to erratic, unreliable, or insufficient rainwater supplies, promotion of greater use of yield enhancing farm inputs and creation of additional employment, which together, enable people to move out of the poverty cycle. Frequent drought and adverse economic conditions are the major problems faced by the irrigation sector in semi-arid areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Irrigation scheme development has shown throughout the developing world that it can be used as a key drought mitigation measure and as a vehicle for the long-term agricultural and macro-economic development of a country (Sokoni & Shechambo, 2015). Successful smallholder irrigation schemes can result in increased productivity, improved incomes and nutrition, employment creation, food security and drought relief savings for the government. However, socio-economic evaluations of smallholder irrigation schemes are needed at regular intervals to be able to derive lessons from past experiences and help policy makers in formulating sound policies for future development. Yet, government-managed (large-and small-scale) schemes have generally performed far below expectations and most of the time, initial capital costs have not been recouped and the financial returns have not been able to cover operation and maintenance (O&M) costs (Ortman *et al* 2010)

#### **1.1.1 An Overview of irrigation in Rwanda:**

Irrigation in Rwanda began during the Belgium colonial rule in 1945 at Karongi (Kibuye) after the famine known as Ruzagayura (1943-44). An 8km water channel was dug from Ntaruka towards Rubengera with its tributaries irrigating local people's farms. In 2003, the government of Rwanda embarked on swamp reclamation under the Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP, World Bank/IDA 2015) with major focus on large scale rice production. The importance of the role of irrigated agriculture in achieving food security and offering away out of poverty and additional benefits include; overall modernization of agriculture production through introduction of quality inputs such as chemicals, fertilizers, quality seeds, extension systems and knowledge support.

Irrigation was identified as a key strategic activity in PSTA II. Rwanda signed the CAADP compact which establishes in its Pillar I on Land and Water management that the Government should allocate at least 2% of public funds for irrigation development. Irrigation is important to increase agricultural productivity through allowing multiple cropping and reducing vulnerability to weather shocks. Considering the potential impacts of climate change, irrigation infrastructure also made rural households more resilient and adaptable to longer term shifts in seasonal rainfall. This irrigation development took place in line with the National Irrigation Policy, the law on Water Users Associations and the Irrigation Master Plan (MINAGRI 2008-2012).

The Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme was visualized to improve irrigation facilities to provide a stable supply of water required by agriculture in the area and especially rice. The scheme was expected to enable double cropping (two harvests per year) of rice and horticultural crops, as well as to improve the productivity of rice and other crops by expanding the total cultivated area to 600 ha. Through these efforts, the project aims to contribute to the improvement of food security in Rwanda and to the livelihoods of farmers in the region, hence ensuring the country is secure in crop production to ensure food security and boost incomes of the beneficiaries.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem:**

Irrigation is a crucial input in the agricultural production process and movement towards market-oriented production is often requiring a greater application of irrigation techniques (World Bank, 2008). As a regional strategy of water resources development, irrigated agriculture has become the main intervention to mitigate recurrent drought and thereby improve food security and income of the rural population in Amhara Region (Mati, 2008). The World Bank, various development agencies and numerous countries have invested in large irrigation projects, but there is disagreement on whether investing in new irrigation projects is appropriate because of the less than satisfactory performance of existing projects (Tilahun & Paulo, 2014).

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The Kanyonyomba Dam alone in Gatsibo district was developed in 2006 where before rehabilitation a small part downstream was cultivated for rice on 45 ha with inadequate agricultural techniques used on the pretext that farmers were unskilled in the domain.

Rwanda is promoting commercial drought resilient agriculture, that's why the country is expanding its area under irrigation. The big question lies as to whether the irrigation scheme contributes in uplifting livelihood. It's for this reason that researcher investigates the contribution of irrigation schemes on the livelihood of farmers in Rwanda. A case study of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme.

#### **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

#### **1.3.1 General objective:**

The general objective of the study was to determine the contribution of irrigation schemes on the livelihood of farmers in Rwanda. A case study of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives:**

The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To analyze the contribution of irrigation on crop diversification of the livelihood of farmers in Rwanda.



# 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

# 3. TARGET POPULATION

A population refers to an entire group of individuals, events or objects that have a common observable characteristic (Orodho, 2012). A population describes the parameters whose characteristics the research attempted to describe. The target population of this study considered households from Kanyonyomba sector in Gatsibo District. The households were targeted because the study focused on the rural residents of Gatsibo District who could best be found in households as opposed to meeting people on street. A total of 350 households were chosen because the study required household survey.

#### **3.1 Sampling Procedure:**

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting several individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they are selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013).

Purposive sampling technique was employed to select Gatsibo District as the study site since there is an irrigation scheme in the area. In Gatsibo, Kiramuruzi Sector was purposively selected as the study location because Kanyonyomba is among the first schemes to be rehabilitated in the Eastern province of the country which is considered as the driest of all provinces in the country. Kiramuruzi sector is among other sectors in Gatsibo District where irrigation has been employed for the last 6 years.

## 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Diversification of crop production on rural livelihood in Rwanda:

#### 4.1.1 Respondents involvement in agricultural activity

Respondents were asked whether they were involved in any agricultural activity.

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Figure 4.2: Respondents involvement in farming

Majority (95%) of the respondents indicated that they were involved in agricultural activity whereas only 5% of the respondents were not involved in agricultural activity.

#### 4.1.2 Activities respondents involved in

Respondents were asked to indicate the activities involved in

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Rice	19	10.2
	Maize	105	56.1
	Beans	40	21.4
	Fish farming	23	12.3
	Tomato	105	56.1
	Other	40	21.4

Comparative yields analysis by crop type could not be done because of lack of uniformity in the use of inputs. However, gross yield for major crops by access to irrigation schemes was presented in Table 4.1 As expected, irrigation use has significantly contributed towards achieving household's goal of increased production and this result is similar to other reports (Getaneh, 2011). Data analysis of major cereals and horticultural crops showed that mean crop yield per household for maize, tomato, and rice is highest for irrigation users. This evidence has ensured that irrigation use is a guarantee for increased food supply and ensured food security. Crops like tomato, vegetable, are only grown by those households with access to irrigation. This is also an indication of the fact that irrigation use increases crop diversification and intensity.

#### 4.1.3 Agricultural production improved since the inception of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme?

 Table 4.2: Benefits of diversification in Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very well	80	60.6
	Well	32	24.2
	Neutral	12	9.2
	Not well	8	6.1
	Total	132	100.0

Most farmers however preferred to grow other crops for various reasons. About 60.6% of farmers preferred other crops to what they were currently cultivating. Out of those farmers who preferred to cultivate other crops, 86% of them assigned a higher market value to their preferred crops than what they were cultivating. The rainy season is from September to November. In this period both irrigating and non-irrigating households produced rain-fed crops. The dry season is

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practiced from December to April. In this cropping season, only irrigating households can cultivate using water from irrigation. Access to irrigation has been regarded as a powerful factor that provides a greater opportunity for multiple cropping, cropping intensity, and crop diversification (Saleth *et al.*, 2003).

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the empirical findings, some major conclusions are drawn after being achieved with regards to the irrigation schemes in rural livelihood in Rwanda.

The utilization of Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme has been a success to farmers in Gatsibo district. This is a clear testimony that irrigation schemes can be successfully operated and managed by the farmers themselves. In view of that Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme has enhanced the employment availability as many people have engaged themselves in agricultural activities something that has reduced the possibility of falling into hunger as well as avoiding rural urban migration among the youths. However, inflexible land tenure system available has necessitated the land shortage leading to farmers' unnecessary conflicts. Although, there has been a need for carrying out research and development in order to improve the irrigation scheme, the un-availability of skilled extension officers and farmers still pose a challenge for the government and other stakeholders to solve.

#### 5.1. Recommendations:

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn above, this study makes the following recommendations.

- 1. Kanyonyomba irrigation scheme improvement attained by small scale holder farmers need to be properly maintained; hence attainment of higher production
- 2. When land conflicts emerge, the resolution need to be passed wisely in order to avoid continuous conflicts among farmers for the smooth running of the irrigation scheme
- 3. Efficient and effective training to farmers and extension officers should be enhanced for the performance of agriculture in the district.
- 4. Policy makers have to see a need for promoting irrigation, enhancing marketing system and promoting new technology acquisition in terms of production methods and inputs in order to enable small scale farmers to carry on their activities aiming at value addition.

#### **5.2.** Areas for further research:

The findings assessed the contribution of irrigation schemes on enhancing the livelihood of rural households. It is advised that further studies could be done on the following issues; To what extent have farmers been able to utilize fully the irrigation schemes found in their areas? What are the challenges small scale farmers face when carrying out their jobs?

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