

Youth Economic Empowerment

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a vast, under-developed Central African country of over 78M people. Political instability, extreme poverty, gender inequity, and human rights violations limit the health, wellbeing, and opportunities for adolescents and future generations to break the cycle. The youth economic empowerment program grew out of parents in rural villages expressing a need to create opportunities for young people, who often tend to their family's animals and participate in agricultural activities while juggling school and other interests.



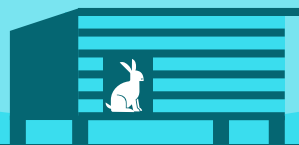
Engaging Youth in Poverty Alleviation

PFP is a Congolese-led livestock asset transfer program serving poor rural families in the South Kivu province in Eastern DRC. As part of the broader strategy to promote income generating activities with adults (e.g., livestock rearing), the program also has a youth-focused initiative that engages motivated adolescents of participating PFP communities in raising animals for profit too.

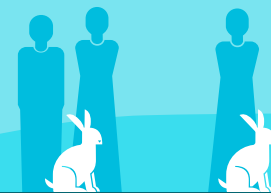
How PFP Youth Empowerment Works



Interested boys and girls (~10-15 years old) in PFP families receive a female rabbit as a loan and asset for them to raise with permission of parents.



Participants are mentored in building a rabbit cage with locally-sourced materials, composting, and nurturing the young rabbit to maturity.



When the rabbit provides offspring, youth reimburse two female rabbits to PFP to pay it forward and provide loans to other youth in the same or neighboring village.

Economic Empowerment

Adolescents are motivated to participate with the hope of selling a rabbit to help pay school fees, purchase a school uniform, and fund supplies for themselves and siblings. They also invest in other businesses, like selling pens/notebooks to students at their schools, or to save up for personal items. This provides both an opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of their family, and also instills a sense of pride and accomplishment for being able to earn money and make purchases themselves.

Why Rabbits?

- Rabbits tend to be relatively easy for youth to raise, while participating in school, family chores, and other community activities
- They require small amounts of food that is widely available in villages
- They reproduce frequently, multiplying their income potential
- There are no cultural taboos, age, or gender-based responsibilities for raising/selling rabbits
- They can provide a good source of protein promoting food security for the youth and their family
- They can be easily sold or traded for other goods

Research Study to Evaluate Effectiveness

Johns Hopkins University has worked closely with PFP to complete a comparative effectiveness trial that included:



542 young adolescents
(52% girls)

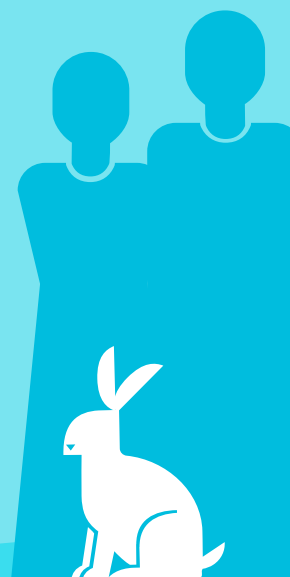
10-15
years old

representing
10 different villages



Compared to the control group (no rabbit in PFP family), adolescents in the program had:

-  **Improvement in food security**
(e.g. most improvement for younger, 10-11 years of age and girls)
-  **Improvement in communal social behaviors**
(e.g., listens to others and elders, plays together with others, helps others)
-  **Improvement in economic capacity**
(e.g., acquire additional livestock or start new complementary economic initiatives)
-  **Missed fewer days from school in past month**



Positive Impact

When asked about their experience in the program, one youth explained *"It helps me with a lot of things— not going to bed hungry, being able to return to school, purchase clothes, and not wandering in the streets because I don't have anything else to do."*

These findings reinforce the value of engaging youth in community-led sustainable development initiatives. Adolescents that participate learn new skills, gain confidence, and develop capacities that will positively contribute to sustained health, economic and social impact for themselves, but also benefits their families and communities over time.

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