Urwaruka Rushasha (New Generation)
Improving the Well-Being of Vulnerable Girls and Boys in Burundi

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Targeting 1600 families in Burundi

- Recovering from decades of conflict and one of the poorest countries in the world

- Children in disaster and conflict affected communities face numerous risks to their development and wellbeing.
Two interventions

Village Savings and Loans Associations Intervention

- VSLA groups
- Standard VSLA training
- Entrepreneurship and financial education training

Family-based discussion sessions

- 10 discussion sessions related to child protection and well-being in the family and community
- Developed for the cultural context
Research questions

1. Does a VSLA intervention improve economic outcomes of poor households?

2. Do family-based programs improve children’s wellbeing beyond what is explained by increased economic wellbeing? Or is money alone enough to improve child wellbeing in poor families?
## Evaluation strategy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Baseline Survey</th>
<th>Cycle 1</th>
<th>Midline Survey</th>
<th>Cycle 2</th>
<th>Endline Survey</th>
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<td>VSLA</td>
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Sample size: 80 VSLA groups – 1595 households
Limitations

• Self report and social desirability bias

• Validation of the scales measuring child and family outcomes

• Attrition in follow-up surveys

• No pure control group for both project cycles
Process indicators for VSLAs

- 40 VSLA groups, one cycle
- Overall savings: 52,250 USD
- 3,108 loans disbursed
- 135,409 USD worth of loans
- 43.6 USD average loan value
- 47.8% Return on savings
- VSLAs highly effective from output point-of-view (delivery of basic financial services)
- But what about the impact?
(I) Impact of the VSLA intervention on economic outcomes

- After 1 year, participation in the VSLA intervention increased expenditures & assets:
  - Increase in per capita consumption: $7 per month
  - Increase in assets: 0.22 on asset index
  - Increase in spending on education / clothing

- Led to poverty reduction:
  - 14% decrease in the number of households living below the poverty line

➤ The VSLA intervention had a significant impact on household economic wellbeing
(II) Impact of the VSLA intervention on child outcomes

- The VSLA intervention on its own had no clear impact on caregiver practices and child outcomes.

- The VSLA intervention did significantly lower family problems but did not improve overall family functioning.
(III) Impact of family-based discussions on child outcomes

• According to children (1\textsuperscript{st} cycle):
  – Improvement in parent-child communication and in family problems
  – Improvement in children wellbeing

• According to caregivers (1\textsuperscript{st} & 2\textsuperscript{nd} cycle):
  – Decreased harsh physical and verbal discipline
  – No significant impact on :
    • parent-child communication and family wellbeing
    • child wellbeing, child labor and child mental health
Conclusion

- The VSLA intervention had an economic impact but no clear link to family or child outcomes

- The family-based intervention influenced caregiver practices but not child outcomes according to caregivers
Discussion

Potential reasons greater impact was not seen:

• VSLA intervention:
  – The increase in income was too small
  – Alleviating poverty is not enough

• Family-based intervention:
  – Many risks/issues addressed in the sessions
  – No direct practice with children in sessions
  – Small room for changes from baseline
What’s next?

• VSLA interventions
  – VSLA only versus VSLA & economic training
  – Long term impact on economic outcomes
  – Further research needed for child outcomes

• Family-based interventions
  – Research in Thailand
  – New Generation 2
IRC Research with Adolescent Girls

• Economic interventions:
  – Job Training and Business Development Support (Age 16-24 / Liberia)
  – Microfranchising (Age 16-19 / Kenya)

• Life skills interventions w/ eco component:
  – Mentoring with girls / Caregiver discussion groups (Age 10-19 / Liberia, Ethiopia, DRC, Pakistan)