



GREAT LAKES CASSAVA INITIATIVE

Area of Focus: Agriculture training and monitoring of farm extension agents and field officers

How it works: GLCI was a four-year initiative (concluded in August 2012) designed to strengthen capacity in six Great Lake countries—Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda—to combat the already-present cassava mosaic disease and the emerging cassava brown streak disease pandemics. The program trained over 3,000 farmer groups and 60-plus partners and collaborated with multiple cassava initiatives in each country, regionally and across Africa. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) purchased nearly 300 netbooks, which were deployed to the NGO partners for two main purposes. The first was to run standardized training programs called “Go Courses” for GLCI managers, supervisors and field agents. The training software allowed the students to complete learning assignments, quizzes and tests, which were submitted online and evaluated to assess training utility and course effectiveness. The second purpose was to collect field data for project impact assessment. This involved registering farmers and also delivering agricultural extension information and disease monitoring surveys. Field agents collected data on farmer groups, planting, diseases, and seed distribution.

Technology used: Agilix learning platform for the “Go Courses”, Intel netbooks and Adobe Air. For subsequent projects, CRS moved to iFormBuilder and iPods/iPod Touch for the form software and mobile device.

Implementer/Funder: CRS implemented the project, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was the funder.

Fees: None to the end user. The total ICT-related implementation costs were roughly \$300,000 out of a total project budget of \$21 million. The Intel Classmate machines were valued at about \$400 each. The cost of Agilix with a NetHope discount was approximately \$7 per user per year. Adobe Air was free.

Primary Markets: The six Great Lake countries: Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Users: There were roughly 240 users total: GLCI managers, supervisors, field agents and NGO partner staff.

Business Model: As this was a donor-funded initiative across multiple countries, there was no explicit business model. One of the factors that went into CRS’s decision to use these technologies was the potential cost savings they represented over traditional methods of information dissemination and data collection.

Impact: GLCI achieved its goal of reaching approximately 1.15 million farm families. The software facilitated the standardization of the M&E questions and the indicators across all 60-plus partners and across CRS. Through this process, CRS also realized that the real value of the ICT was that it enabled new ways to analyze the data and derive greater meaning from it.

For more information visit: <http://www.crsprogramquality.org/the-great-lakes-cassava-initia/>

Sources: Interview with Shaun Ferris, CRS, August 27, 2012.

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This profile is supported by USAID’s Fostering Agriculture Competitiveness Employing Information Communication Technologies (FACET) project under the Financial Integration, Economic Leveraging, Broad-Based Dissemination and Support Leaders with Associates award (FIELD-Support LWA). It was written by Alice T. Liu. FACET offers on-demand field support to help missions with the challenges of using these ICT interventions in agricultural development. To learn more about field support options, contact Judy Payne, ICT Advisor, (jpayne@usaid.gov).