

Reaching Rural Families in DR Congo

Your Impact Report, Fall 2024

OUR GRATITUDE

Thanks to your ongoing belief in the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Opportunity International continues to reach more smallholder farmers and their businesses with the tools they need to produce successful harvests, increase their income, and stabilize their families in sustainable ways.

AGRICULTURE FINANCE IN THE DRC

Opportunity International's staff and financial institution partners continue to see that Opportunity's proven three-pronged model of **training, access to financial resources, and support** is foundational to long-term success; partnerships with trained financial institutions, well-equipped Farmer Support Agents, and financial products are key components.



Farmer Support Agents receiving bicycles to reach their farmer groups more easily

PROGRESS ON OUR WORK

As you know, Opportunity's Farmer Support Agents (FSAs) are local farmers who have been successful and are willing to train and help other farmers to succeed as well. **As of July 2024, we have 122 Farmer Support Agents supporting 17,410 registered farmers within the Gemena/Karawa area—53% of whom are women—and 60 FSAs supporting 11,349 registered farmers in Kasai—59% are women.**

- Opportunity's training manuals were printed in Lingala and Tshiluba and have been shared with all our FSAs in Ubangi and Kasai Oriental.
- FSAs have conducted a "Group Dynamic" refresher training with their savings groups due to several significant updates in the latest version of the teaching manual.
- New FSAs in Gemena and Karawa will be trained in financial literacy and bank products, following the successful roll out of the "Group Dynamic" training.
- The "Family Business and Entrepreneurship" manual has been translated into local languages and will go into production after final editing.
- 60 FSAs in Karawa have received bicycles and other materials that will help them reach their savings groups more easily (*see photo for the smiling faces!*).
- Program officers have connected 739 mature savings groups to financial institution partners for group lending products.

Digitization of Savings Groups

As part of the “Women Thrive” project that aims to increase access to financial services for women entrepreneurs, Opportunity International and Equity BCDC have partnered with DreamStart Labs to train 15 FSAs and 100 savings group representatives in Kasai Oriental in the use of the DreamSave application. This application serves to digitize a savings group’s ledger, automating the calculations and creating a digital profile that can be shared with financial partners (Equity BCDC, in the case of Kasai Oriental) to facilitate access to finance for the savings groups. In the next quarter, an additional 100 savings groups will be added. The initial savings groups helping us work through the pilot stage are receiving smart phones and a small solar kit provided by Opportunity.



A savings group conducting their first meeting with the DreamSave application

In the Ubangi region, DreamStart Labs has partnered with World Vision and VisionFund DRC to roll out a similar pilot project. Opportunity is coordinating with DreamStart Labs and World Vision on how local FSAs can be leveraged to reach more savings groups.

Partnerships: A Key to Success

Opportunity International serves as a link between farmers and financial institutions. We work with local financial institutions to develop products that meet the needs of smallholder farmers.

VisionFund DRC and **Equity BCDC** are our partner financial providers; they open savings accounts and issue loans. We continue to advance our work together:

- ▶ **VisionFund** is committed to financing smallholder farmers in Gemena and Karawa. As of **July 2024, they disbursed 6,802 Ag loans totaling \$682,400; 81% of loan clients are women.**
 - VisionFund is using an existing group financial product modified for agriculture clients.
 - In Gemena, Opportunity International is planning to train VisionFund staff in agriculture lending cycles in September.

- ▶ **Equity BCDC** has started offering financing smallholder farmers in Kasai. As of **June 2024, they disbursed 3,650 Ag loans totaling \$779,000; 27% of loan clients are women.**
 - Opportunity’s Ag team will train Equity’s staff in agriculture lending cycles this summer.
 - Equity BCDC is conducting a credit assessment for the savings groups recommended by Opportunity International.
 - As of June, Equity BCDC has trained 238 women micro, small, and medium enterprises in Kongo Central, Lubumbashi, Bukavu, and Kinshasa. They will train 287 women micro, small, and medium enterprises in Mbuji Mayi and Kinshasa.

Thank you for your continued leadership, guidance, support, and—most importantly—your deep faith and hope in the people of the DRC.