

Launch of the project on Supplying of ‘Solar Home Systems’ in Gisagara district, Rwanda

“Having a good lighting system makes the home feel more comfortable!”

BY RDIS ORGANISATION, RWANDA, 17/08/2018

On Friday 17.08.2018, RDIS organisation was delighted to launch its project on supplying Solar Home Systems (SHS) in Gisagara district, Rwanda. The president of the BoD and at the same time the legal representative of RDIS organisation, Bishop Nathan Gasatura together with the Executive Secretary of Cyiri cell, Ms Francoise Maniraguha launched the project in the presence of more than 100 villagers and invited guests.

This special event started at around 10:30 with a meeting, where the executive secretary of Cyiri cell welcomed the invited guests. Prior to that, she thanked RDIS organisation for bringing the project for Supplying Solar Home Systems in her work area as it will improve the livelihood of the people who until now had no electricity in their homes.



Figure 1: Villagers from Cyiri cell during the meeting

The Executive Secretary of RDIS organisation Mr Viateur Ntarindwa introduced the invited guests, who were mainly staff members of the Anglican Church in Butare Diocese and some staff members of RDIS organisation. He later continued with a general introduction of RDIS organisation and its projects, especially the projects that are currently being implemented in Gisagara district, such as the Carbon Project for supplying Improved Cook Stoves to poor families (CCER), Waste Management Project and Poverty Eradication Project (CCT).

Some beneficiaries of the project for Improved Cook Stoves stood up and confessed to the crowd that they are benefitting a lot from the supplied wood stoves. Mr Ntarindwa reminded remaining villagers to construct good kitchens, so that they can also qualify to be given the stove. And since this stove is not free, he said, community members must be prepared to make their contributions in kind. He continued saying, similarly, the new project for Solar Home Systems (SHS) requires the beneficiaries to slowly pay back the loan offered to them.

The guest of honour to this event was the Hon Bishop of the Anglican Church in the diocese of Butare, Nathan Gasatura. In his speech, he explained the aim of the Anglican Church is not only about praying, but it is also facilitating supply of water, stoves and now the supply of Solar lamps to the community members and so on.



Figure 2: Executive Secretary of Cyiri cell, Ms Françoise Maniraguha opening the meeting

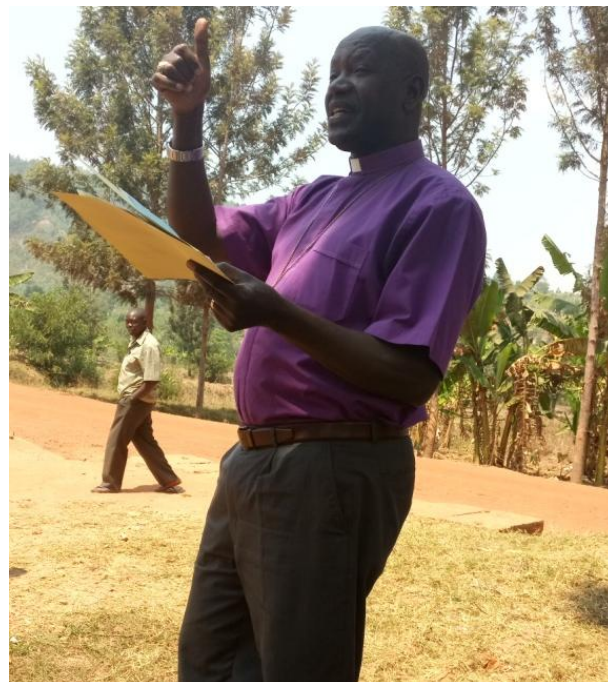


Figure 3: Bishop Nathan Gasatura speaking at the launching meeting

Bishop Gasatura, who is also the Chairman of RDIS organisation, encouraged the people to work hard so as to contribute to their own development. He encouraged them to be aware of the work and the projects of RDIS organisation in their area, especially in Cyiri cell, which has been selected to benefit from the new project for supplying SHS kits. This project will not only improve the livelihood of people, but will contribute also in the fight against Climate Change. He reminded the attendees that for a community member to benefit from this project, s/he is required to work hard to save some money for the down payment and also for the monthly payments for repaying the microcredit.

Later on, the villagers and the guests moved from the meeting place to the home of the first beneficiary family of SHS project, Mr Theogène and Mrs Uwimana Batege. When asked about the benefits of using the SHS kit, Mr Theogène Batege said: *“We firstly thank RDIS organisation very much for bringing this project to our area, because having a good lighting system makes the home feel comfortable”*. He continued saying, *“Previously in the night, we relied on one small battery torch for lighting our home. Whenever one person went outside, s/he took the lamp, leaving the other family members in darkness. Now we do no longer have this problem, because our SHS kit has four lamps: Three are installed in each room in our house and the other one is lighting our backyard.”*



Figure 4: The first beneficiary of our #SolarHomeSystyems in Gisagara district Mrs Uwimana and her husband Mr Theogène Batege with their children (in between)

Theogène Batege’s family and some of their neighbours who are going to benefit from this pilot project are among an estimated 7 million people in Rwanda who don’t have access to the country’s electric power grid. This family is happy, because for the first time is able to light their home, to charge their cell phones and a small digital radio by using solar power, while immensely cutting down household costs. In other households, solar power often replaces kerosene, which is expensive, potentially hazardous and causes pollution.

Based on Government data (Energy Group Report Aug/2017), Rwanda’s national electrification rate has reached 41%, whereby 9% are in rural areas and 72% are in urban areas. So, only a small fraction of the population is connected to the grid. Among the issues is limited financing for off-grid companies.

This pilot project, which is sponsored by the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) with its head quarters in Wuppertal Germany aims to contribute to the solution of this problem of limited financing. The business model, which is developed by German partners, Büro Ö-quadrat (Ö2) and One-for-the-Climate (OFTC) will allow the SHS users to use pay-as-you-go system and therefore make the SHS kits affordable. Under the pay-as-you-go system, customers are required to provide a 20-percent deposit (21,200 RWF) and pay the rest over 23 monthly payments of 5,200 RWF to cover costs and to repay the microcredit. In most cases, the payments are lower than what families would pay for charging mobile phones and flashlight batteries or kerosene.

The Anglican Church of Rwanda (EAR), dioceses of Butare, Cyangugu, Kigeme and Shyogwe via the Rural Development Inter-diocesan Service (RDIS) in collaboration Presbyterian Church of Rwanda (EPR) are jointly implementing a pilot phase of a Project for Supplying ‘Solar Home Systems (SHS)’ in Off-grid areas in their respective Church areas.

The two UEM member Churches above are in essence implementing an environmental protection project by investing in renewable energy sources (Solar energy), whereby the invested capital will have to be paid back.



Figure 5: RDIS’s improved cook stove in use

In addition, the day was also an exciting field day for the RDIS organisation, because the family of Mrs Uwimana Bathege is also a happy beneficiary of the project for supplying Improved Cook Stoves for poverty eradication and environmental protection. So, Bishop Nathan Gasatura, the Executive Secretary of Cyiri cell Ms Francoise Maniraguha and the RDIS Executive Secretary Mr Viateur Ntarindwa went on to verify the use of the stove in the kitchen.

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For more information, please visit our special page: www.rdis.org.rw/solar-home-systems