

## SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL: CAVIES IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS

IN

### DR CONGO SOUTH KIVU PROVINCE

Wanjiku Chiuri (corresponding author), Brigitte Maass, Benjamin Wimba, Gaston Amzati, Fabrice Muhimuzi, Carol Amani, Pascal Habumugisha, Thierry Metre and Felix Meutchieye

#### **Abstract**

*The current debate on African agriculture is women's limited access and control of production assets which jeopardizes the sector. Women need more access and control of production assets, but how and who will do it? On the other hand, little attention is given to what women control (small livestock) by researchers, extensionists and development agents, despite their huge potentials in ensuring nutrition security and improved livelihoods. The domestic cavy (Guinea pig) is one of them. Thus, the AustAID-funded project '**Harnessing husbandry of domestic cavy for alternative and rapid access to food and income in Cameroon and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**' aimed to contribute to introduction to forage production, improved cavy husbandry and generate reliable information on their contribution to livelihoods. "Small is beautiful", Professor Schumacher said. In a world, where big is better, it takes thinking outside the box to see the world from African women's eyes. Cavies are small and they are kept mostly by women and young people. They are one of the women's controlled livestock for nutrition and incomes. Women constitute 64% of cavy producers and traders. Assuming that Cavies are the only source of cash and proteins, it is estimated that in one calendar year, a household of 6.5 members needs 130 cavies to meet their basic nutrition and income (above 1.25 dollars a day) requirements, if the cavies average weight is 800g, achieved with improved forage production and cavy husbandry. With the traditional husbandry, the family needs 230 cavies.*

**Key word: Cavies, Empowerment, Livelihoods, Women, Youth**