

Special Initiative on Training and Job Creation

# Creating Inclusive and Sustainable Construction Jobs in Rwanda

## Promoting women and youth in rural construction

Invest for Jobs supports EarthEnable in **empowering women, youth, and people with a low level of formal education to enter the rural construction sector**. The company's training and coaching programmes in masonry and business management enable disadvantaged people to start their own construction businesses or secure jobs.

## Employment bias in the Rwandan construction sector

In 2021, 11 percent of Rwanda's employed population worked in construction, making it the country's second largest job provider after agriculture. The sector, however, is highly male dominated. According to the National Labour Force Survey only 13 percent of construction workers and managers are female. Women face structural prejudice, old-fashioned gender roles and limited opportunities in the industry, leading to high levels of under- and unemployment. **Without strong female role models and targeted upskilling in construction, women's participation in the sector will remain low.**

In addition, youth and people with a low level of education struggle to earn a living in the construction sector. Their chances of finding employment, moving into better paid positions, or running their own successful business in the industry are low. They often lack the necessary literacy, numeracy or technical skills and have limited experience in construction and business management. Especially in rural areas, employment opportunities are limited. Yet, given the high demand for affordable and safe housing in rural communities, there is great market potential for resourceful construction entrepreneurs.

To improve rural livelihoods and create inclusive employment opportunities in the industry, training and mentoring formats need to be designed for disadvantaged groups. Aspiring female masons and young housing entrepreneurs require targeted support to develop the skills and confidence necessary to secure jobs, build their own businesses and make a difference in their local economies.



## Empowerment and coaching of female and young housing entrepreneurs

To create inclusive employment opportunities and equip rural women and youth with the necessary skills to successfully run businesses in the construction sector, Invest for Jobs supports EarthEnable – also known locally as Tube Heza. The Rwandan construction company specialises in affordable and organic housing solutions, including sealed earthen floors and wall plastering. Through their franchisees – entrepreneurial masons – they market and install their products in rural communities throughout Rwanda.

As part of a joint project with Invest for Jobs, EarthEnable started providing training to 200 unemployed women and youths and coaching to new and existing franchisees. The aim of the collaboration is to **create 200 new jobs in construction** by November 2023, **normalise women's work in the sector and contribute to inclusive and sustainable rural development**. In two-month-long training courses, participants are taught technical skills for construction, sales and business management and other soft skills. The content is tailored to the individual needs of the three targeted demographics – women, youth, and people with a low level of education.

Implemented by

The female-only training programme offers a safe space and addresses gender-specific barriers in the construction sector. In addition to practical masonry skills, these workshops focus on communication, identity, leadership, peer-support, conflict management and managerial soft skills to build self-confidence and challenge gender stereotypes held by both men and women. The training content for young people or people with little formal education additionally emphasises language, literacy, and numeracy, as well as practical work-readiness skills to improve employability.

Subsequent to the training programmes, EarthEnable provides sixteen months of targeted one-on-one coaching to graduates and 75 existing franchisees. The aim is to consolidate skills and improve productivity along with incomes. Finally, the company provides certification to masons who have achieved a high level of competence in construction, sales, and effective small business management. Successful housing entrepreneurs trained under the initiative will break preconceived notions in the industry and contribute to rural development with affordable and sustainable housing solutions.



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## Making an impact in the rural construction sector

EarthEnable developed targeted curricula and training sessions for Rwandan women, youth, and individuals with a low level of formal education. By August 2022, 140 people have been trained in construction and business management, of whom 40 were women, 69 were youth and 65 had a low level of education. Trainings for new recruits are ongoing and 22 graduates have already been signed as official franchisees of EarthEnable.

One participant confirms that in the past, women were not trusted to make a living in the construction sector, but the training and coaching at EarthEnable has empowered her as both an entrepreneur and a mason. She says: *“I feel happy because when people see me now, they say: ‘That is a businesswoman of EarthEnable. She is a mason, and she is good at it’”*.

In the months following the basic training, 93 newly trained masons and 75 existing EarthEnable franchisees have already received one-on-one coaching to consolidate and expand their professional skillset. More trainees and franchisees will receive the same support during their employment. In a next step, graduates will be prepared to enter and pass EarthEnable’s certification process. Certification by an established player in the construction industry proves to sceptical clients: Rwanda’s women and youth are fit for the job.

**Under the Invest for Jobs brand**, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has put together a package of measures to support German, European and African companies engaging in Africa. **The Special Initiative on Training and Job Creation** – the official title – offers comprehensive advice, contacts and financial support through its implementing organisations to overcome investment barriers.

### Please get in touch!

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