

# NEWS FROM THE FIELD

- Inclusive Insurance in Rwanda -



## Inclusive Insurance in Rwanda: Lessons from Field Experience

### Building Agricultural Resilience through Inclusive Insurance: The Rwandan Case

In Rwanda, inclusive insurance is not a theoretical concept: **it is an operational lever for risk management for farmers, cooperatives and financial institutions facing climate and economic shocks.**

In 2025, a visit to Kigali and rural areas brought together 17 participants representing 12 organisations from 9 countries. They observed a structured model in which public actors, insurers and microfinance institutions (MFIs) collaborate to make insurance protection accessible to vulnerable populations. At the heart of this ecosystem, **Radiant Yacu**—the country's first dedicated

microinsurance company—and local agricultural organisations illustrated how tailored products can secure incomes and support investment.

This approach is a part of **the inclusive insurance programme supported by Proparco and implemented by the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation (GCAF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).** Beyond the programme framework, there are tangible factors that illustrate the impact: ensuring a harvest, securing a loan, investing despite uncertainty.

This field-based insight demonstrates how, when institutional, technical and partnership systems are in place, inclusive insurance can become a genuine driver of local development.



› Ovia Tuhairwe, Chief Executive Officer of Radiant Yacu

### Radiant Yacu: The Trajectory of a Specialised Player

*“We started in 2019 with nine employees and capital of 400,000 dollars. In the first year, we collected only 8,000 dollars in premiums,”* says **Ovia Tuhairwe, Chief Executive Officer of Radiant Yacu.** *“Today, we have 28 staff members, we reached 6.7 million dollars in premiums in 2024, and our target for 2025 is 10 million dollars.”*

These results reflect a rare trajectory in the sector: **achieving profitability within three years.** The company now offers eight products: life insurance, credit insurance, agricultural insurance (crops and livestock), health insurance, savings insurance, liability insurance and student insurance.

This growth is built on three structural pillars: tailored products, specialised human resources and strong distribution partnerships. *“We work closely with banks, microfinance institutions such as VisionFund Rwanda, savings and credit cooperatives, as well as agronomists and veterinarians across the country,”* explains **Ovia Tuhairwe.**

## Rwanda's Institutional Framework: A Structuring Public-Private Partnership

Rwanda stands out for the strong involvement of the State in developing inclusive insurance. In 2019, the government launched the **National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS)**, a public-private partnership which subsidises 40% of farmers' insurance premiums.

*"Government intervention was critical," emphasises Ovia Tuhairwe. "Without specific microinsurance regulation, subsidies and VAT exemption on our products, we would never have been able to establish this company."*

**Pamela Mutesi**, from the **National Bank of Rwanda**, confirms this strategic approach: *"Insurance plays a vital role in our financial inclusion agenda. It is about protecting what we have already achieved and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our progress. The NAIS started small, but we are now expanding the system to reach all Rwandans."*

The Ministry of Agriculture, the **National Agricultural Export Board (NAEB)**, and other government agencies also play an active role in farmer enrolment, awareness-raising and coordination with private insurers.



▶ Pamela Mutesi, National Bank of Rwanda

## More Constrained Contexts in West Africa

**Testimonies from participants from West Africa highlighted the challenges they faced in their countries, in contrast with the institutional framework seen in Rwanda. In some countries, particularly Mali and Burkina Faso, changes in the international context have halted partner funding, regardless of the relevance of the technical approaches developed.**

### Mali and Burkina Faso: Insecurity Weakens Portfolios

*"Today, we are facing major security challenges," explains Abdoulaye Sidibé, Commercial Director of the Kafo Jiginew network in Mali. "Mali has been heavily affected by insecurity and terrorism for over a decade. It is difficult for financial institutions to operate across the entire territory. Beyond security challenges, climate change is severely affecting the agricultural activity that we largely finance."*

The figures are alarming: Kafo Jiginew has closed 20 branches, while the **Network of Micro-Institutions for Growth and Income (RMCR)**, a member of **VisionFund International**, has closed 6 branches and lost 25% of its portfolio. *"We are witnessing increasing impoverishment. Population displacement leads to the abandonment of economic activities and significant deterioration of portfolios,"* he adds.

In Burkina Faso, the situation is similar. **Gaston Assagwe**, Chief Executive Officer of **ACFIME**, explains:

*"Insecurity has led to population displacement and clients we can no longer reach. This results in poor portfolio quality. Some areas have seen branch closures, leaving portfolios without solutions or repayment." He adds: "Households have had to flee, losing their assets and their ability to repay. This directly affects their repayment capacity, and these populations can no longer develop or even feed themselves properly without the support of host communities."*



▶ Thérèse GANHOUEGNON (COMUBA Benin), Herman JAKO (COMUBA Benin) and Edith Salimatou TRAORE (RMCR Mali)

## Togo and Benin: The Weight of Climate Risk

Further south, challenges are primarily climate related. *“The main challenge we face is climate change,”* says **Yendoumban Fori**, CEO of **Coopec Sifa** in northern Togo. *“We mainly finance smallholder farmers and are seeing rising defaults. We lack liquidity to finance activities.”*

He describes a vicious cycle: *“Households lose income, fall into debt, struggle to repay, and face food insecurity. It is a downward spiral that entrenches poverty. A colleague even referred to intergenerational poverty: when you cannot afford to educate your child, that child remains trapped in this cycle.”*

In Benin, **Herman Jako** from **COMUBA** shares the same observation: *“Our portfolio is 54% agricultural. We face significant risks linked to climate change and declining profitability. These challenges pushed us to integrate agricultural insurance into our procedures.”*

**Prosper Kanawe** from **Assilassimé** (Togo) summarises the urgency: *“If our beneficiaries had access to agricultural insurance coverage, the impact would be significantly reduced. They would have a much stronger capacity to withstand shocks.”*

### Limited Public Engagement in Several Countries

*“The experience we saw in Rwanda is truly remarkable, and we would like to have this type of model: a public-private partnership,”* says **Abdoulaye Sidibé**. *“There is strong public sector involvement, which has enabled success. It is a source of inspiration for us.”*

**Gaston Assagwe** confirms: *“When the government is involved in developing financial products, the chances of success increase.”*

However, in several West African countries, this institutional support remains limited. *“Today, in our countries, we do not have this support. That is what is missing—we must acknowledge it,”* admits **Abdoulaye Sidibé**.

### The Role of Technical and Financial Partners

West African stakeholders emphasise that, in the absence of strong public engagement, donor support remains critical to structuring technically sound and financially viable insurance mechanisms.

*“We cannot ignore donor support,”* says **Gaston Assagwe**. *“If governments are not involved but donors provide strong support, we can still move forward. The ultimate objective is to have a population using microinsurance products to reduce their vulnerability.”*

The programme funded by **Proparco** and implemented by GCAF and the ILO has demonstrated this impact.

*“The programme helped us establish an insurance department that now oversees all our activities,”* says **Herman Jako**. *“We can now serve a wider range of clients and are more advanced than other institutions in our country in this field.”*



## On the Ground, lives transformed: The Cotevem Cooperative

In the Gakenke district, the Cotevem tea producers' cooperative brings together 5,500 members who collectively produce more than one million kilos of tea leaves per month. **Emmanuel Niyitegeka**, the cooperative's director, recalls the difficult years before insurance was introduced: *“We were particularly affected by climate change: prolonged droughts and floods that devastated our plantations in the marshlands. Farmers were constantly asking us for support in dealing with these challenges. Local authorities then advised us to seek insurance coverage.”*

After working with **Radiant Yacu** and conducting a thorough climate risk assessment, the cooperative introduced a dedicated insurance product for tea. The first impacts became visible very quickly. *“Before insurance, farmers cultivated in marshland areas that were extremely vulnerable to flooding. Now that they are covered and the insurance compensates for all losses, they have the confidence to relocate their plantations to higher ground and invest in their future,”* explains **Emmanuel Niyitegeka**. *“People who were not previously tea producers now want to join our cooperative because they know there is insurance that can cover potential losses. We expect to double or even triple our membership over the next two to three years.”*

## Key Lessons from the Rwandan Experience

The visit to Rwanda identified five essential conditions for the success of inclusive insurance.

### Simple, affordable and relevant products

“For our low-income beneficiaries, insurance must be simple and easy to understand, affordable, and accessible,” summarises **Prosper Kanawe**. “At the outset, support is also needed from the government or from partners to subsidise premiums so that beneficiaries can gradually become accustomed to using insurance.”

**Radiant Yacu** has fully embraced this requirement by naming its products in Kinyarwanda, the local language, so that low-income populations can understand them easily. For example, its hospitalisation insurance product for motorcycle taxi drivers is called **Turi Kume**, which means “**We Are Together**”.

### Innovative, locally rooted distribution

“We wanted to work with the right distribution partners: banks, MFIs, savings and credit cooperatives, as well as agronomists and veterinarians across the country to market agricultural products,” explains **Ovia Tuhairwe**.

The ILO played a particularly important role in helping **Radiant Yacu** develop its tea insurance product by placing an expert within the company for two years. “The intention was not for her to come, design the product and leave, but to train our teams. We designed it together,” the Chief Executive explains.

### Digitalisation remains a major challenge

“A significant share of our product management remains manual, particularly the assessment of agricultural losses, which is carried out entirely in the field. This limits our ability to scale up and to compensate farmers quickly”, acknowledges **Ovia Tuhairwe**.

## Financial education and awareness-raising

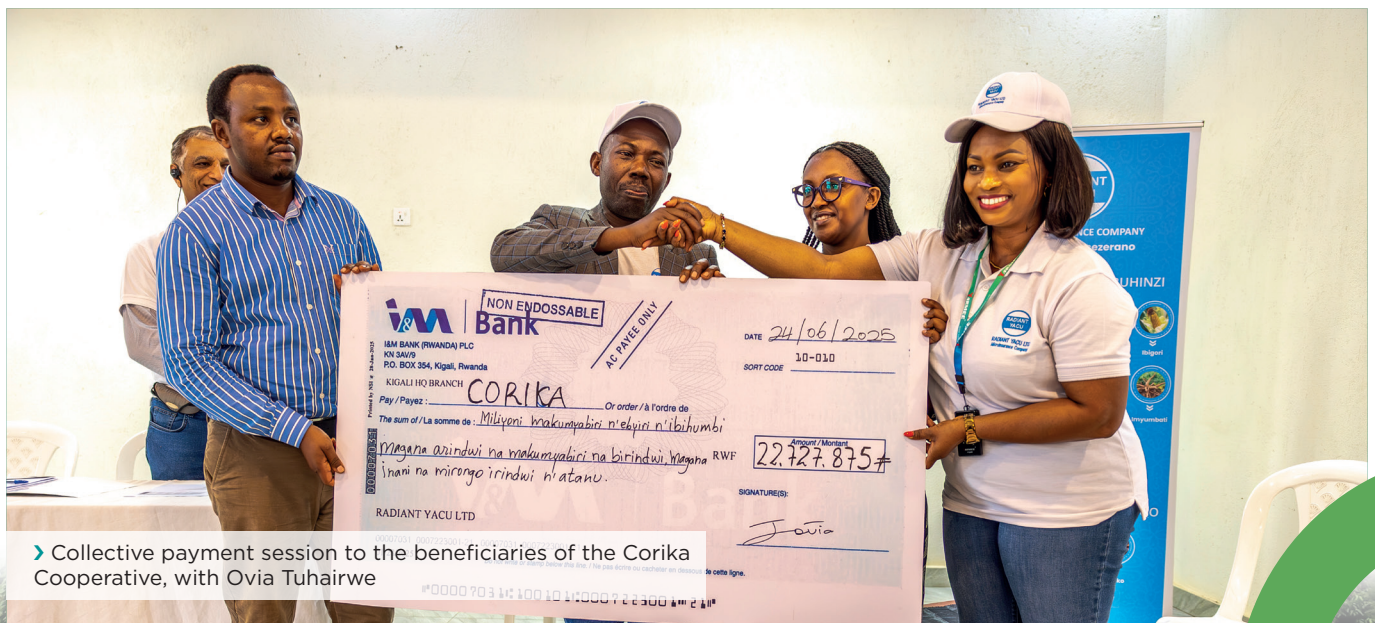
“The main problem is information and education,” stresses **Yendoumban Fori**. “Products need to be made accessible to everyone. Beneficiaries need to know that it is possible to insure their crops and livestock. Even if people are poor, they can usually set aside the minimum needed to pay a premium, but without the necessary information, this becomes a real obstacle.”

In Rwanda, insurance penetration remains at 1.8%, despite progress. “There is still a lack of public awareness and consumer education, and this is very costly,” **Ovia Tuhairwe** notes. “Television and radio campaigns are expensive. And in the microinsurance sector, farmers and low-income people are not on social media. They use basic phones. So awareness-raising has to rely on television or radio.”

## Transparency and speed in claims settlement

Radiant Yacu has chosen to innovate by organising public and collective payments of agricultural claims. “We try to settle claims collectively, especially for agricultural insurance. We bring farmers together so that they can see that the claim has been paid,” explains **Ovia Tuhairwe**. “We even invite journalists, television and radio stations to witness it. They take photographs, interview us and interview the farmers. For us, a claim is an investment, not a cost or an expense, because by paying claims we demonstrate the value we bring to our clients. And once they see it, they spread the word. Word of mouth is excellent marketing for us.”

This approach has created an extraordinary virtuous circle within the **Corika cooperative**, which specialises in rice. During the visit, participants had the opportunity to observe how farmers, gathering to receive compensation after flood-related losses, immediately became enthusiastic ambassadors for the product among their uninsured neighbours.



› Collective payment session to the beneficiaries of the Corika Cooperative, with Ovia Tuhairwe

## Challenges and Prospects

**Despite its success, the Rwandan model is not without challenges, and Radiant Yacu is transparent about the obstacles that remain.**

### Financing innovation

*“We are extremely grateful to the ILO, which provided us with a grant to design our tea insurance product,” says **Ovia Tuhairwe**. “The next product in our pipeline is coffee. We were supposed to launch coffee at the same time as tea, but we did not have the capacity to develop both products at once. We are now trying to meet with coffee cooperatives in order to start designing a suitable product. But the whole process needed to create and appropriate new product is costly. It includes, among other things, in-depth research and feasibility studies.”*

### Adapting to national contexts

*“I believe that the model we have seen over the last few days in Rwanda could be applied in our country, Togo,” says **Prosper Kanawe**. “But it needs to be adapted, because Rwanda and Togo do not share the same context. We should draw inspiration from it but adapt it to our own reality. A copy-and-paste approach would not work.”*

Senegal faces specific challenges. According to **VisionFund Senegal**: *“In Senegal, we face marketing challenges due to low population density and dispersed target areas, which results in high costs. We are exploring digitalisation to compensate for this, but it remains difficult because of regulatory issues. Following the most recent change in government, subsidies to MFIs and insurers were revised.”*

### The sustainability of the subsidy model

A key question concerns the sustainability of the subsidy system. The Rwandan government covers 40% of agricultural insurance premiums. How long can it maintain this effort? And how might other African countries, facing far tighter budgetary constraints, replicate such a model?

**Prosper Kanawe** suggests one possible route forward: *“A wide range of stakeholders really need to be involved, just as they are in Rwanda: the State, the Ministry of Agriculture, insurers, cooperatives and farmers. In West Africa, we have two regional organisations, ECOWAS and WAEMU. I believe that if we can pool efforts at regional level, things could move much faster and benefit everyone, because it would reduce the cost of setting up such systems in each country.”*

### Expert Analysis: Market Dynamics and Resilience

**Dr Kameshnee Naidoo**, who prepared the programme’s strategic analysis on behalf of FGCA, offers a broader perspective on the issues at stake: *“Across the world, we are seeing rising vulnerability. Agricultural households appear to be on the front*

*line. They face growing risks to their incomes caused by climate change: floods, droughts and various disasters all have an impact and increase household vulnerability.”*

She emphasises that the Rwandan experience shows how the regulatory framework, investment environment and business strategy can converge to build a viable inclusive market. *“In a changing world, one of the most important things is to understand the new context in which we operate. Market growth cannot take place without understanding the field, how it has changed, the new partnerships that will be needed, and the different forms of collaboration required for a significantly transformed market.”*

She concludes that this experience marks a major shift in how insurance markets will need to adapt to new risk environments.



➤ TV interview with Ovia Tuhairwe during the collective payment session to the beneficiaries of the Corika Cooperative

## Conclusion: Adapting Principles, Structuring Ecosystems

Rwanda shows that a clear public framework and targeted subsidies can help build a viable inclusive insurance market. The challenge now is to bring together, in each country, the institutional, financial and partnership conditions needed for its sustainable roll-out.

As **Gaston Assagwe** states with conviction: *“The ultimate goal is to have a population that uses microinsurance products to reduce its vulnerability. And for that, it is essential that international partners get involved so that, together, we can build viable structures.”*



➤ Beneficiary farmers during the collective payment session to the Corika Cooperative by Radiant Yacu

### About the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation

Created in 2008 as a joint initiative by the Crédit Agricole Group and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus with the Grameen Trust, the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation contributes to the fight against poverty through financial inclusion, focusing primarily on women. The Foundation provides long-term support to partners in the field, to finance their development and adaptation needs. GCAF combines financial investment with technical assistance to reach underserved vulnerable populations.