

## CENTRE FOR GENDER AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CGCDZ) REPORT

### Cooperative Community Voices: Tagona Women Cooperative Pamushana Business Centre

#### Background of Tagona

Tagona Cooperative was established in 1996 as the brain child of thirteen women in ward 15 of Bikita district in Masvingo province. The cooperative started with the women renting space at Pamushana Township, while engaging traditional methods of peanut butter making. After realizing some proceeds from their trade they embarked on building a structure thanks to the US Ambassador's Self Help Fund which supported their project through provision of machinery to make peanut butter.

**Below are some of the testimonies from the women members of the cooperative and community members who directly benefited from the establishment of the cooperative**



*“At one point in time I had two thousand dollars in my personal account with a local commercial bank in Masvingo realised from the sale of peanut butter while working for Tagona cooperative”.*

My name is Muchadudza Dzimati, I am 70 years old and live in Chiduwa village in Bikita. I am a member of Tagona Cooperative since its inception in 1996. The cooperative during the period 1996 to 2007 transformed my family income. I bought five cattle, ten goats, send my children to boarding school and built a standard house under zinc. Business was flourishing such that we had ready markets at Pamushana High School, Silveira hospital, Silveira High School and Ndanga Hospital.

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The cooperative produced 100 litres of peanut butter (dovi) a day. However, after the introduction of the multi currency system in 2009, all the cooperatives' savings were swept and to date there is a crippling electricity debt of eight hundred dollars United states dollars that has crippled operations.

We are seeking support in the form of a grant to off set the electricity bill so that we start operations.



*“The training I received from workshops conducted for the cooperative members broadened my thinking and I helped my village members on a number of issues related to their rights”.*

My name is Alleta Shereni, I am a widow aged 60 years. I come from Marozva Village and has been a member of Tagona Cooperative since inception in 1996. My household income improved tremendously while the cooperative was functional. My daughter was employed when I was incapacitated for six months and the income she got was handy for my medication during the period.

I bought household wares and livestock from proceeds realized from the cooperative. We appeal for assistance to pay off the electricity debt which the coop owes to Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority

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so that we start operations. However, by the time of the interview we had engaged management at Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority to reconnect power after presenting a re-payment plan.

The cooperative had improved the lives of surrounding communities since it provided a ready market for their groundnuts. However, we bought groundnuts from Gutu, Bikita and Buhera thus revitalization of the cooperative shall require transport for the raw material (ground nuts) from the farmers to the plant. Contract farming that was introduced in the area did not take off after the closure of the cooperative due to viability challenges.



My name is Pindai Chiduwa from Marozva Village in Bikita District of Masvingo Province. I am a married woman aged 54 years. I joined the Tagona Peanut Butter Cooperative from inception in 1996 and I am the Chairperson of the Cooperative. When we started we were renting space and using traditional methods of making peanut butter. The process was slow and labour intensive resulting in us failing to meet demand in some cases. We then decided to secure our own stand and completed the building around 1998. We received a donation of machinery (sheller, grinder) from the Ambassador's Self Help Fund.

Now a fully fledged cooperative we then embarked on producing large quantities of peanut butter which we sold to the local community, Pamushana High School, Silveira High School and Hospital and as far as Ndanga Hospital. We secured ground nuts from local farmers and also from as far as Buhera which is over a hundred kilometres away. Upon realising that our business was growing big we then hatched the concept of contract farming, where local farmers would be allocated seed and fertiliser

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and then would sell the groundnuts to Tagona Cooperative. The concept was however not implemented due to capacity challenges.

As a member of Tagona cooperative I was able to improve my family's standard of living since we could afford decent meals, school fees and clothing for my five children among other domestic utensils. I also managed to buy goats from proceeds from the cooperative.

The Cooperative is currently defunct owing to an electricity debt of close to US\$1000. Once this debt is offset we can resume operations and become a force to reckon with in food processing. We are also encountering such capacity challenges as:

- Limited entrepreneurs training
- Limited bookkeeping skills
- Limited marketing skills



My name is Angeline Ranganai aged 62 years. I live in Marozva village in Bikita. I also joined Tagona Cooperative in 1996 and was among the 13 founders of the cooperative. I benefited from the cooperative since I could manage to send my children to school and buy kitchen wares. I also bought goats which have now multiplied to more than ten. My greatest challenge came when we had to come home late and my husband would not understand that. We would quarrel and at one point he even threatened to stop me from being a member of the cooperative. He however softened when I started

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bringing in some income from the cooperative. So it would be necessary to also teach us ways of managing and resolving conflicts within the cooperative itself and those arising between spouses.



My name is Slivia Ngwaru from Marozva Village. I am aged 64 years and joined the cooperative on inception. The cooperative started off with challenges of lack of support from our spouses who in many cases threatened to close the cooperative. We were served by the chief who summoned our husbands to his court and told them to support our initiative. Despite these challenges we soldiered on until we constructed our own building. I personally benefited a lot from the cooperative because I did learn to live in harmony with others and also to share my experiences with other women.



My name is Veronica Mujinga and I am 56 years old. I live in Marozva village. My family's life improved greatly as a result of the cooperative. I could afford to send my children to school well clothed and fed. I also managed to buy kitchen utensils and livestock from the proceeds from the cooperative.

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Women show casing some of the machines they use in peanut butter production. The venture has economically transformed the lives of the members however, they lack the business approach in order to be competitive.

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Above, the Chairperson of CGCDZ Mr Munyaradzi Rubaya sharing the benefits of the cooperative with some of the members of Tagona highlighting the advantages of legally registering their entity with the Ministry of small to medium enterprise development.

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