



Developing Women's Leadership and Business Skills

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Home-based workers from the OYES Cluster in Kenya, 2015

Photo: C. Wills

Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade, one element of a multipronged project (sidebar) targeted poor workers in Africa—specifically in Ghana (cocoa farmers), Kenya (handicraft producers) and Uganda (coffee farmers and handicraft producers)—and offered training to help them improve and diversify their livelihoods.

The project was implemented and the training delivered by WIEGO's ground-level partners:

- in Ghana, Kuapa Kokoo, a cocoa farmer cooperative
- in Kenya, the Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT) – a network of membership-based fair trade handicraft organizations
- in Uganda, Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative, a farmer's cooperative
- in Uganda, the Ugandan Federation for Alternative Trade (UGAFAT), a network of membership-based fair trade handicraft organizations

In December 2015, at the end of the project, WIEGO's Global Trade Director Elaine Jones and writer Leslie Vryenhoek visited seven groups in Kenya and Uganda that had taken part in the project. The purpose of the visits was to determine what, if any, changes had occurred as a result of the project, and to gather stories from the women involved.

This report reflects the findings of that visit, as well as reported facts from the partners. A final piece on Kuapa Kokoo is derived from reports made by Mary Mabel Addy, the Gender Consultant who played a key leadership role in delivering the project to women in her cooperative.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The project was designed to raise the voice, visibility and validity of informal women workers. It emphasized a bottom-up approach utilizing local expertise and a participatory process. First, partners conducted baseline surveys. An assessment of needs for training was done. Then training materials were developed that met those needs.

The training relied on a cascading method. In each organization, a small group of local facilitators were trained. They then trained women in their own organizations and communities. In Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, a total of 8,134 women have received training over the three year life of the project. The training covered areas ranging from leadership to record-keeping, from marketing to governance.

The content of the training was predicated on these overarching concepts:

- Firstly, that to be empowered, women must understand their legal rights, including to own property, and that they can assume leadership roles.
- Secondly, that building and managing strong democratic organizations can amplify women's voices and thus enhance their opportunities.
- Thirdly, that solid business and financial skills are required so women can run productive enterprises and access credit.
- And finally, that improved understanding of international markets and buyers ensures informal producers can create saleable products and sell them at a fair price.

The training regime respected organizational, economic and cultural realities. Project partners were able to customize the training. Gumutindo, for example, trained women coffee growers to improve their farming practices, while KEFAT and UGAFAT trained handicraft producers in product design and quality assurance.

TRAINING TOPICS

The training includes seven modules, each of which has four sessions. Topics are:

1. Introduction & Understanding Gender and Employment Relations
2. Understanding Women's Economic and Social Contribution to Effective Poverty Reduction
3. Promoting Democratic Participation and Accountability
4. Enhancing Financial and Business Management Skills
5. Understanding the Market
6. Quality Management Systems
7. Improving Innovation and Production Techniques

Customization also meant translation into local languages, and addressing local culture and custom. Some organizations found it helpful to invite men to attend sessions so they, too, could come to understand the benefits of empowering women.

It was interesting to discover, through the final interviews in Kenya and Uganda, that different organizations identified different facets of the training regime as the most crucial catalyst for change. For example, women at Bega kwa Bega and Machakos—both Kenyan handicraft producers—spoke most passionately about having achieved solidarity through a strong organization. This, they felt, was the crucial piece that led to other improvements.

For coffee growers at Gumutindo, it was the combined knowledge of women's rights, especially property ownership rights, and the push to diversify their earnings that had the biggest impact. Others, like Basecamp Maasai Brand in Kenya and the Nubian craft producers in Uganda, focused their comments on what they learned about improving product quality and creating new products.

That said, it is important to note that women in all groups spoke to all facets of the training as important ingredients in facilitating the changes they experienced. The differences in what they emphasized most likely reflect differences in their type of work, their overarching circumstances at the project's outset, and in the maturity of their organization.

OBSERVED OUTCOMES

During the December 2015 visits, it was evident that the women's increased knowledge has dramatically bolstered their confidence levels, strengthened their organizations, and improved their livelihoods. Many women who were interviewed said they had a newfound ability to speak out and to have their voices heard in the home, in group meetings, in the community, and more widely. One outcome is that women—women like Justine at Gumutindo and Lucy at Bega kwa Bega—are putting themselves forward as candidates for leadership roles within their organizations, while others have aspirations beyond their organizations. In fact, we met two women who are currently running for public office, and credited the project with helping them find the confidence to campaign. And we learned that Jenipher Wettaka at Gumutindo applied for a local government post and is now a parish chief. UGAFAT reports that five women who participated in the training have contested local or district elections.

Organizations were also strengthened. They reported greater solidarity, regular meetings and elections, and better record keeping. Official registration of the groups—a step emphasized in the training—was undertaken by most, and led to increased visibility and validity. Organizations that had begun as social welfare projects (such as Bega kwa Bega and Basecamp Maasai

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- to increase women's participation as members and leaders of producer cooperatives, which will translate into increased equality
- to foster increased realization of rights and access to assets
- to help women achieve an increase in income through improved design, quality and production techniques, leading to an increase in market readiness and improved global, regional and domestic sales
- to strengthen institutional capacity for more effective market access and women's economic empowerment
- to strengthen networks and replicability

Brand, both in Kenya) became independent, women-run membership-based organizations. And official status gave the organizations access to authorities, resources, and funding. In one great example, Ngalo in Uganda recently received a very large grant to expand its operations.

However, in one instance—the Nubian handicraft producers in Entebbe, Uganda—change at the organizational level was less evident. While some gains had been made, particularly in a wider range of products and in improved income, a more focused effort on organizational strength could have led to better results.

Women in every group reported increased earnings. Often this was a result of better product quality or better product costing. Just as often, it derived from new streams of income, often the result of coming to own property such as livestock. Much of the information gleaned on increased earnings was anecdotal; few women could pin hard numbers to their statements—though at least two handicraft producers in Uganda said their earnings had doubled in the past two years. The women did, however, provide elaborate details on how better cashflow led to improvements in their lives and households. Most often this involved the ability to pay school fees for children, but women also reported purchasing water tanks, solar panels, better-built houses, cooking items and clothing.

Over and over, we heard women talk about how they had gained an understanding of their rights—especially their right to own property, which has given them a much more solid foundation from which to earn a livelihood and to access credit. The women also said they experienced a significant shift in their perceptions: they now see themselves as workers who bring in earnings that benefit their households and their communities. This identification clearly made the women proud. It also led to a “professionalization” of their behaviour. Because they saw themselves as workers, and their handicrafts as real work, they applied more rigorous standards and quality control, which in turn improved earnings. Within the Nurturing Uganda group, two women spoke about how the concept of quality control spilled over into their small retail businesses, leading them to ensure their wares were of better quality and more attractively displayed; each said this has brought them more customers.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CHANGES

In addition to ensuring new knowledge and skills reached thousands of women, the cascading training approach created sustainability beyond the life of the project. Women who have been trained can continue passing along the skills into the future.

Initially, some of WIEGO’s partners had expressed concerns that poor and largely uneducated local women would not be able to successfully take on training and facilitating roles. Despite that initial skepticism, in every community WIEGO visited, we met women who had risen to the challenge and excelled. Their energy, intelligence and intimate understanding of their communities has been crucial to local success of the program. As the project ends, those local leaders and their enthusiasm offer a chance that the positive changes in their organizations and communities will be sustainable.

A training package for broader use has been compiled by the WIEGO project coordinators in collaboration with partners and with input from expert trainers and subject specialists. Training manuals are now available at <http://wiego.org/wee/fair-trade>.

Combining the learnings and best practices from the three project countries, the resource consists of seven modules focused on women's leadership, governance and business skills (including clear, accurate record keeping, marketing and quality assurance). This will allow the partner networks and cooperatives to offer ongoing training to their membership, while making the training available to other informal worker networks worldwide.

Poor informal women workers in Kenya and Uganda turned new knowledge into power, seizing the opportunity to diversify their livelihoods and to assume leadership roles. Consistently, the women we met in December 2015 wanted to deliver these messages: they are grateful to all who made the project possible, and they would like more—more ongoing training and more knowledge.

The project led to clear improvements in women's confidence, in their product lines, and in their organizations. They gained an understanding of their rights as women, built leadership capacity, and learned financial skills, including the value of savings and reinvestment. This suite of knowledge and skills has the potential not just to continue to benefit the women who received training between 2013-15, but to multiply outward in their communities and down through generations.



PROJECT PARTNER:

KENYA FEDERATION FOR ALTERNATIVE TRADE (KEFAT)

KEFAT was created in 2003 so Kenyan fair trade groups could collaborate on organizational capacity development, market access, and fair trade growth. Across the country, KEFAT currently has 37 member organizations that provide incomes to 6,000 artisans, helping support an estimated 30,000 individuals in their households. Through KEFAT membership, these organizations and producers have benefited from trainings in business management skills, craft skills, product development, and financial management.

KEFAT is a country network affiliated to the World Fair Trade Organization. It was a country-level partner in the Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

First, KEFAT conducted a baseline survey on its membership to collect data and determine the gender balance and registration status of its member groups, and where training should focus. The network intended to target 50 of its members—but the first discovery was that it only had 35 active member organizations.

The baseline survey also identified gaps where capacity-building training was most needed across the membership. Organizational challenges were among the most significant issues identified. This research informed the development of training materials.

Thirty women-led producer organizations were selected to take part in the project. KEFAT decided to divide the country into seven geographic clusters, and appointed a coordinator in each cluster to support project implementation at the regional level.

In May 2013, coordinators took part in a three-day training session that gave them a range of knowledge on leadership skills, women's rights and roles in poverty alleviation, relevant legislation, democratic participation and accountability, business and financial skills, and an understanding of marketing and quality management.

Once trained, these community coordinators took their new knowledge back to women's groups in their areas. By the projects' end, over 3,100 women had received training.

In addition to the seven community coordinators, three other leaders have also been trained as trainers. KEFAT has had training materials translated into Swahili for those women with little or no understanding of English.

OUTCOMES OF PROJECT PARTICIPATION

KEFAT's goal in this project was to see the new knowledge translate into an increase in sales of at least 15 per cent in three years for member groups. For some groups, that goal was exceeded. For example, Lucy Nyambura said her group, Bega kwa Bega, saw sales jump by 30 per cent in one year due to better communication with customers and better leadership within the group. (She also noted respect for women has led to engagement with local leaders on issues like waste disposal and provision of toilets in the slum area where their production centre and office is located.)

In turn, better group management and opening up training to women in the community beyond the group's membership has led to increased membership in many groups.

While not all groups could provide definitive sales numbers, all reported an improvement. KICK, one of the participating groups, recorded improved sales of almost 40 per cent, though not all of that growth can be attributed directly to this project.

The project's training on product design and quality management, in particular, helped participating groups find new markets and new customers as products improved and diversified (across participant groups, 17 new products were designed).

Because the participating groups are all formally registered, it allowed them to be recognized by institutions and enabled access to financial services. Economic empowerment followed, as both groups and individuals were able to take out loans, leading to improved standards of living. And a culture of saving was established among participants that will help sustain the positive changes in their lives.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PARTICIPATION

30 self-help women's groups from all parts of Kenya participated

67 separate trainings were held
3,160 women received training

REGISTRATION

At outset: Only 13 of 30 groups were properly registered with current certification

Project goal: To have 25 participating self-help groups registered

Outcome: All 30 self-help groups participating in the project are registered and have current certification

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

At the 2014 AGM, for the first-time ever, the gender balance shifted on KEFAT's nine-person Board of Directors when five women were elected.

STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK

KEFAT's Board members received institutional governance training in 2013. The workshop was sponsored by the WIEGO project and facilitated by OYES, an affiliate member of KEFAT. Board members were equipped with leadership skills and awareness of Board roles and responsibilities, the principles and practice of good governance, financial budgeting and reporting, corruption and resource mobilization and other relevant topics. This training has enabled them to better deliver on their mandate.

KEFAT subsequently developed a human resources manual, a procurement guide, a strategic plan and an inventory management system throughout the project. Improvement of KEFAT's website was undertaken to ensure it remained dynamic and responsive to the needs of its membership and that it communicated effectively.

SUSTAINING THE GAINS

In 2013, KEFAT created a five-year strategic plan that reflects the aspirations of the membership in terms of institutional development and market expansion. A key part of this is a marketing strategy. In the coming years, KEFAT will focus on linking to other organizations and to governments, building on the global interest in fair trade and expanding KEFAT's reach. It has set a target of increasing its market share by 5 per cent by 2018. Already, a feasibility study is underway, and partnerships are being built with tourism operators, county governments, and NGOs.

KEFAT STORIES OF CHANGE

- **Success for the Women of Machakos**
- **Maasai Women Bead Better Products, Better Lives**
- **Bega kwa Bega: Shoulder to Shoulder, Achieving Their Goals**

KEFAT MEMBER PROFILE

MUCH SUCCESS FOR THE WOMEN OF MACHAKOS COOPERATIVE UNION

For a group of women who weave baskets in Machakos, Kenya, coming together to work—and coming to perceive their basket weaving as a business—has created a shift first in perspective and in a better standard of living.

Unity and harmony are soft, immeasurable outcomes, but for a group of women in Machakos, Kenya, these have translated into solid earnings and improved well-being.

In December 2015, five women from rural Kenya dressed up and travelled an hour by taxi to the town of Machakos to meet with WIEGO representatives. They told us how working with KEFAT in the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project has changed their lives.

The women are part of a burgeoning 40-member group that is affiliated with the Machakos Cooperative Union. They produce sisal bags woven in different styles and sold through Machakos to an international market—for example, in Japan, Canada, Italy and Germany.

Since 2013, the women have undergone training on organizational governance, on their legal rights as women, and on financial and business practices that will strengthen their livelihood. These include how to appropriately price and cost their goods and how to negotiate a better price.

“The training has taught us to take this as a business. Before it was just leisure,” said Lydia John, the coordinator of the project in her group.

She added that learning better techniques and how to manage quality has dramatically improved the product—and the women’s earnings. “Before, we were weaving without knowing what we were doing. Now, you are counting your hours to make sure you are paid enough.”

It is worth noting that the women who visited were well-groomed and dressed as modern business women—a stark contrast to the way they presented when we visited them two years earlier. They admit the way they dress has changed as their income has risen, and that this also enhances their confidence.

“Even if you are going to tend cattle, you have to be coordinated,” laughed Lydia, whose tailored red blazer matched her red and black shoes.

She also cited the importance of the social aspect, which is crucial to the group’s success. “We gather together and teach each other. Now we meet and you can correct where you have gone wrong. Before, we went home to weave alone.”

Relationships within this tight-knit group have become more harmonious. “We share stories and now we are stress free,” Lydia said, explaining that the tendency to gossip or quarrel has diminished because the women have come together with a common purpose, while being able to talk and advise one another has helped women cope with difficulties. “We are at peace with each other.”

Two years ago, group membership was just 25, but as women in the community saw how their neighbours inside the group were thriving, and as orders increased, the group’s ranks began to swell. Recruiting often happens through training sessions, which are open to the whole community. Each new member must pay 500 Kenyan shillings to become a full-fledged member. However the payment is deducted in 50 shilling increments each time the woman is paid for a bag or basket.

ABOUT MACHAKOS

Machakos is a cooperative union in southeast Kenya. Registered in 1972 as a coffee cooperative, it has 34 primary societies; most are certified through the Fairtrade Labelling Organization. This year, the cooperative union milled over 1.2 metric tons of coffee—about 50% of the coffee grown in this region.

In 1980, Machakos started a handicrafts division to provide women with livelihood options. The handicrafts division is an affiliate of the Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT). Today, more than 26 women’s groups representing over 3,000 women are part of Machakos.

These groups are not full-fledged members of the union, but according to Martin Malila, CEO and General Manager, the goal is to continue to strengthen their capacity and organizational structure until they can become cooperatives. Only then can they become members. “It’s a process,” he said, noting that it is a necessary process to ensure these new members will be honoured by the existing membership.

The groups do have voice on the Machakos Board, however. Two directors—each representing a region of women’s groups—now sit as directors.

Training in product design and new development has also paid off. In addition to the original sisal baskets they still weave, the group has branched out to making new sizes and shapes, and using different materials such as banana fibers. One creative member of the team, Donata (shown in photo), has designed a basket that is rounder and wider. Part of the group's commitment to environmental issues, the bag is designed for shopping and aimed at the global desire to reduce plastic bag usage.

Most sales are made through the cooperative union, which markets the products online and in catalogues. The project provided support with these marketing endeavours. Orders have become fairly steady, keeping the women busy most months of the year. (Women occasionally sell their own bags at markets, too, but report that they receive less money per item this way.)

When the satisfactory product is delivered to the Machakos office, the women are paid. Some money is deposited in the group's joint account at a savings and credit organization, a cooperative in which they are shareholders. Some is used to buy sisal and other raw materials. (The cooperative union has provided them with bulbs to grow their own sisal, but the plants take years to mature and are not yet ready.)

SAVINGS, ACCESS TO CREDIT AND INVESTMENT

The group also engages in savings strategies like table banking, which sees each put money in the pot regularly, creating a savings habit and a fund for loans (at a low interest rate) if someone needs more than they have saved.

Improved earnings have given the women access to formal credit. A financial services provider has come into the community directly because of the sisal bag success. It offers flexible, low-interest loans backed by a peer guarantee system. Some women have borrowed to buy solar panels and make a loan payment on the 12th of the month. The group holds its table banking sessions on the 10th of each month, and any woman struggling to make that payment can borrow what she needs.

The influx of income has allowed members of the group to buy water tanks, to get gas cylinders and to buy livestock like goats and chickens. The goat's milk can be sold providing another income stream.



Donata, a member of the women's group, designed this new shopping bag.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek

At the WIEGO-led project's outset, not a single woman sat on the 12-person Machakos Board of Directors. In 2014, three women were elected to the Board.

“Our living standard is better,” says Lydia. “The money we get allows us to save and to borrow.”

With the encouragement of the WIEGO-led project, the group formally registered in 2013, paving the way for the women to access government funding from sources such as UWEZO, a local fund specific to women. Leaders in the group told us they are trying to get an appointment with officials so they can access the fund. If they are successful, they plan to use the money to build storage space and a showroom, with a covered open area that will allow them to keep a fire lit and heat water for dyeing the sisal even during the rainy season.

MEET NORA MUENI NYILE

Learning that she had land rights changed Nora's life. A single mother of two who lives with her aunt, she had no access to land—or so she thought. But a training module on the new constitution, which grants women the same legal right to inherit land as men, opened her eyes. Nora laid claim to a parcel of land that had belonged to her father. She has planted some food crops there, and with income from the baskets she makes as part of a women's group under the Machakos Cooperative Union, she bought a goat that now grazes on her land.

Nora says the money from the sale of baskets at first helped her buy basic necessities “like sugar and soap”. Now, it isn't just necessities she can afford. She has also invested some of the money—and realized a terrific tenfold return. A chicken she purchased for 300 Ksh has given her 10 chicks—each of which she sold for 300Ksh.

Improved income and title to the land have also led to increased confidence. “As a woman, I have my rights,” she says, adding, “We have the freedom to speak in the community, to have a voice.”

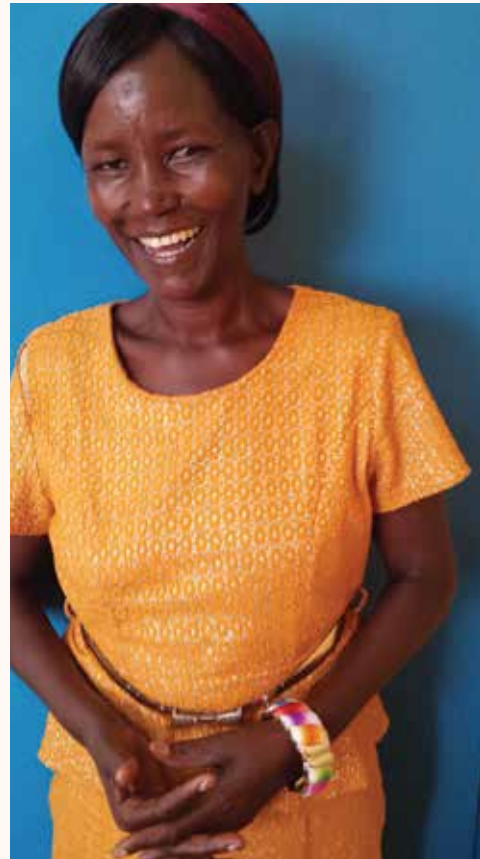


Photo: L. Vryenhoek

KEFAT MEMBER PROFILE

MAASAI WOMEN BEAD BETTER PRODUCTS, BETTER LIVES

by **Leslie Vryenhoek**

Nalakiti Sayaiael has a slow but fierce smile, punctuated by the custom-made gap in her lower set of teeth. As she shares her story in Maa, the local language, that gap forms part of the sound. Her hands, meanwhile, stay in motion. She's finishing a bright blue bracelet that ties together her traditional beading skills and a new understanding about international markets. Blending new knowledge with old skills has led to a dramatic change in her household — and in her sense of self.

Nalakiti lives in Talek, a community adjacent to the Maasai Mara National Reserve in southern Kenya. Although separated from Kenya's urban areas by rough, unpaved roads, the place and its people are being transformed by external forces. More frequent and severe droughts in this semi-arid region, for example, threaten subsistence livelihoods based primarily on rearing livestock, particularly cattle. Meanwhile, grazing areas are limited by a conservancy movement that sees the Maasai trade parcels of land to outside interests in exchange for regular payments. Add to this mix a growing tourism industry, which imposes new customs to satisfy tourist preferences.

According to the Maasai Association, over the past thirty years the economy here has grown increasingly connected to global markets. In 2003, Basecamp Maasai Mara, an eco-safari enterprise operated by the Norwegian company Basecamp Explorer, opened here. It sought to provide local employment while helping preserve local nature and culture. The tourism company also set up a foundation to support community projects, including schools, hospitals and a handicraft enterprise. That enterprise, Basecamp Maasai Brand (BMB), gives women an opportunity to make and sell traditional beaded crafts in a global marketplace.



Nalakiti Sayaiael has turned her traditional skills into a good source of income. Photo: L. Vryenhoek



The women who produce for Basecamp Maasai. Brand say learning to do things better has improved their lives. They too have spent their increased earnings on livestock, on more functional homes, and most especially on education for their children.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek



Nalakiti finishes beading a bracelet destined for international markets
Photo: L. Vryenhoek

In 2013, a project called Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Women in Fair Trade was implemented by BMB, to help its handicraft producers improve their livelihoods. The project, led by WIEGO in partnership with the Kenyan Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT), provided training in women's leadership, business and finances, organizational governance, and women's economic rights.

Nalakiti is one of the women who benefitted from these trainings. She believes the project taught her to be a leader, allowing her to overcome shyness and help other women learn to earn a living. And in 2014, her newfound confidence helped her win election as the chair of BMB, which has grown into a 120-member community-based organization (CBO).

According to Jemimah Lenjirr, BMB's coordinator, the group has officially registered with the Kenyan Ministry of Gender Children and Social Development. Registration brings benefits, Jemimah explained, by making a group more visible and offering access to government funds.

"The women have a voice as a group," she says. "When you are alone, you cannot claim your rights. But when you are together, you can negotiate."

But the new identity brings worries, too. In a move to promote sustainability and independence, the foundation ended its financial support for women's enterprise last year, although it continues to offer free use of an Art Centre and office on its site. Now, to pay salaries to Jemimah and two other staff and to cover expenses, BMB must rely on its sales.



A range of Basecamp Maasai Brand products.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek

SECURING BETTER LIVELIHOODS

Currently, buyers come from Europe and the USA. Most place orders through an online catalogue, though some ask for custom designs. BMB also sells products on consignment in some of Nairobi's gift shops.

Women producers pay no membership fee to belong to the organization. Instead, their buy-in is the skill they bring to make the products that BMB sells. They are paid on a piece rate as subcontracted producers. BMB provides the beads and other material, and instruction on new designs. However, while the women start working on new items at the Art Centre, much of the work is done in the women's homes, where many also produce their own products to sell independently.

In the past two years, training in new techniques and quality management, alongside basic business skills and financial topics like saving and diversifying their income, have bolstered both BMB and individual earnings.

Because BMB is Fairtrade certified, it pays a fair price for the work the women do. This gives the producers a sense of security. In fact when she was nearly finished her bracelet, Nalakiti held it up and said, "When I'm beading this, I know how much I will get for this product."

Her earnings from the work are now significant—about 20,000 Kenyan shillings every two months. This has allowed her to improve her household and to share in the cost of schooling her five children. Nalakiti's husband also contributes to the family expenses, but his income from cattle farming is not high and he has three other wives with children to support.

Nalakiti has built a bigger, more modern house and bought a water tank, and recently a group of the women went together and each bought a gas cooker for 5,000 Kenyan shillings. The cookers save time. Now if Nalakiti is delayed with work, she said, she can prepare the evening meal without having to take time to fetch wood and make a fire.

She has also reinvested her earnings to diversify her income. Once she came to understand that she could own property—ownership and other rights were also part of the training—she purchased cows and sheep. These give her additional income streams.

Many of the women who had gathered also talked of how much it has meant to them to learn to do things better. They too have spent their improved earnings on livestock, on more functional homes, and most especially on education for their children.

“Women now are able to know that they can have their own money and have control over it. They can say ‘This money can take my daughter to school,’” said Jemimah.

One woman noted that what has really changed is the respect that the women are afforded in the community.

BRINGING IN MORE WOMEN

Nalakiti echoed that, saying she is proud that she’s setting an example for other women to follow. Many women, she says, ask her if they can join.

However, it’s not that simple. “We have a waiting list of young women who want to join, but we need higher orders to absorb more,” Jemimah said, but added that all interested women in the community were welcome to attend the project trainings, regardless of whether they were members.

Following Maasai tradition, some younger members inherit their spot in the group. An older woman who can no longer efficiently make the products can hand over her spot to a younger woman—usually a daughter or daughter-in-law who has learned the skills. The older woman maintains the membership and receives 50 per cent of the income generated by the younger woman. Only upon the older woman’s death will the younger woman gain full membership.

KEFAT MEMBER PROFILE

BEGA KWA BEGA: SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS

In a Nairobi slum, the women of Bega kwa Bega are checking linens—table runners, decorative cushion covers and an ingenious pan carrier—and then packaging each piece. It’s a flurry of activity. A buyer from Italy is coming to collect the 400-piece shipment in two days, and the women must ensure each item meets the demanding standards of this customer. The order is worth 305,000 Kenyan shillings for the self-help group; for the women who made the products, that represents a significant payment.

Both the large order and the careful attention to quality control are a sign of how much has changed since this group joined the Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT) in 2012.



Bega kwa Bega (in English, Shoulder to Shoulder) was started in 1992 under the auspices of the Catholic Church. Then, it was a social program for single mothers. Eventually, the group expanded to include others, and its ranks grew to more than 100 members before dwindling to almost none due to a lack of organizational leadership. But in recent years, Bega kwa Bega has become independent, reinventing itself as a fair trade enterprise that produces quality accessories and housewares.

“Now we are strong on our own. We are independent,” explains Lucy Nyambura, who has been the treasurer of the organization since 1994. But while the organization values its autonomy, the women value solidarity. “We learn from each other. We have that spirit, so we can achieve our goal.”

According to Lucy, much of the group’s current success comes from participating in the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project.

It provided a range of training, including on the rights of women and their identity as home-based workers. Financial and business skills training—from record keeping to quality control, pricing and costing—dramatically improved the group’s capacity to operate.

The project uses a cascading training approach, in which community facilitators are trained and then bring home their new knowledge to their groups. Lucy is a facilitator. “I trained everyone [in the group] on finance and recordkeeping” she says, “Now I do not have to be here all the time.” While other people can record incoming items and pay the producer, she concedes that she does check to ensure everything has been recorded correctly.

The group has also grown. “Three years ago we were only 12 members,” Lucy says. “Now we are 20.”

Last year, Bega kwa Bega opened a bank account and officially registered. It plans to make use of its official status to begin lobbying the government for improved services—especially water and sanitation—in this slum.



The women of Bega kwa Bega conduct quality checks to make sure each piece they have made will meet their European buyer’s standards. Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Through the project, Lucy travelled recently to a home-based workers' meeting in Uganda, where she met WIEGO's partners from around the world. She was particularly impressed by the solidarity of the home-based workers from India.

"They are so close and so organized. They have one voice, and they go one way. And they achieve what they want. We have to do that here," she says.

KEFAT Coordinator Edwin Bett says he has seen a great change in the attitude of these Kenyan women. The first training that he did, he refused to pay the "sitting allowance"—a long-standing practice of organizations paying people to attend a meeting. After his presentation, Edwin found himself locked in their offices, alone and unable to leave until he agreed to pay the women what they felt they were owed for their time.

"I had to explain to them that this training was for them, to help them," he recalls, "and that I would not pay."

Today, Edwin and Lucy can laugh about it, but that afternoon it was a delicate negotiation.

"At the time KEFAT came in, we were down. We had no work, no money, so we weren't going to sit for nothing," Lucy explains. "Now we have realized it was for us."

Today, the group members are grateful for the training and support. Like Bega kwa Bega itself, their incomes have risen from the ashes. On average, the women now make about 6,000 Kenyan shillings each month through external orders. To put that in context, it is about 13.5 days of work at the standard day labour rate in Nairobi of 450 Kenyan shillings.

But each month is different, and depends on the incoming orders and the amount of work an individual does. Currently, the complicated bead necklace many of the women are fashioning pays 180 Kenyan shilling each—and it is only possible to make two in a day. However, the US buyer who specified the design follows ethical trade practices, and Lucy says they will negotiate a fairer price.

"Because of the training, we know how to come up with the appropriate cost, how to add up our time and any materials, and we know we have the right to ask for a fair price," Lucy says.

For most of the women, this is not the only source of income. While Bega Kwa Bega works entirely on external contracts, making its members subcontracted homeworkers, most also create their own products as own account home-based workers. Then they sell these on the streets or in markets. Lucy and the others light up when they talk about the self-employed work. It is simply more creative and more enjoyable.



For making this complicated bead necklace, a woman is paid 180 Kenyan shilling each. However, because the work is time-consuming and the US buyer who specified the design follows ethical trade practices, Bega kwa Bega will negotiate a fairer price for the next order.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Another funder provided a computer, after the group realized its inability to communicate directly with buyers was hampering its income potential. The computer will let them stay in touch with current customers, find new ones and recapture old ones. To assist with marketing, KEFAT has helped them design a website; the group also has a brochure, and plans to try to place the best of its products in large gift shops.

When Bega kwa Bega holds its bi-annual elections next year, Lucy plans to put her name forward to be the next chair. She says, "I always tell [the other women] we are going to fight for our rights. No one else is going to fight for our rights—it is just us. So if you want to be back, stay back. But we are looking forward."



PROJECT PARTNER: GUMUTINDO COFFEE COOPERATIVE

Gumutindo is a secondary level cooperative which began as a group of 200 farmers in 1998 and now encompasses 10,000 farmer members organized into 16 primary societies. The farmers live on Mount Elgon in eastern Uganda. Gumutindo produces Arabica coffee and is 100% Fairtrade certified.

In recent years Gumutindo has focused on empowering women, who carry out nearly all of the work on coffee farms. However, men own most of the land and take most of the earnings from coffee production. Currently, land ownership is a requirement for membership in the cooperative, so women comprise just a small percentage of Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative members. However, Gumutindo has a gender policy: 50 per cent of the Board seats are reserved for women, while on the primary societies' committees, at least two of seven seats must be held by women.

The Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project targeted not just Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative members but the wives of members who also engage in growing and harvesting coffee.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PARTICIPATION

10 OF 16 primary societies participated. 40 women—4 in each primary society—trained as facilitators.
OVER 1,280 women trained.

WOMEN'S MEMBERSHIP & LEADERSHIP

Issue: Only landowners can belong to the cooperative, and few coffee farmers knew women could own land. At the outset of the project, women accounted for just 13% of Gumutindo's membership.

Intervention: Women learned that land can belong to them as well as their husbands.

Outcome: Women's names have been added to joint legal titles or husbands have granted their wives some land to hold alone. Women's membership in Gumutindo grew to over 21%.

Four primary societies are now chaired by women.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

Gumutindo selected 10 primary societies to participate. Initial meetings were held in those societies so that women would understand the goals of the project. A baseline survey was carried out and training needs were identified.

For each primary society, four local facilitators were chosen to carry out the training and capacity building. A three-day workshop was held to train the 40 women facilitators on asset ownership, rights, leadership and savings and credit. They returned to their communities to train others.

The first target was to train 80 women in each society. In 2013 alone, more than 800 women were trained. In subsequent years, increasing numbers of women were drawn to the groups. Group size and the number of groups swelled. By the end of the year, more than 1,200 women had been reached with training.

OUTCOMES OF TRAINING ON LIVELIHOOD¹

The training led women to realize that growing coffee is a long-term process that provides income only during the annual harvest—and often only to men—so the women could better secure their livelihoods by diversifying their incomes. In addition, a culture of saving was introduced. Small group savings schemes have been started by all groups, and their funds are accumulating. This has allowed women to build capital to start new small businesses, as well as provide for their households.

Before the project, most of the women had no income. Therefore, any amounts they earn now, whether because they have gained ownership of some land and the crops grown on it or because they have started another small enterprise, represent a 100 per cent increase in their earnings. However, those earnings vary widely by individual, and Gumutindo is unable to track the amounts.

The cooperative reports that since the women received training on product innovation and income diversification, they are not waiting for the men to provide money. They are selling vegetables, kerosene and other products. Women can buy food or other household items for themselves now, as well as pay school fees, and for many, every evening brings economic activity.

The leadership training also resulted in clear gains. Women are now more likely to run for leadership positions on primary societies—four are now chaired by women, while in some societies, women now make up two-thirds of the committee members, a major increase. Some have participated in local councils. An example is Jenipher Wettaka, who recently was appointed as a parish chief (district local government).

One clear indicator of the women's interest in playing an active role in the organization is that they respond to the call to come to meetings, and once there, they ask questions and share information. A marked increase in confidence is reported in how they express their views with the

¹ The WIEGO-led project within Gumutindo has run concurrently with training in the Gender Approach Learning System (GALS) that was designed by Oxfam-Novib to sensitize women (and men) to gender-specific power dynamics at home, at work and in the community. Since the same women's groups participated in both trainings, it is difficult to cleanly separate the impacts by project.

leadership. Men are also changing because of their proximity to the training. Training is often done in private homes, so it reaches the husbands and other family members, too. Thus, knowledge about land rights and shared assets has transferred, and some men have come to understand the benefits of owning the land and working it together. It's a gradual process, but Gumutindo has noted an uptick in joint financial decision making, including over whether to sell land.

The financial training provided by the project has helped this along, since women have gained knowledge they previously lacked about budgeting and financial management.

An unintended consequence of the interventions through this project and the GALS training appears to be a marked decrease in domestic violence. Gumutindo says there are fewer reported cases and police interventions. This may be a result of the ability for women to talk through problems and find solutions within their groups. Some also suggest it is because women with independent incomes do not have to ask their husbands for cash—a flashpoint for angry exchanges.

STRENGTHENING THE COOPERATIVE

The project had a significant impact on the Gumutindo cooperative. It provided a marked stimulus to address gender issues within the cooperative and the inadequate number of women in leadership positions. A gender policy is now in place that mandates that half the representatives on its board are women, and that at least two of seven primary society committee members are women. In some societies, this ratio was quickly surpassed.

Gumutindo now plans—in part, because of the encouragement of WIEGO's Global Trade Programme Director—to begin the process of changing its membership policy to amend the land ownership requirement and allow women coffee farmers to belong as members.

Gumutindo has become economically stronger as a result of the project, too. There is big competition in coffee. The benefits of training through the project have strengthened the loyalty of members to sell their coffee to Gumutindo, which has helped increase its volume.

SUSTAINING THE CHANGE

Gumutindo has committed to continuing training in the years ahead. In 2015, three community facilitator training sessions were held to introduce the facilitators to the seven modules that WIEGO and project partners have developed as an online resource. This will help ensure that knowledge sharing started during the project continues into the future.

GUMUTINDO STORIES OF CHANGE

- **Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative: Finding a New Balance**
- **Gaining Ground: The Cooperative Life of a Smallholder in Uganda (from 2014)**

GUMUTINDO SOCIETY PROFILE

GUMUTINDO COFFEE COOPERATIVE: FINDING A NEW BALANCE

Halfway up Mount Elgon, a bumpy hour's drive from the busy centre of Mbale in eastern Uganda, the women meeting at the Organic Coffee store are unabashedly cheerful. Cheerful, despite the persistent, late rains that threaten this year's coffee harvest. They have recently discovered that they can make money beyond coffee, though that crop remains the main source of earnings in their households.

We have come to talk with a group of women who grow coffee for Konokoyi, one of the 16 primary societies that belong to the Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative. For the past two years, 10 of those societies have taken part in the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills training project, offering training that reached over 1,200 women. Since traditionally, it is men who own the land—and since land ownership is a requirement for membership in the cooperative—Gumutindo opened the project to both women members and the wives of its members.

In a shaded alcove near where coffee is being dried and sorted, we meet Justine Watalunga, the project coordinator for Konokoyi. She has an expressive face set off by her bright yellow dress in a traditional style and print.

She explains that Konokoyi formed 12 women's groups, each with 20 members. As one group gathers, Justine tells us the women have enjoyed the project trainings, and the social aspects of coming together. "But what they learned most, and loved most, is savings."

Justine explains the revolving merry-go-round style of saving that the women established. Each group of 20 decides on what they will save for in a particular month—it could be household goods like cups and plates, or something to improve their businesses. They all contribute 1,000 shillings each week. In the first week, the full sum is divided between five women; the following week, another five women receive the money. This repeats in the next two weeks, and by the end of the month every woman has received a lump sum of 4,000 shillings and bought the items.

But their saving strategies go beyond the simple, enforced merry-go-round system. They have all been encouraged to make budgets and save on their own. One of the older women in attendance, Esther, praises the habit. "I no longer have financial gaps. The needs at home are met, and we do not depend just on the men."



Justine Watalunga, the project coordinator for Konokoyi, says women have loved learning to save for their household needs.
Photo: L. Vryenhoek

From watching each other, the women have learned that they can use their savings to invest in businesses that improve their livelihoods. Justine points to Stella, a young woman sitting in the group, and tells us that Stella got the idea to sell petrol to motorcycle drivers. She began with one jerry can, saved the proceeds from sales, and now has five jerry cans—and money in her pocket that she can call her own.

“She is admired. When women look at Stella, they see how she has grown up. Then they look around for where there is a need and they have their idea, just like Stella did,” Justine says, adding that the training has helped them understand how to spot a particular market. “They are thinking far and looking far now.”

Justine says the women’s small businesses have made a big difference. “Life comes better. Before, we were waiting for men to give us everything because we didn’t have any money in our pocket.” That creates greater harmony at home, too—many of the women shared that their husbands are pleased that instead of “demanding” money or things, their wives now contribute income to the household.

There’s plenty of irony in that statement, given that these women do most of the work involved in growing and harvesting the coffee. However the land, and therefore the coffee grown on it, almost always belongs to the husband. On Mount Elgon, gender inequality has very deep roots.

According to Tabitha Namarome, Gumutindo’s Gender Coordinator, “A lot of these women prune, pick, wash, dry and carry the coffee to market—and the man will follow and sell it and take the money.”

But she believes a progressive change is happening—slowly. In the past few years, she says, she knows of about 30 husbands who have given a plot of land to women in the training program—because the men, too, have learned about the issues—and 34 who have agreed to make the land a joint holding with their wives. Bureaucratic red tape, however, makes the official transfer of title difficult. Tabitha says it can take years. While Gumutindo requests that women keep at it until they have the documents, the cooperative does recognize the transfer of land title as soon as the process is begun.

Justine herself farms 300 coffee trees. One of her six children, a son, works with her. Her husband, however, works far away and is only home occasionally and for short times. “I am the one controlling everything at home,” she laughs.

She was trained as a master trainer more than two years ago, and has since passed on her knowledge to four other leaders who now train the women in this primary society. “Before, I had nothing to teach them. But then I learned to help them plan and I learned even more about saving than what I used to do, and now I feel powerful.”



Dena grows and sells vegetables—primarily eggplants and tomatoes. Since joining the group and its mutually-beneficial merry-go-round, she has been able to invest in this business and has seen it double from 2014 to 2015. Her ability to bring in money, she says, has helped smooth out a previously fractious relationship with her husband.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Her newfound confidence led her to put her name forward to become chairperson of her primary society last year. She was defeated, largely she says because so few women are members and the men opposed her. Now, she's encouraging all the women who can to pay the membership fee to Konokoyi before the 2017 elections. Because in 2017, Justine plans to win.

"We shall have a woman as the chair. Men say this is our store, but we will change that."

Willington Wamayeye, the general manager of Gumutindo, believes this is an indication of how the women's perspective has changed in the past few years. "The mere fact that she offered herself without thinking that 'I am a woman' is a huge, huge cultural step," he says. "They no longer consider themselves women first, they consider themselves human beings. They have become very forthright, which is thanks to these training projects."

He notes that women's leadership is taking hold at Gumutindo, with one-quarter of its primary societies now chaired by women, and a 50-50 split on the cooperative's board. He also says about 60 per cent of the paid administrative staff are women.

Nonetheless, gender inequality remains a fact at Gumutindo. The cooperative has not yet changed its policy of conferring membership only on those who own the land, despite a strong push throughout the project from WIEGO's Global Trade Programme. The land ownership restriction leaves the majority of women coffee farmers on the outside, despite the fact that here, like everywhere, women do most of the work in coffee.

Gumutindo is working toward the formulation of a new policy. According to Willington, the cooperative will initiate a process, beginning at its January 2016 AGM, with an organization-wide conversation. "We have to define what we want and have the general agreement of the membership, and then make policy that includes aspirations." He notes that only through this kind of inclusive process will a change to the rules of membership that breaks with cultural traditions "become part of [Gumutindo's] DNA."



Fazida (second from the right) is a tailor. The group allowed her to take a loan, with which she was able to buy material and take on a large production of school uniforms. With the money she earned, she was able to pay school fees for her children. **Photo: L. Vryenhoek**

But he goes on to share his own strong beliefs: "The definition of what we call a member should be redone. We originally took the 'head of household' as the member," he explains, adding that he hopes to see it redefined to include anyone who can stand and say "I'm selling my coffee."

And he believes what is good for the women will be good for the cooperative, too. "Initially, all our gender work we undertook because it was just a good thing," he explains. "Now we want to use it as part of our marketing strategy."



PROJECT PARTNER: UGANDAN FEDERATION FOR ALTERNATIVE TRADE (UGAFAT)

UGAFAT is a fair trade network in Uganda established in September 2008 by producers who organized themselves for the purpose of fair trade facilitation, debate and advocacy. It brings together different producers, consumers and trader groups from diverse sectors with a view of improving livelihoods through the practice of Fair Trade principles as defined by the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).

The network has 26 member organizations representing over 2,500 producers of textiles and handicrafts—from jewelry to baskets to bark and paper products—as well as cooperatives producing coffee and cocoa.

The network's focus is to support mostly small groups operating in the informal economy where wages and incomes are low, social benefits are almost non-existent and working conditions are difficult by linking these groups to importers and buyers in and outside Africa.

UGAFAT is affiliated to the WFTO, and was WIEGO's country-level partner in the Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

A baseline survey at the project's outset captured information on 18 UGAFAT members and 25 affiliate groups. Its findings offered a better understanding of members' status and highlighted the needs of the members and their affiliates as a basis for appropriate intervention.

At the project's inception, while all of the official member organizations were registered, only 6 of the 25 affiliated producer groups surveyed were registered as community-based organizations. Further, only 8 per cent had constitutions. Several issues were identified through the baseline survey, including organizational weakness, inadequate sharing or communication, and high-cost and/or poor quality raw materials and techniques that lowered the quality of final products.

UGAFAT initially selected 30 affiliated groups that belong to its member organizations to participate in the project; the number of groups participating later dropped to 29. Then field mobilizers were identified and trained. An inception workshop was held for all stakeholders to learn about the project and the share findings from the baseline survey.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PARTICIPATION

29 self-help women's groups from all parts of Uganda participated

39 women were trained as trainers

893 women received training

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Women have come up to stand as leaders. In fact, five women out of the participating women are now running as candidates for office in the upcoming elections at both local and district levels.

MORE DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS

Issue at Outset: Among participating groups, half had leadership that was not elected and had not held elections for 5 years or more.

Outcome: All groups now have elected leaders in place.

The Board, which underwent governance training as part of the project, formed a sub-committee to oversee the project implementation.

Beginning in 2013, training workshops were held on human rights and legislation, organizational governance, product design and development, quality control, and financial and business skills.

In addition, UGAFAT began to hold network-wide fair trade exhibitions to raise profile, give members another way to access customers, and to allow them to share information with one another.

STRENGTHENING THE GROUPS

The unregistered groups received information on the benefits of registering and by the end of 2014, 20 of the participating groups were formally registered as community-based organizations, making it possible for them to be recognized and to have joint bank accounts. The members in 12 of those newly-registered groups worked together to develop constitutions.

Six of the participating groups have increased their membership numbers, mainly because of the trainings.

The groups report improved participation of members in their groups, better attendance at meetings, and proper record keeping within their groups.

At the beginning of the project, only six groups had group savings schemes. In December 2015, 15 of the participating groups had started savings and credit within their groups to boost the businesses and the lives of their families.

And in terms of securing both their ongoing relevance as enterprises and the livelihoods of their members, the groups have developed stronger links to international markets.

OUTCOMES OF TRAINING ON LIVELIHOOD

UGAFAT's project goals for its membership included increasing the capacity of organizations to serve their membership in gaining effective market access, leading to at least a 10 per cent increase in sales. However, they estimate that the increase achieved, averaged across all participating groups, is currently only about 3 per cent. Though slow, income is steadily increasing for most of the women who participated in the project. This is expected to continue, as the groups are stronger and more cohesive. UGAFAT reports that where the women's groups used to wait for their umbrella organizations to give them orders, now they go out and search for their own markets, participate in exhibitions and trade fairs, and seek out individual buyers.

Much of this newfound confidence comes from the product design and development trainings they did. Quality control is now a crucial part of their process, and rejected products have been reduced. Many groups have seen a rise in orders. For example, Ngalo women's group is working to fulfill an order of 200 bags at the end of 2015, while in 2014, Kyebaija Toboona completed an order of 100 bags, Chrisams designs completed 200 key holders and Nubian Crafts sent an order of 200 baskets.

Also, the rights training opened their eyes. Women have started demanding and exercising their rights in the homes, groups and the community, and sharing with other women their new knowledge. Many previously did not know that women could own property. After the training, women understand they have a right to have their names included on property records as joint owners with their husbands. Eight of the 893 participating women have acquired property in their names over the last two years.

According to UGAFAT, all of this has combined to markedly improve the participating women's self-esteem and confidence, which is key to their ongoing economic success.

STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK

Strengthening the governance of the network was a key objective of the project. The UGAFAT Board received training in the roles and responsibilities of the network leadership, which they report has led to a more dynamic Board. One Board member was elected to the regional WFTO Africa and Middle East Board.

UGAFAT reports that through the project, it experienced a dramatic rise in its national profile. This was also bolstered through a revamp of its website as part of the project. That led to recruitment of three new organizational members to the network.

During the project, UGAFAT developed and implemented a five-year marketing strategy that spells out its path toward improving production and increasing reach to both local and international markets. Strengthening the network to better serve its members, and building capacity within its membership, is also part of the plan.

SUSTAINING THE GAINS

The project led to clear improvements in women's confidence, in their product lines, and in their organizations' strength. The participants gained an understanding of their rights as women, built leadership capacity, and learned financial skills, including the value of savings. This suite of knowledge and skills offers great prospects for sustainability.

UGAFAT intends to continue to roll out the training. Group facilitators and members in the groups plan to volunteer and pass on the trainings to new members and to people outside their groups. A goal has been set to reach out to leaders from about 7 groups with about 70 individual members to network and sensitize them about the network's objectives, and to bring into the fold four more groups.

The network also plans to translate the training materials into at least one local language so that women are able to read and pass on the material to other people.

UGAFAT STORIES OF CHANGE

- **Confidence Soars for Nurturing Uganda's Women**
- **Kampala Women's Group Sews—and Reaps Big Rewards**
- **Change Comes Slowly for Nubian Home-Based Workers**

UGAFAT MEMBER PROFILE

CONFIDENCE SOARS FOR NURTURING UGANDA'S WOMEN

An alliance between Nurturing Uganda, an NGO in the rural area of Jinja, the Ugandan Association for Alternative Trade (UGAFAT), and WIEGO has proven a remarkable boon to the 23 women who came out to meet with WIEGO representatives on a warm, sunny December day in 2015.

The women represent just about 20 per cent of this burgeoning community group—many of the 106 members, all women, were too busy working to come to the meeting. To manage the fast-growing group, Nurturing Uganda has divided into three subgroups. All three comprise home-based workers who produce handicrafts for domestic and international markets.

Through the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Women Fair Trade Producers project, UGAFAT has worked with its member, Nurturing Uganda, to provide a full slate of training on women's legal status, leadership and financial management skills, record keeping and quality production.

Two years earlier, when the same WIEGO representatives visited Nurturing Uganda in the early stages of the project, the assembled women were quiet. Many sat stone faced. Few made eye contact, and even fewer spoke up. Today, they are outgoing and confident. One woman says the leadership training in the project gave her the confidence and courage to run for office. Today she is an aspiring local councillor campaigning toward a February 2016 election.

Almost all agree they have experienced change in their lives, and many women want to share a brief story about what is happening now in their lives.

CHANGE IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Fatima says she has seen a dramatic improvement in her life, thanks to the training she has received in these recent years. "I see a woman can take charge—she doesn't have to wait for the husband to provide."

She has used the additional income she's receiving to pay her children's school fees. When asked how many children she has, she looks embarrassed and then doubles over laughing. The answer, when it comes: 10. She has 10 children, and now she can help pay school fees for all.



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Edith says what she learned in the project about good business tactics and ensuring only the best-quality goods reach customers has carried over to how she runs her small retail shop. "For instance, the beans—I make sure they are all good beans so the customer can be persuaded to buy."

That attention to detail has been crucial. She says before, customers were hard to come by. Now, she sometimes arrives at the store to find customers waiting for her to open.



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Cecilia says, "This group has empowered me. It has given me the ability and the capacity to make things."

She appreciates that she received information she could put to practical use and improve her livelihood.



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

For Juliet, one of the most important aspects was the training in women's legal rights. "Now I know my rights; I know that I can own property." She also emphasizes the importance of learning about budgeting and the value of saving. Put together, this new knowledge allowed her to buy her own four cows and 50 chickens. The livestock provide another stream of income.

"Before, I was a lazy woman. I had no purpose. Now I am polished. And my husband is very happy because things in our house have improved."



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Sophia's husband is also happy with the change in their household. Sophia made money through her home-based handicraft work, saved, and then borrowed money from Nurturing Uganda's loans programme² to buy a small boat for fishing on the Nile, expanding her income potential.



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Betsa, the chairperson of the full 106-member Nurturing Uganda, has experienced a change in how she runs her retail business.

"I didn't know that somebody owning a small business could so greatly improve their circumstances until I took the training." Before, the single mother recounts, it was common to overspend every week. "Now I know how to make a budget, and every week I have about 30,000 shillings left over."



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Rebecca says she always felt "inferior" until the trainings helped her learn to express herself and stand up confidently, and to save so that she could buy things needed in her household. "Now the home is running smoothly and I have improved my well-being."



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

2 With the help of a private donor from Austria, Nurturing Uganda has established a fund to give its members access to credit. Women can borrow up to 600,000 shillings from the fund if they have saved 10 per cent of the amount they wish to borrow. But they must have a sound plan for repayment, which is to be done within four months at 7 per cent interest. This fund is separate from the women's own savings.

For young Harriet, the training in gender roles was an eye-opener. “I learned my power as a woman,” the small, strong woman says. She thought only a man could drive businesses, and only a man could work in construction and build houses. Now she does both those things, and is very proud.



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

Mutesi says she was “backward” before she began training with the project. A tailor, she has put her newfound business skills into expanding her business—and has seen her income double.

“Before, I couldn’t even afford to buy a pencil,” she says. “Now I participate in paying the school fees for the children.”



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

After providing English-translation services for the women and the WIEGO visitors, Harriett, the chair of a subgroup with 40 members, made her own strong point. “We are very many and we contribute to the economy, but we do not get seen. Before the training, I was doing my work but I did not recognize myself as a worker. I did not see myself as contributing.”



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

While the WIEGO-supported project is ending, training is expected to continue through Nurturing Uganda. Members of the group have been trained to pass on the knowledge they learned, and training manuals are being produced by the project partners. This is important, because the current members must have their learning reinforced to ensure transformative change continues to develop in their lives.

And new members³ must undergo two months of intensive training in business practices, savings, women’s leadership and rights, and quality production before becoming fully engaged in producing with a subgroup.

Nurturing Uganda registered officially as a community-based organization in 2013 due to the encouragement of the project, but Ivan Waraba Zema, Nurturing Uganda’s founder and director, says the organization has a higher goal—to meet the demanding standards of the World Fair Trade Organization and win the right to have products that bear the Fair Trade label. In the immediate future, however, it plans to ensure each of the three subgroups is independently registered and has established its own bank account.

3 New members pay a 7,000 shilling one-time membership fee. Annual membership subscriptions (renewals) cost 4,000 shillings.

And last month, another, bigger dream took shape after WIEGO hosted a gathering of home-based workers from around the globe in Kampala. On a field visit, participants made the two hour drive to visit Nurturing Uganda in Jinja. He was inspired by representatives from Argentina, who formed a cooperative and who he felt had an incredible sense of organization, focus and energy. Now Ivan is looking into transforming Nurturing Uganda into a full-fledged cooperative of women's handicraft producers. Currently, arrangements are being made to send some of the Nurturing Uganda women to visit the nearby Gumutindo Cooperative, another participant in the WIEGO-led project.

SAVINGS AND CREDIT

The women are encouraged to save on their own, but also to place a minimum of 4,000 shillings each Friday on account with the group. While that amount is easy for everyone to manage, it adds up. A woman can draw on her own savings at any time to meet a personal or business need.

Ashia is now a great proponent of putting something aside for the future. "When you save, you just save a little but then you add more and it adds up to something durable." For her, the savings were a lifesaver, allowing her to seek treatment when she got sick recently.

FINDING RESPECT: ONE WOMAN'S STORY



Photo: L. Vryenhoek

As a disabled woman, Jane Innocent faced daily discrimination. She admits she never bothered to strive because she knew she could expect everything to be given to her. But the educated widow and mother of three children wanted to be seen to be doing something worthwhile. She joined a women's craft group because she wanted respect.

"And I got it," she says. Today she earns an income making crafts.

For the past three years, Jane has served as the elected chair of the biggest subgroup, Kyebajja Tobona, which has 50 members. The name does not translate elegantly, but it means roughly "you will be admired by others when they see the results of your labours."

Asked about the biggest achievements in her group, Jane does not hesitate. "The confidence of the women now."

UGAFAT MEMBER PROFILE

KAMPALA WOMEN'S GROUP SEWS—AND REAPS BIG REWARDS

Like all groups involved in the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project, Ngalo was encouraged to officially register as a community-based organization. In July 2015, it did. That small act has already paid big dividends.

The women's fair trade handicraft group in Kampala, Uganda, has received a 5-million shilling interest-free loan from local government. The funding will allow Ngalo to dramatically expand by buying industrial sewing machines (they currently use manual machines) and renting workshop space.



Agnes Mugabe at the house she owns. *Photo: L. Vryenhoek*

"Now that we are fully registered, we are known by government—we are seen," says Agnes Mugabe, the chair of Ngalo who has served as a community facilitator and trainer in the project.

Agnes has been an elected member of the Local Council for 10 years. Her connections to the community and its political leadership are undoubtedly a factor in Ngalo's success—but so are the skills this project has strengthened. The trainings provided through WIEGO's Ugandan partner, UGAFAT, has bolstered confidence and propelled these women to expand their horizons. In fact, in 2016 Agnes will campaign to become chairperson of the Local Council.

She credits the project. "It really helped me. I can express myself fluently without fear. Formerly, I could not imagine a woman leading," Agnes says. "But it is really happening in our lives and in this group."

Ngalo—which means "fingers" in English—was one of the groups involved in WIEGO's first women's economic empowerment project from 2009 to 2012 as part of the National Association of Women Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU). Six years since the start of this relationship, Agnes reports that her changed attitude has impacted her daughters, because she realized that daughters should also be treated equally to sons and should be educated. The youngest daughter will soon graduate from university.

Agnes has also embraced what she's learned about a woman's right to own property. "I am pleased to tell you that where we are seated is my own home on my own land," she says proudly. Now, she plans to buy a very big piece of land outside the city where she can grow food "to feed a nation"—and on which she can build a training centre. She has gained such inspiration from training through the project that she wants to keep passing on the knowledge.

Outside the small brick house, Agnes has planted a vegetable garden. This is part of the group's plan to diversify income. Most of the women have planted small urban gardens and grow onions, garlic, mushrooms, tomatoes, and other produce for sale. Some are now raising chickens.

But it is the items they design and make together—fabric bags are Ngalo's specialty—that generate the greatest income and the greatest optimism.

The group, now more than 20 women strong, has experienced growing success. After taking the quality production and diversification training, they developed a new range of styles. Orders and income shot up. In December of 2015, they are working to fulfill a 400-piece order for a particularly popular bag.

“We need those new sewing machines,” Agnes asserts. “Our business has spread wings.”



Margaret holds a bag she designed and sewed.

Photo: L. Vryenhoek

MARGARET

Margaret told us that her husband did not allow her to do anything independently. Even after she joined Ngalo and improved her tailoring skills, he held her back. Eventually she separated from him and today is thriving as a designer and tailor.

Because her seven children stay with her husband in another district, she returns to her former village often. During her visits, she passes along what she has learned through training, both to her children and to other community members. When she does, she says “they can see I have gone on ahead” and they treat her with greater respect. Someday, Margaret hopes to see a new Ngalo group form in that district.

UGAFAT MEMBER PROFILE

CHANGE COMES SLOWLY FOR NUBIAN HOME-BASED WORKERS

In Entebbe, Uganda, just off the main thoroughfare but only accessible by a rutted dirt road, a community of Nubians live and work. There in a quiet schoolyard, we meet Hadijah Ahmed, the coordinator for Nubian Crafts, a group of women handicraft producers. School is out for the December holiday and because it is Friday afternoon, most people—including many of the group's 25 members—are at the mosques. However, Hadijah has gathered six other women together.

The women, all home-based workers, make a range of trays, bowls, baskets and covered containers for household use. These are woven from papyrus, a local grass called *dissi*, and often incorporate fabric ribbons. Dyes are traditionally made from rock, but more recently synthetic dye is also used, which has led to an increase in the range of colours.

They sell the products locally themselves and to international buyers through the Ugandan Federation of Alternative Trade (UGAFAT), of which they are a member.

Like others who received training through the WIEGO-led Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project, delivered here by UGAFAT, the members of Nubian Crafts report an increase in income. This is primarily due to better quality management—“We learned to make different shapes and to do measurements so the pieces are all the same”—and a new understanding of product costing.

That quality, along with their stronger relationship with UGAFAT, led to orders of 200 woven baskets in 2014, and another 50 in 2015.

According to Mayimuna Yusuf, the mobilizer of the group for two years, the women used to be too willing to accept whatever a buyer wanted to pay for an item. Now, they understand how to determine a fair price based primarily on the amount of material used, but also factoring in how much time it took to make.

The weaving is intricate and Mayimuna says it can take a week or more to create one larger piece, for which a woman might be paid 30,000 shillings. But there is an ongoing struggle with buyers who do not want to pay even that much.

“Some buyers do not respect the maker,” one woman says. “He does not count me, my time.”

Of the seven groups we visited in Kenya and Uganda, Nubian Crafts seemed to have matured the least as an organization. The group has never registered officially, so does not have a bank account. While the women have embraced the idea of saving, and are encouraged to deposit some amount of their earnings regularly, it's an informal system. Hadijah explains that the members carry passbooks into which a stamp is made that shows the amount deposited. The savings are held, and once a year distributed at the AGM.

In the absence of an account, money from non-local product sales is sent to UGAFAT, and then paid directly to Hadijah, who cashes cheques through her personal account and disburses the money to her colleagues.

The group does plan to register in the future, when funding allows, and is slowly trying to recruit new members. New members pay a one-time fee of 10,000 Ugandan shillings to join.

ABOUT THE NUBIANS

The Nubians are an often marginalized group of people with cultural roots stretching back to ancient Egypt, where they lived along the Nile River.

While the largest populations live in what is now Sudan, a Nubian community is also well-established in Uganda.

According to Hadijah Ahmed, despite inter-marriage and other influences, the Nubians do maintain many of their cultural customs. The weaving of colourful containers for household use is a centuries-old Nubian art form.



Nubian Crafts group members show off some of their intricately-woven products. *Photo: L. Vryenhoek*



PROJECT PARTNER: KUAPA KOKOO FARMERS UNION

Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union is a 100 per cent fair trade cooperative, located in Ghana, which formed in 1993 to allow farmers to trade their own cocoa after Ghana liberalized its cocoa marketing. Kuapa Kokoo represents 83,000 farmers across 1,300 primary societies.

Kuapa Kokoo is committed to the values of transparency, democracy, equity, commitment, and care for community. It aims to facilitate the social, economic, and political empowerment of cocoa farmers and encourages environmentally sustainable cocoa production processes. Since 1996, the cooperative has had a gender program that focuses on educating and empowering women and enhancing the participation of women in decision-making at all levels of operation and organization. However, gender parity in its membership is not yet achieved due to longstanding traditions that allowed only men to own land and assets.

As a partner with WIEGO in the Developing Leadership & Business Skills for Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project, Kuapa Kokoo delivered training to more than 2,800 women farmers in 670 primary societies.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

In the first half of 2013, an inception workshop was held to share the project objectives with Kuapa Kokoo management, staff and 35 Board members. This provided the opportunity for key people in the Kuapa team to learn about WIEGO and the project, and to understand its objectives:

- to increase the participation of women as active producer cooperative members and leaders
- to foster increased realization of women's rights and access to assets
- to strengthen institutional capacity for more effective market access and women's empowerment.

During the inception workshop, responsibilities of all players were spelled out.

This was followed by the development of a baseline survey questionnaire, data collection and then analysis, which provided a better understanding of Kuapa Kokoo women's land ownership and cooperative membership status. The survey found about 60 per cent of the women involved with Kuapa Kokoo owned land. Assumptions about women's representation on Kuapa committees were checked against reality. As a result of this, Kuapa Kokoo undertook a restructuring of its own Gender Programme.

Training needs assessment was carried out and a training programme drawn up to meet those needs. By July 2013 (the end of the first reporting period) training of trainers had begun with 670 women selected from 33 districts. Chosen for their active engagement with Kuapa Kokoo

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PARTICIPATION

670 primary societies (about half) were involved in the project.

697 women trained as facilitators; on average, each trained six women.

2,800+ women have received training on leadership and business skills.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

In 2014, a dramatic surge in women's leadership occurred when women won over 40% of the positions up for election in the cooperative.

and their communities, the women were given training on women workers' rights, business and leadership skills. Each was asked to train a minimum of six other women in their district.

During their training, community facilitators suggested information for content during their training. These new ideas were immediately rolled into the materials before manuals were distributed to community facilitators. The women were encouraged to carry their new knowledge and the spirit of camaraderie that had developed back to their regions and primary societies.

Women leaders learned how to make work plans to benefit their organization. They were invited to create objectives for a particular timeframe, and identify activities that would lead them to achieve their objectives within that timeframe. A similar process was undertaken for issues at the society level that required solutions. Some main problems identified were poor meeting attendance, no keeping of records and members who did not know their responsibilities to their organization. The women were taken through a process to create a work plan and activities that would help resolve these issues.

Key points of learning were recognition of the importance of good recordkeeping, the relevance of a baseline survey, the importance of planning, and the realization that men as well as women are interested in examining gender-specific work activities.

In 2015, the last three leadership trainings were done with 71 women executives from 68 primary societies. The main objective of this was to strengthen institutional capacity, leading to more effective market access and to women's empowerment. The training also aimed to equip women leaders to actively participate in decision-making and to better perform their roles and responsibilities at various executive positions. Again, through the community-based cascading training approach, it is anticipated these 71 women will pass the skills they have gained to other women in their respective societies.

OUTCOMES OF PROJECT

In 2015, an impact survey was developed and administered to women sampled from the five different cocoa regions that Kuapa Kokoo encompasses. Sixty women—12 from each region—were interviewed. The results, compiled and analyzed, showed remarkable improvement in the social, economic, political and emotional lives of the trained women.

When tested, about 80 of those interviewed could remember most of the information they had received in training, while about 14 per cent could recall about 50 per cent of what was learned. All the women said they have applied the lessons and thus made changes in their lives and their businesses. Some claimed that their confidence had increased substantially and they can now address the public.

While the baseline survey had found that 60 per cent of the women involved with Kuapa Kokoo owned land apart from land owned by their husbands, that number had dramatically risen to 89 per cent by the end of the project in 2015. The greatest increase was due to women exercising their inheritance rights and getting land from their parents, while a much smaller percentage acquired land from their spouses. And in 2015, 17 per cent of the women who owned land had purchased it themselves, compared to just 3 per cent in 2013. The women indicated that empowerment training had been the single greatest contributor to their decision to pursue land ownership.

A subsequent result of women's control over cocoa production was a marked increase in the amount of cocoa that was sold by women to the cooperative; in the 2011-12 growing season, about 24.8 per cent of cocoa was sold by women. In 2013-14, the percentage rose to 26.3 per cent.

However, the women have other streams of income, too, such as vegetable gardens, petty trading, manufacturing of soap, gari, and plant oil extraction, and hair dressing. The empowerment training equipped women with how to plan and manage their businesses and finances. The survey revealed that about 94 per cent of the women now plan before implementing a venture. In the attempt to expand their businesses, about 20 per cent gathered confidence to acquire loans from outside sources. The Kuapa Kokoo Gender Programme also runs a micro-finance initiative that has helped about 90 per cent of women involved in the empowerment project.

Now 97 per cent of the women say they control their own money so that they can spend it on family and household needs. Most notably they spend it on educating their children. In 2015, 100 per cent of the women interviewed who had school aged children said their children were going to school.

One of the greatest gains was in the women's leadership capacity. In 2013, Kuapa Kokoo elected its first woman president, but women were still vastly under-represented in leadership roles. Then in July 2014—partially as a result of the leadership training offered by this project—women's representation surged. Women won 2,244 leadership positions up for election, representing 40.7 per cent of available leadership positions in the huge cooperative.

While women as a percentage of membership in Kuapa Kokoo only changed from 32 per cent between 2012 and 2014, the number of women holding the following positions in their societies shot up in those two years:

Role	# 2011-12	% of women in this role 2011-12	# 2013-14*	% of women in this role 2013-14	% increase
Presidents	57	4.28%	134	11.96%	135.09%
Vice Presidents	-	-	889	79.38%	
Recorders	36	2.70%	56	5.00%	55.56%
Treasurers	310	23.26%	1,018	90.89%	228.39%
Secretaries	49	1.84%	148	13.21%	202.04%

* The data for 2014-15 was not yet available.

Women's leadership roles at the District level also grew, but far less dramatically.

About 83 per cent of those interviewed for the Impact Survey are now cooperative leaders. They explained they had previously been afraid to serve because they have not been to school. The training gave them the knowledge they needed about the responsibilities of these roles, and they consequently entered the competition, won their seats, and are carrying out their duties as expected. About 99 per cent of the women interviewed expressed their desire to also take up responsible positions in their communities. Examples of the positions include Assembly Representative (a position dominated by men), Unit Committee Members and women leaders.

The number of women's groups across Kuapa Kokoo also grew through the project, from 38 to 53, representing about a 36 per cent increase. Further, the number of districts that had women's groups saw a 154 per cent increase (from 11 to 28), indicating that change was geographically widespread.

SUSTAINING THE GAINS

The cascading training approach will allow for the almost 700 women who were trained as facilitators to continue to train women in leadership and business skills, and the new online manuals will aid in this. Kuapa Kokoo, however, is particularly interested in spreading the benefit of empowerment trainings to those primary societies in districts that did not participate in this project.

The women surveyed at the end of the project indicated that they feel proud when women gain leadership positions and they think women can do better—that they can do what men can do. They pledged to train their daughters to become women of substance.



About WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce. For more information visit: www.wiego.org.

SECURING ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR INFORMAL WOMEN WORKERS

Improving the organizing and leadership capacity of informal women workers can build economic self-reliance. It can also lead to growth in women's participation in politics, governance and management. This multifaceted project, implemented through WIEGO's partner networks and organizations, aimed to strengthen the voice, visibility and validity of informal women workers on both policy and practice levels. Efforts focused on research, and on helping women informal workers collectively raise their voices through dialogue and sharing.



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