

## Empowering Smallholder Women and Youth Farmers on Rice Postharvest Management and Marketing, funded by the European Union

### --- First success stories of Ripoma ---

Our project "Ripoma" focuses on providing trainings for women and young adults in commercial parboiled rice production in order to enable them a better future. Since the start of the project, a total of 100 rice producer groups have been founded, of which 61% live in the project region Mvomero and 39% in Kilosa. These groups have a total of 2,868 members (2,094 women and 774 men), of whom 1,176 are young people. Each rice producer group is led by a lead farmer who takes part in training courses and then passes on his or her acquired knowledge to the members.

In order to inform all interested people about the project in advance, 2,000 brochures in English and Swahili were produced and circulated. The 41-year-old Edith Malik Clemence, mother of two children, was also informed about the project and was very interested in taking part, as she cultivated rice before the start of the project without having any basic knowledge of "good agricultural practices". She says: *"I wondered why my harvests were often so small and why my rice was so dry and of poor quality compared to the one in the supermarket. After reading the brochure about the upcoming project, I was curious and became a member of the Uwezo Rice Producer Group in my village of Dihombo in the district of Mvomero."*

After all groups were formed & the 100 lead farmers selected, they received a training on "Good Agricultural Practices" from the project partner "JRT-Agri Services" to improve rice quality and reduce post-harvest losses. After the training, the lead farmers shared their knowledge with the members. During the exchange, Edit quickly realised that she had previously planted her seedlings far too late and had never ploughed the soil well enough to plant the seedlings properly. She explains: *"Before I took part in this training, I planted my seedlings too close to each other, I didn't know that a certain distance had to be kept between them. I also realized that I often harvested the rice too late and that it had often already dried out, which resulted in high post-harvest losses. I always harvested less than 60 bags of my three-hectare land, and unlike the rice in the supermarkets, mine was of poor quality, so I could hardly sell it."*



*The members of the rice producer groups are introduced to "Good Agricultural Practices" by the lead farmer.*

Grayson Ferdinand, project manager of the Ripoma project, explains that the participatory approach in the sense of "learning by doing" is very important for effective knowledge transfer: *"Since the members actively participate in the training of the lead farmers, they quickly learn new methods and can then apply them directly in their own fields. In addition, it is very important that the lead farmers are available to advise the participants and visit them in their fields, since individual complications occur again and again during the first sessions and can be quickly resolved by a professional eye. This is why "refresher courses" are offered again and again throughout the project to ensure that the knowledge is maintained over the long term and becomes part of everyday practice".*

In addition to this training, the project team also arranged two "rice value chains" events involving rice farmers, project partners, agricultural traders, millers / processors, financial institutions and government officials. The aim was to establish links between all actors involved and to improve processes. The lead farmers also received training in entrepreneurship, business management and negotiation skills and quickly realised that they could act more successfully as an association than alone. They therefore decided to form associations and develop two rice brands (Mvomero rice, Kilosa rice). The aim was also to register the rice producer groups with recognised registration authorities such as TBS, TFDA and ISO.



*A farmer explains the added value of parboiled rice and the study that was conducted.*

A highlight of the project activities already carried out was the cooperation with a consultant from the "Sokoine University of Agriculture". The consultant was commissioned to carry out a study on the market potential and added value of parboiled rice. *"To produce parboiled rice, paddy rice is first soaked in several steps, then treated with hot steam, dried and then peeled and polished,"* explains Deputy Country Director Daniel Kalimbiya. After a short break, he continues: *"During this treatment, about 80 percent of the vitamins and minerals contained in the silver skin are pressed into the inside of the rice grain, so that parboiled rice is nutritionally more valuable than peeled white rice and has a shorter cooking time than brown rice."* The results of the study confirm this and it has also been found out that parboiled rice is the most suitable rice for diabetics due to its better compatibility and that there is already a high demand for it in Tanzania.



*Members of the Tupendane Saving Group in Mambengwa are proud of their first savings, from which they can now also obtain loans.*

In the further process of the project, 100 Village Savings and Lending Associations were founded. All saving groups received a "starter package", which consisted of a memo book, a savings book, a stamp, a calculator and an attendance list. The saving groups received training on savings measures and were able to achieve their first successes quickly, so that they were already able to award their first loans to members. Edith also decided to take a loan of 240,000 TZS to buy a garden hoe and environmentally friendly fertilizers. As a result of the investments and thanks to the Erbacher Foundation, she was able to

increase her first harvest to 30 rice sacks per hectare, sell some sacks directly and quickly repay her loan. The lead farmers also shared their acquired knowledge on entrepreneurship with the members and encouraged them to set up a small start-up through innovative ideas. Edith was enthusiastic about the idea, felt encouraged and took a further loan of 100,000 TZS to produce handbags decorated with pearls. The mother of two explains: *"I've always loved to do art, but I never had money to buy pearls and fabrics. The loan gave me the opportunity to make my dream come true."*





*Thanks to the Erbacher Foundation, Edith is on the right track to become a successful entrepreneur.*

In July and August 2018, 15 rice producer groups took part in food fairs where they jointly marketed their two rice brands and were already able to sell 452 kg of parboiled rice. However, as demand was higher than planned, they took further orders and sold a further 612 kg of parboiled rice to interested customers after the events. This shows that there is a clear demand for parboiled rice in Tanzania; one kilogram of parboiled rice is currently sold for around 1.20 euros on local markets. Edith's rice producer group also took part in one of the food fairs. In addition to marketing their rice, they also had the opportunity to sell their innovative start-up products and Edith's handbags were a huge success. Confidently she says: *"I was very excited about the food fair, got in touch with many people from different industries and was very proud of how well my handbags were received by the visitors. This encourages me to continue and produce at least two*

*handbags a day in future, because from this income we could pay the school fees for our children without any problems".*

In addition to all these initial successes, six rice processing centres have also been set up, two of which have already been opened. In the future, these *places of exchange and mutual learning* will also be open to other local farmers who have been unable to participate in the project due to a limited number of participants. In exchange with the already trained participants, they will also be able to acquire knowledge and thus become more productive farmers than before.

Throughout the project, the 100 lead farmers are also trained on cross-cutting issues, including *gender issues* and *social justice*. The lead farmers have the responsibility to pass on this knowledge adequately to the members and to ensure that it is applied in an exemplary manner. It is already evident that there is better cooperation between men and women and that husbands support their wives more than before in household activities and childcare. Edith's husband also attended the training sessions, as good project work can only be successful if husbands are included and understand the added value of promoting women.

Consequently, we have already achieved our first goals and Edith and her family are looking forward to the further project activities. The enthusiastic woman is particularly excited about the opening of the rice processing centres, where she will have the opportunity to share her success story and knowledge with other farmers in order to give them the opportunity to start to live a life in dignity as well.



*Edith can now harvest 30 rice sacks instead of 20.*

February 2019,  
Daniel Kalimbiya & Julia Thienhaus