

Supporting women throughout the cashew nuts value chain in Inhambane Province – Mozambique A case study in Mabote District

Mabote District is located in the northern part of Inhambane Province, 120 km off the main national road, with approximately 45,101 inhabitants in an area a little smaller than Connacht Province.

People's livelihoods in Mabote depend largely on subsistence agriculture. There is a gradual shift from shifting cultivation to a more permanent type of farming. In this context, the cashew nut tree has become very important as a source of food security and livelihood for households, especially for the poor. For the small-scale farmers the weak knowledge around new cultivation practices, limiting demand from local markets and lack of capacity to negotiate prices are a growing concern.

CARE International implemented in 2009 the **Sustainable and Effective Economic Development - SEED Project** with funding from Irish Aid. The project aims to increase the access of poor households to more diversified options around income generating activities. Female farmers are the target group. The Cashew Sector Component focuses on the production and commercialization of the cashew nut while also addressing social issues such as gender equality and HIV and AIDS.



Persina Silingue Massinguile is a small-scale farmer and beneficiary of the SEED project in the village of Tsumbo, in Mabote District. When Persina's husband divorced her in 2010, she and her 20 year old son were left homeless and with no livelihood. She turned to her parents for a place to live and to the SEED project for means of subsistence

CARE brought hope of a better life and even the possibility of savings to Persina when she began to receive technical assistance through community promoters. She introduced new agricultural practices through an integrated management approach (pruning, cleaning and chemical treatment) and now participates in group sales through an association. In 2 hectares and as a result of buying from other farmers, she collected around 1,180 kg of cashew nuts and raised 21,240.00 MT (€ 600), with which she was able to build her own home and celebrate the traditional wedding of her son, soon to be a father.

The organization of small-scale farmers in associations increases their access to markets while also allowing them to negotiate a better price. In **2011, with about €400,000 of Irish Aid funding to the SEED Project, cashew producers saw their income increase by about 30%.**



According to Persina, before her engagement in the project, her harvest did not yield as much, which brought low income to her family, especially after paying transportation costs to take her product to the market in the next district. After the implementation of group sales, she has the possibility to negotiate the best price and increase her savings. Persina and her family can now plan for the future.

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CIP: Making OSFP Available to Improve Nutrition



Photograph 1: Antonio Saide holding orange fleshed sweetpotato (Delvia variety) freshly off the ground; by Benjamin Rakotoarisoa

Antonio Saide from Niassa Province, northern Mozambique, and Waisone Missoia from Malawi, have joined efforts to multiply sweet potato vines. The province is known for its high levels of chronic under nutrition and vitamin A deficiency, particularly in children under five years of age. This tuber, especially the orange fleshed one, is famous for its high vitamin A content and its preparation versatility, from juice to soups, buns and cakes which are especially appealing to children.

The International Potato Centre (CIP) is working with 30 other local farmers to increase the amount of orange fleshed sweet potato vines available for dissemination to poor households as well as encourage communities to plant and consume it.

Antonio and Waisone embarked on this journey in early 2013 and following training and trials with CIP, their cultivated land yielded a remarkable 26 ton/ha. They are overjoyed with the result and have even become a source of inspiration to others.

The vines are distributed to vulnerable households which are identified with support from local organizations who have been working to increase the availability of nutritious food to poor households. One such partner is Progresso, a literacy project also funded by Irish Aid.

CIP received €500,000 from Irish Aid in 2013 for its work in the province which will see an increase in the diversity of people's diet and intake of vitamin A in at least 20,000 families in rural Niassa by 2016.



Photograph 2: Antonio Saide and Waisone Missoia celebrating a new partnership; by Benjamin Rakotoarisoa



Photograph 3: Ambassador Ruairí de Búrca, Embassy of Ireland between Antonio Saide (left) and Waisone Missoia, a vine multiplier from Malawi living in Muembe; by Benjamin Rakotoarisoa

Improving the present, investing in the future



As part of its focus on reducing the vulnerability of the poorest people in Mozambique Irish Aid is supporting the NGO CARE to implement a key programme in Inhambane, a drought and flood prone province in the south of Mozambique.

The PROSAN programme focuses on tackling household food and nutrition insecurity while strengthening resilience of poor communities to natural disasters and climate change. The main target group are poor rural women who are often running households alone and are highly dependent on subsistence agriculture and regularly face lean periods where food supply is scarce. This programme builds on a previous successful intervention which lifted over 8000 people out of purely subsistence activities and gave them access to alternative sources of livelihoods and markets.

As livelihoods have improved it has been recognised that people need help to secure the future. A highly strategic element to the programme is a micro financing component implemented through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA¹). These are groups of 10 to 25 people who come together to accumulate savings and access loans during 9 month cycles. They agree and set rules for saving by buying “shares”, taking loans at a service charge, implementing fines and distributing savings and profits according to “shares” bought. Through this simple intervention community members learn to manage money and use it to reinvest or create additional income sources thus increasing their capacity to withstand shocks.

Saugineta Ernesto, aged 37 and a mother of four, used to sell basic items in a small market stall in Inhambane Province until 2010. She graduated from being a member of the group to being trained as a village saving and loan scheme trainer and now supports the creation of groups, trains members on how to save, take loans and repay. By 2012, she had created 42 groups with 25 members each, the majority of whom are women. She in turn receives a small fee which has enabled her to improve life for her and her children.



Being part of this association has empowered members to save and to build resilience against unforeseen occurrences which has included anything from crop failure to damaged property to loss of income from abandonment or illness. For women members in particular, control over savings has also given them more influence on how decisions are taken at household level. For an older female member, it meant being able to deal with a sudden drop in the family income when her husband passed away.



For Saugineta herself, these three years made all the difference. “We can do a lot now. I married my husband officially, bought a plot of land and now can work the fields”. Last year she cultivated cassava, beans and maize for household consumption and with support from her husband, managed to build a modest home for her family. The meagre earnings at the market stall are far behind her.

In 2013 Irish Aid disbursed €800,000 to CARE to continue these efforts to impact on people’s lives by helping them save and plan but also increase food production at the household level, have access to new and more nutritious crops, and find alternative sources of income to reduce their dependency on farming.

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¹ The groups meet weekly, every two weeks or once a month. Members save by purchasing between 1-5 'shares' each meeting, the value of which is agreed at the start of a cycle. This money is accumulated in a fund, called a 'loan fund' which is then used as capital to provide small loans to its members with a service charge also agreed at the start of a cycle. Small amounts, usually 20% of one share value are also contributed separately by each member into a social fund that can be used if a member is in distress. Savings and profit are shared out at the end of each cycle and are proportionate to each member’s shares with profit being generated from loan service charges and fines.