

Eness Katundu: Empowering Disability, Transforming Lives through Financial Inclusion

In the heart of Mwenefuvwa Village, in the Chitipa district, Eness Katundu's story unfolds as a testament of the power of financial inclusion and determination in the face of adversity.

A disabled woman with five children, Eness's journey took a transformative turn when she decided to join Tusaiwe Village bank in 2020.

This pivotal decision was fueled by extensive financial literacy training provided through the Savings for Agriculture and Market (SAM) project, an initiative implemented by the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP) with funding from the Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders, and Enterprises (FARMSE) Program.

The project aimed at enhancing financial capacity, building market access for Community Based Financial Organizations (CBFOs), and fostering financial literacy.

"At first, it was challenging to contribute the weekly shares at the village bank, considering the limited resources against the backdrop of household needs," Eness reflects.

In the initial year, returns from the village bank were modest, yet they laid the foundation for change. The funds helped her pay school fees for one of her children and kick started a small baking business, focusing on African pastries like mandasi.

As Eness continued her journey in entrepreneurship, she expanded into vegetable farming, leveraging inputs provided through the SAM project. This not only diversified her income streams but also fortified her financial standing in the community.

However, the breakthrough came when Eness's group, through the linkage established by the project with formal financial institutions (FFIs), secured a substantial K1,300,000 loan from CUMO. Eness received her share of K100,000, a sum that acted as a catalyst for monumental change.

Matruda Salanga, the AFAP Extension Officer, emphasizes, "Through the project, households like Eness's have realized the importance of savings, which has propelled their businesses, farming endeavors, and overall household well-being."

The financial literacy training provided through the project empowered individuals to set ambitious goals, paving the way for tangible improvements.

With the injection of capital from the CUMO loan, Eness's baking business soared from using a mere kilogram of flour to an impressive 50 kilograms. The increased production not only met rising market demands but also significantly bolstered her income.

Now, Eness is not only providing for her family's daily needs but also funding the education of her children, including one pursuing studies at Health Sciences College and another at secondary school.

Eness Katundu's success story is not just about economic empowerment; it's about shattering barriers and redefining what's possible. Through the collaboration of AFAP, Tusaiwe Village bank, and CUMO, her journey becomes a beacon of hope for countless others facing similar challenges in rural Malawi.