

MPED SUCCESS STORY — TANZANIA

This article is part of a series written to highlight some of the success stories from FCM's Municipal Partners for Economic Development (MPED) program in Tanzania. MPED projects seeks to improve local governance and economic policy development around the world while, at the same time, emphasizing the importance of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Women's Briquette Project Shows the Way to Economic Revitalization in Morogoro Rural Districts, Tanzania

Five rural districts in Morogoro, Tanzania, have worked with Capital Region District (CRD), British Columbia, Canada on a local economic development (LED) project through FCM's MPED program. The project aimed to create sustainable employment opportunities for women by supporting them to develop and exploit a market for biomass fuel briquettes.

"We first started the project in 2012 when CRD introduced us to RIVERS [Regionally Integrated Visions for Economic Revitalization and Sustainability], says Sebastian Kaole, the District Coordinator for the Kilombero briquettes project team in Morogoro. "RIVERS is a model for rural economic development training, and was piloted in the five rural Morogoro regional districts taking part in the project: Ulanga, Kilosa, Kilombero, Mvemero and Morogoro Rural Districts."

Two local facilitators were initially trained in the content and facilitation techniques needed to disseminate and replicate the program in more remote areas. "This model of training trainers allows people to be trained at so many different levels in the districts, says Khalfan Gajian, MPED National Coordinator. "So far, more than 275 people have received direct training through the project."

The next part of the project involved identifying and implementing the Fuel Briquette Project (FBP), a small-scale demonstration project developed in conjunction with the Legacy Foundation. The five rural districts all took part in the initiative.

"The project supported women to market fuel briquettes and secure a sustainable source of income" indicates Habraham Shamumoyo, Secretary General of the Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania. "The FBP training showed the villagers how to compete with sellers of other types of fuel, how to add value to their products, and how important product quality is. For example, customer service is very important — and can lead people to come back to buy more."

For example, the team in Ulanga, one of the districts involved in the project, now comprises 13 people —

11 of whom are women—and has a chair, a secretary, a treasurer, and a trainer. It is now planning and carrying out environmental and conservation programs, and is raising awareness in the community of the importance of fuel conservation.

The project is ongoing and growing in scope. The group attended the Nane Nane (Agricultural Fair) event in Morogoro, at which local entrepreneurs display and market their products. So far, the group has made and sold more than 800 briquettes from mainly waste materials.

"The briquettes are made from various raw materials such as sawdust, rice husks, charcoal dust, and paper, which provides natural binding," says Gajian, who explains that the profits from the sales are used to give micro-loans to group members. "The interest rates are very low," he adds. "We want to entice other people in the village to become members of the group. The profit we make is ploughed back into the business, and at the moment we are saving for a grinder and a better press."



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