

# Empowering Women in Pastoralist Communities Business Skills Training Workshop

## The Workshop & its Goals:

The workshop was aimed at members of women's groups in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. There were a total of 40 participants and it was held over four days from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2010, at the Masaka Social Centre in Masaka. It was mainly conducted in Runyankore. The participants were all women who are already members of well-established women's groups.

The training gave participants practical skills that they can use to improve their businesses as well as learning better ways of organizing and managing groups.

The training was participatory, so that participants shared their knowledge and opinions. This included the participants providing information about their groups, their businesses and the problems they faced in order that PENHA could design better projects in the future.

## The training covered:

- Organizational management (Ensuring transparency between the executive and members and building trust and cooperation)
- Basic Bookkeeping/record-keeping
- Producing a simple Business Plan
- Separating personal/ family budgets from business budgets
- Costing and Pricing
- Marketing
- Management, Accounting and Legal Requirements for a Business Enterprise
- The Operation of Saving and Credit Schemes
- Group dynamics/maintenance and the distribution of dividends/profits

The following is a summary in photos of the workshop.



Everse introduces the workshop



Lecture Time



Activity session



Outdoor training session



Discussion Group



Women's handicraft display



Marketing advice from Grace



Workshop participants and trainers

# Evaluating Women's Cooperative Businesses

- It is important that members of rural women's cooperative groups assess and evaluate themselves on a regular basis.
- The evaluation must be multi-dimensional.
- The dimensions of success relate both to business as well as the cooperative nature of the business.

## **Indicators of a successful rural women's cooperative business**

### ***Business-related indicators***

The business success of a rural women's cooperative can be assessed from the following indicators:

- Volume of sales
- Regularity of sales
- Profit per member
- Quality of product
- Marketability of product
- Returns on investment

It is important to see if there has been growth in sales and profits over the preceding three to five years.

Sustained growth is an important indicator of the success of a business.

If the business has not grown in any way, there is a chance that it is losing out in the market and must be examined carefully.

### ***Indicators of effective cooperation***

In a rural women's cooperative business, the nature of cooperation is the key to its success.

The first and foremost indicator of a cooperative enterprise is that it has common purpose.

This can be assessed from the group's articulation of its purpose/mission.

There should be clear statements of the product/service to be produced by the group and its business strategy.

It is useful to see if the group has used the tool of business planning, which makes periodical monitoring and necessary adjustments easy.

It is even more important to meet the following criteria:

- Cooperation among group members

- Sharing of work and responsibility
- Sharing of information
- Maintenance of books/accounts
- Sharing of accounts/information with members (transparency)
- Team spirit - interaction among different group members with common purpose
- Leader's ability for business, group management and networking.

### ***Social factors***

Family and community support has a direct impact on the group's success.

Many cooperative women's groups engage in social and religious ceremonies and celebrations.

While this may bring recognition from the community, it can also drain the group's finances.

It is important for the group to keep in mind the importance of re-investment in business.

### ***Networking***

A group that is well networked with other women's groups, government officers and local business, finds it easier to sustain and expand its enterprise.