

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Oikos - East Africa, Tanzania

Project: investing in Maasai women for improving rural community wellbeing

Good Practice: South-South exchange

1. Key Areas of Good Practice:

- Advocacy Methods
- Awareness raising among informal economy operators/workers and other stakeholders
- Organising informal economy workers into associations, cooperatives or other officially registered groups
- Providing support to informal economy operators/workers to access services (social protection services, business registration, access to formal savings and credit schemes, training, etc.)
- Entrepreneurship and business management training
- Leadership training, empowerment training
- Knowledge of rights, laws and regulations
- Community-based social protection
- Enabling especially vulnerable groups on economic empowerment (women, people with disabilities, affected by HIV, youth, refugees, migrants, minority groups, etc.)

2. Context - Brief description

Where the good practice was implemented:

The geographical area where the beneficiaries come from is the rural communities in Arusha, Monduli and Longido Districts, in Northern Tanzania. It was carried out in exchange with rural women in Chennai, India

Why it was implemented:

Some considerations related to the context where Maasai women come from (socio-economic barriers, low representation, lack of formal skills, no property, denial of basic rights of speech and choice), allow to highlight some fundamental themes that the exchange visit was able to touch on and improve in a very potent way.

The South-to-South exchange, where 4 Maasai women (Trainers of Marketplace Literacy) travelled to India, has been a powerful tool, as the horizontal communication between rural women coming from different countries, but belonging to similar contexts, have planted seeds to build and reinforce the self-confidence of Maasai women and awareness on their own potential capacities.

Some important themes came out conceptualizing the experience lived by the Maasai women, under a psychological and emotional point of view:

- **Self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem:** this experience gave them the chance to measure their value, their experience, knowledge, skills and recognize them, celebrating their strength and power, for themselves and in the community/social context.
- **Inspiration:** they could listen to stories, meet people, learn of successful case studies that were useful to give a boost of energy.
- **Exposure:** coming from very remote areas, they have lived a precious occasion to broaden their borders, both geographically and mentally.
- **Analysis/comparison/verification:** they were observing the context and listening to the

interviews in a constant comparison of what they know and usually experience, recognizing the value of difference and being able to discern what is positive and what is negative, in general and compared to their everyday life.

- **Empowerment through MPL:** their understanding of MPL program being an international platform which gives tools to improve livelihood of thousands of women living in similar socio-economic contexts gave them a boost to increase their motivation and confirmation of the empowerment process.
- **Motivation:** the 360 degrees insights coming from the exchange visit gave them an increased motivation to a daily struggle to improve the livelihood for themselves and their families/communities.
- **Strengthened desire to succeed:** “if you get a training and you get tools to try and succeed, you can’t give up! You have to fight”.
- **Respect/recognition/inclusion:** “I have been selected among 65 MPL Trainers, this means I have a value”. The possibility they had to join the exchange visit gave them a chance to increase community respect and recognition of their role and also key contributors for the village well-being, stimulating a positive attitude toward gender equality.
- **Sharing:** for the first time they had a chance to share what they think or do in another context, giving more value to what they are and what they do.
- **Adaptation:** they were living many “first times” and they were able to maintain a professional and controlled conduct, adapting every day to different situations, being flexible enough to do it in a very smooth and smart way.
- **Transformation:** this experience changed them forever!
- **Resilience:** they need great strength to resist fatigue in an environment that is often hostile; the inspiration and tools they received from the stories they have heard, the increased self-awareness and the whole experience they have lived, are tools to be able to act in a more effective and aware way, to take advantage of the existing opportunities, turning them into advantages/solutions.
- **Empowerment:** the result of all the mentioned themes/dynamics above is empowerment for the Maasai Women involved in the exchange visit.

Who was involved:

Project Staff and Partners.

The activities targeted 4 Maasai women, Trainers of Marketplace Literacy Training program, coming from 4 villages of the project geographical area. These women have personally benefited from the activity of the project, but as a result, their family and the whole community where the women come from, is also benefiting.

When the activity was implemented:

December 2017 – January 2018 (for one week)

3. Level and type of innovation of the good practice

The practice is very innovative as such a South-South exchange, with Maasai women travelling to India, is a very different idea and activity.

4. Description: processes and steps involved

The activities implemented have been:

- Exchange visit with MPL Maasai Trainers of Marketplace Literacy in India
- Immersion in subsistence marketplaces through first-hand observation of the influences of poverty, literacy, and culture
- Individual and group interactions in urban and rural settings
- Observations in urban and rural settings

- Learning about some social enterprises and their initiatives in subsistence marketplaces

The exchange followed a unique, bottom-up approach to research, education, and practice at the intersection of poverty and marketplaces.

It provided an opportunity for researchers, educators, practitioners, and students to engage directly with urban and rural subsistence marketplaces, through conversations and observations.

During the visit, the participants were able to appreciate the results of the MPL Programme, which has been implemented for years in the visited communities in Chennai.

The Partners of “Marketplace Literacy Community Trust” India supported in the arrangement of all the interactions and field visits (logistically, in terms of contents and arrangements, for cultural mediation, for translations).

5. Resources and skills are needed to carry out the good practice

The project Staff followed very carefully and with high determination and commitment all the logistics (mostly the complicated process of passport production for the 4 Maasai women), the relations with the Maasai women’s families and local authorities, together with constant interactions with the Indian local Partner, to set the contents and activities of the exchange visit.

The local Indian Partner had a fundamental role in all the arrangements in Chennai.

6. Sustainability of the Good Practice

The project Team is constantly following up with the 4 Maasai women, their families and communities, to ensure the benefits of the empowerment of the 4 Maasai women and the whole community.

7. What the originators of the Good Practice would do differently if they were to do it again?

Arrange all the logistics one year before the implementation of the activity, to guarantee the sufficient timing of all steps.