

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Women in Local Economic Development

One stop shop for new mothers

Summary

Natasha Zulu, entrepreneur, Luwingu, Zambia

Project involvement: Women in Local Economic Development network/
capacity building project

Natasha Zulu's business - providing everything for expectant mothers and newborn babies - is booming now that she has formally registered it and extended her range of products and services to become a one-stop shop for expectant and new mothers thanks to the support she received from the WLED network.

Background

Natasha Zulu is the founder of Tash'Novations, a company dealing with providing the essential needs for new babies and mothers.

Luwingu is a small town and has a limited number of boutiques and shops that cater for expectant women and newborn babies. Tash'Novations' vision is to provide for them in all aspects of life regardless of their status in society, and to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of every expectant mother and new baby born in the district.

Aims

Natasha had big ideas on growing the business to meet her vision – for instance, by providing customised packages for home delivery, and through better marketing including linking with antenatal clinics. However, she lacked the resources, experience and know-how to take this forward.

How the CtD project has helped

Thanks to the WLED project and network, Natasha has learned new skills to be able to grow the business. She has particularly benefited from the training on bookkeeping, finance management and marketing acquired at project training and networking events.

A key element of Natasha's learning in the Connecting the Dots project was the importance of business registration. Natasha's company had previously been operating under the umbrella of Thea General Dealers. Having the courage to operate independently was one of Natasha's biggest challenges. Natasha was supported in her effort to do this with the help of other women in the WLED network through mentorship and sharing experiences.

Impact

Natasha formally registered her company as Tash'Novations in January 2021.

The project also led Natasha to understand the greater need for marketing of the products and services she provided. She is now enlisting the help of midwives working in local clinics.

“I have always had a plan to guide and help Tash'Novations to have an impact in the community and households. The idea is to grow the business by increasing the market through targeting expectant mothers at antenatal sessions in clinics,” she explained.

Natasha is also broadening the products and services being provided, so that the company has been rebranded as a one-stop-shop to cater for all the needs of expectant mothers and newborn babies and is now offering home delivery. And she is thinking about extending the range with food products.

“The business will impact positively on the people of Luwingu by providing customised packages for each client, including delivery to their doorstep. Also, the business helps me meet my households' financial needs,” she said.

Though the journey to achieving Tash'Novations has been a tough road, there have been other benefits as well as lessons for the future.

Through the exposure by being involved in the WLED network, Natasha has been able to mentor other network members in business and it has helped her source capital for growing the business.

“The Women in Local Economic Development experience has taught me to be independent and build a business that will bring change not only in my life but in the life of others as well,” she said

“Experiencing the Project has taught me to be courageous in running my own business thus resulting to me being financially independent.”

Looking ahead

Natasha has highlighted the importance of interacting with other women. For her this was crucial in facing and overcoming challenges in business. On a practical level, she discovered that bookkeeping skills are vital, as is the know-how on how to source capital funding, and mentorship is important to provide support to women who are hoping to grow their businesses.

Natasha says that in future it would be useful to organise inter-district visits of women in economic development to experience at first hand how each group runs their businesses to learn from each other.

Looking ahead

An innovator and self-driven, Natasha is keen to develop other skills such as food processing, branding, tailoring, catering, and even construction.

