

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Women in Local Economic Development

Business skills benefit Maggie's big switch

Summary

Maggie Dlamini, entrepreneur, Msunduzi, Mbabane, Eswatini
Project involvement: Women in Local Economic Development conference at Pigg's Peak and network

After being involved in an innovative recycling project, and successfully exhibiting and selling at a trade fair, Covid-19 hit Maggie Dlamini very hard. Future trade fairs were cancelled, leaving Maggie with the prospect of no income. But Maggie was not to be beaten and has shown her resilience. Using some of the skills she had learned from recycling, Maggie made a big switch and set up a compost making and vegetable growing business. The new business skills Maggie learned, through her involvement in the Connecting the Dots project, helped her to keep her new venture afloat, better manage her money and plan for a brighter future.

Background

Maggie Dlamini is hard-working business woman, who has tried a number of jobs and businesses to help make ends meet, pay for the basics and pay for her children's education.

Having started in business by making and selling corn bread, Maggie responded to an opportunity from Mbabane Town Council who were looking for unemployed women to teach them a new way to generate income from their communities. She attended the council's workshop, where she learned about making money from litter. The council were looking for ways of reducing the amount of litter they had to collect by getting local people to collect items that could be reused or turned into other things, particularly plastics and papers.

Maggie took this on enthusiastically, not only collecting litter, but also creating beautiful dishes and vases from recycled paper, and turning plastics into floor mats and carpets. The work was so good that the town council gave Maggie and colleagues the chance to showcase their work at the annual trade fair. This was extremely successful and profitable, bringing in a lot of money.

Then Covid struck, and restrictions meant that two trade fairs were cancelled so income from the business dried up.

But through her efforts in recycling and reusing, Maggie had acquired a number of skills, and was able to apply her approach to composting and

gardening. Using her limited outdoor space, she was able to make compost and grow vegetables. She was then able to start a business selling compost and some of the things she had grown.

How the CtD project has helped

Maggie was invited to attend the Connecting the Dots WLED conference in Pigg's Peak, where she learned about business management and how to manage her money whatever circumstances arose.

The knowledge she gained was a revelation. Before this she had not known that accounting existed. Now she keeps records on sales, has a bank account to save money to invest in the future, and can work out her income and profits.

"I didn't even know there was something called accounting," notes Maggie.

"Now I have a book to keep records on sales. It is really helpful to see it all and can work out what profits I have. Without this I might have thought of quitting the business."

Impact

Though Maggie's current business is small, her good record keeping mean she is managing to make a profit and is working on ways to grow the business by increasing the area she has to garden. Not only can she sell the vegetables she grows to others in the community, but is also donating produce to orphan children in the community.

"I would like to make my garden bigger because our area is poor even though it is close to town," concluded Maggie.

