

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Young Women in Local Economic Development

Yes we cayenne

Minenhle Dlamini, young entrepreneur, Pigg's Peak, Eswatini
Project involvement: Women in Local Economic Development network, Pigg's Peak conference

Summary

Minenhle Dlamini responded to the challenges of Covid-19 not by giving up but by using it as an opportunity to grow a new crop that had health benefits to help relieve some of the symptoms. Thanks to the learning from the Connecting the Dots project she has gone from being a small scale local vegetable supplier to a nationwide distributor of cayenne pepper and cayenne pepper products.

Background

Minenhle Dlamini is a young entrepreneur, full of ideas and ambition. As the representative for young people and entrepreneurship for Pigg's Peak municipality, she has been at the forefront of encouraging and supporting young people in the town into business.

Minenhle was a vegetable farmer, growing crops such as spinach, cabbage and lettuce to supply the local community. However, when Covid-19 hit, with many workplaces closed and people staying at home and growing their own vegetables, business went down as there were fewer customers.

Aims

That's when Minenhle decided it was time to change. She started researching how Covid affected people - loss of appetite, high blood pressure, cold symptoms - and if there was anything she could do to help relieve some of the symptoms. And she had a brainwave. In 2019 she had started growing cayenne pepper. The crop did well and after using it in cooking and eating it she found that it had health benefits such as helping relieve nausea.

"For instance, if you feel nausea after eating oily food it would help," she explained.

Minenhle decided to give up producing vegetables and concentrate on growing cayenne pepper. The CLGF Connecting the Dots young entrepreneurs workshop in Pigg's Peak and the follow-up programme came at the right time to help her develop a business plan and put her business on a secure footing.

Through the workshops and the programme Minenhle learned about innovation, business plans, how to advertise using social media such as Facebook, What's App and Instagram, and had support to help her design and grow her business.

Impact

Having gained in confidence, Minenhle started full production of cayenne pepper to sell in several different size packages for general use and as an immune system booster. After posting on social media through the local Balimi Eswatini group, Menenhle saw a huge increase in sales and interest in her product, resulting in a substantial income for her.

“The first day when I was trying it out I made E1,500,” she said.

Minenhle is now confident in running her own business and in helping and encouraging others. and her business has now gone nationwide.

Demand for cayenne pepper is still high but Minenhle is not resting on her laurels. She has expanded her business interests so she now produces cayenne sauce and cherial sauce. Thanks to the training she received from Connecting the Dots, each business has its own account.

Looking forward

Minenhle is now planning to add tomato sauce to her repertoire if she can obtain funding to purchase an industrial blender that can blend large quantities. She is continuing to innovate, for instance using cayenne pepper to make atchar as customers were calling for this.

“I am thankful to the Commonwealth for helping me,” says Minenhle. “I am now confident to encourage other young entrepreneurs.”

