

HOW TABLE BANKING HAS TRANSFORMED LIVELIHOOD IN SOME MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY.

BY CAROLINE WAMBUI

When Igambang'ombe youth group in the outskirts of Kajuki, Chuka, Tharaka Nithi County started meeting some three years ago, there is nothing much they anticipated. In a way they underrated themselves from their humble backgrounds, their education level and their low level of skill were it not for some undeterred zeal and zest from some members who had a vision for the group.

To enhance growth and development in the community, the group started by holding simple group meeting where every meeting raised a significant of money from which the group kept as savings in a group account.

Their savings contribution started growing by the month and by the end of year 2015 the group had a gathered a considerable amount to embark on table banking.

Table banking is a concept developed by poverty eradication commission under the former ministry of planning and vision 2030 with the main aim of eradicating poverty in rural areas in line with the millennium development goals.

Their meetings took place once a month where in every meeting savings were contributed. To start with, members of the group attests of starting with merry go round with the women saying that they started saving from what was left to them for daily household budgets.

The women further attest of greater benefits as after their savings grew at the end of every month one of them would receive a lump sum that they confess of engaging in meaningful money generating activities.



Igambang'ombe Youth Group in one of their table banking group

Jeremy Mugau Njoka, the chair Igambang'ombe Youth Group says that, “table banking allows individuals to access funds for investments in income generation projects.”

Some of the women like Nancy Wanja attests of managing to equip her shop where she generated reasonable profits as to manage to repay the loan and at the same time educate her children comfortably.

Members from Kajuki Traders Self Help Group attest of managing to purchase motorcycles to be used for commercial purposes while others managed to comfortably educate their children while others after generating good income from their businesses managed to improve on their houses.

Members from different groups such as Muchore Self Help Group in Tunyai attests of recommending the table banking method as when they compare it with the requirements in the banks and other financial institutions they find the conditions unbearable for them.



Members from Kajuki Traders Self Help Group in a table banking group

“Anytime I went seeking for financial assistance from a bank I was either asked for a payslip or a land title deed to act as collateral a thing that automatically disqualified me. Things changed when I joined the Igambang’ombe youth group as they guaranteed me and when at times I wasn’t in a position to repay, the group supported me which could not have been the case with a bank. The interest rates are also friendly and so for the last five years I have been in a position to borrow and repay.” Elijah Mawira a member of the group attests.

Today the concept that started as just merry go round in most groups supported by GRADIF-K has now grown and members who were previously considered unbankable can now access credit comfortably and repay under the group guarantee mechanism.

It is after GRADIF-K realized that economic disempowerment not only affects development of the affected areas, but also deplores the livelihood of millions of people who are disadvantaged to accessing financial services from the mainstream institutions that it sort to promote table banking in different areas in Tharaka Nithi County.

Today Gakiuma Community Self Help Group boats of over Sh 260,000 in savings alone a thing that could not have turned a reality if they did not converge, form and register a group.

The group's growth is attested to the many trainings that they have received from GRADIF-K "Out of the many trainings from leadership, group management, and finance among other topics.

Out of the many benefits derived from table banking Kajuki Traders Self Help Group which is the mother to all the groups under IMCOS has managed to be lending a significant amount of money to the members where each member can have a loan of up to Ksh 40,000 with friendly interest rates.

With this, members of Kajuki Traders Self Help Group have managed to venture into different income generating activities such as purchasing a set of some plastic tables and chairs for each member, rear chicken as a group, plant nursery seedbed for sale, among embarking on other projects. The group also has future plans of purchasing a 60 seater bus that can be plying along Meru Mombasa route. All the success is attributed to the group, cohesion, capital and the guarantee mechanism that all positively influenced economic empowerment.

"Before joining the group, members were not economically stable, nor were they in formal employment, but after joining the groups, table banking has financed their businesses, but today members are financially stable with well-grounded sources of incomes thanks to table banking," attests Patrick Kirema the chair of the group.



Muchore Self Help Group a newly formed group in their table banking meeting.

Table banking has thus been used to deliver sustainable financial services in areas where formal and centralized financial institutions have failed to deliver by acting as the link between self-help groups and economic developments. It has also helped to improve livelihood by empowering women who are the majority and who lack access to the mainstream banking.