

Restoring business viability through sustainable strategies – Off-grid solar powered hatcheries, the answer to climate change and economic shocks.

Rukundo Group Story: Mutare District – December 2019.

Zimbabwe's macro-economic instability has caused many thriving value chains to seek more sustainable strategies to keep their coffers full and businesses running. Rukundo hatchery group saw their business take a dive as power shortages and fuel price hikes caused their profits to diminish drastically. Upon realizing the situation, Rukundo, a female driven group from Ward 27, (membership Male 1, Females 9), responded to address the bottlenecks around hatcheries. Knowledge gained through INSPIRE programme facilitated trainings on business ideas generation proved worthwhile leading them to raise USD\$ 500 cash towards purchasing a full time solar-powered off-grid incubator (1056 cc) in December 2019 on a cost sharing basis with LFSP. They also contributed labour and housing structure costs for their business under this agreement.

Chipo Mutangi, one of their group member reflected-

“It is our participation at the business management training by EMPRETEC that empowered us to understand and practice the concept that successful entrepreneurs are those that seek opportunities, able to utilize available challenges, work on unmet demand and resources to make money. We could not let go the high demand for chicks without converting it to money simply because the country is struggling with electricity supply, we decided to invest in solar-powered incubator. It's a smart technology”,

They re-kick started hatching and selling chicks business to the community rekindling hope for the value chain which most households in the ward depend on.

Their innovation was on investing in sustainable cost cutting solutions to power cuts, high priced fuel and other countless macro-economic instability factors. The group boasts of cost cutting by above 85% compared to relying on electricity grid. Currently the group is serving a community in excess of 1230 households.

The results from this strategy speak for themselves; having gone through 2 cycles since December 2019 they have generated US\$ 156.00 through distribution of 250 chicks from their new business model, hatching rate is now above 70% as well as having completely eliminated electricity and fuel costs. As part of expanding their business income streams, the group acquired a total of 24 black Australop for breeding stock. The group innovation rests on facilitating wide spread of the black australop at the same time ensuring that each group member is keeping batches for breeding stock. Private sector partnership remained key in their mandate as they are working with ZIM Incubators. The company supplied and installed their solar-powered incubator as well as providing technical backstopping on use and maintenance of the incubator. The relationship enabled the group to access the black australop breed, free transport and logistics. Meanwhile the group is pledging to buy and install more incubators if their business model blooms.

Practical ACTION



“It all started with the technology fair held last year at Matongo (Ward 18) with LFSP facilitation. That is how we started to know that solar can also be used to power these incubators. We saw pictures shared by Zim Incubators from that technology fair”, said Mavis Chipere of Rukundo group as she narrated her story with the incubator.

This unique investment in solar powered machines has revitalized and inspired other local hatchery businesses. We expect to see more of such innovative ideas in the face of the troubling season Zimbabwe is in.



Mavis Chigodora from Rukundo Group Mutare District loading fertile eggs into their hatchery



Ladies from Rukundo Group showcasing austrolop chickens breeds at their centre.