# Bungokho Rural Development Centre

**CHURCH ARMY AFRICA**
"Helping people help themselves"
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**THE SUCCESS AND IMPACT MILE STONE OF THE LIVELIHOODS OF WOMEN (BUMAENA TSOWATSWANA WOMEN'S GROUP) IN BUKIENDE SUB-COUNTY MBALE DISTRICT BY BUNGOKHO RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

BRDC means bungokho rural development Centre .it is a voluntary charitable non-profit making, grassroots development oriented and duly registered non-governmental organization operating in the republic of Uganda at country wide scale. It is located at a latitude of 1 2 3"N to longitude 34 10 31"E on the international coordinating system.

It is situated in Manyonyi upper village, Bugema parish, bungokho sub-county, mbale district about 230km east Kampala, the capital city of the Republic of Uganda.it is located only 47 km from border town of Lwakaka, Republic of Kenya in the east. It was initiated by a lady called ESTERI married to Tremlet who loved children as the creation of God. The couple owned land and property which they donated to the church army Africa and in their agreement for community development service and for the benefit of vulnerable women, children and youth.

In the engagements of BRDC and the surrounding community as stipulated by Esteri and Tremlet, it identified Bukiende Sub County located in Mbale district which is twelve kilometers from Mbale city, and 3km off Mbale Bududa road. The Sub-County is one of the oldest and largest Sub-Counties in Mbale District with a population of **3085** people ***(provisional population census 2014).***

**85%** of this population was dependent on agriculture for food and income which income could not sustain them in accessing the daily needs.




***(The bumeana women's group)***

**Interventions in the Bumaena community as explained below:**

Basing on the above situation, **BRDC** with the financial and technical support of **KNH-Germany** identified Bumaena village and worked with the most vulnerable households that were represented by women starting in **August 2014**.

The vulnerable women were mobilized and sensititised to form groups called self-help groups **(SHGs)** composed of 15-20 members each. Around **165 groups (2970 women)** were formed. At maturity, each SHG selected two representatives who came together to form a Cluster Level Association (CLA). In total, BRDC formed thirteen **CLAs in** the whole sub county.

BRDC continued to build capacities of the **SHG** members in order for them to work for themselves and demand for their rights. These groups trained in livelihood activities such as savings, child care, and modern agriculture to support their families including children.





***(Inception and training of the group leaders in book keeping)***

The groups were empowered in a sense that they were able to save money through the savings and loan taking for business. They were also trained in kitchen gardening for food which boosted their health and the surplus to contributed to their daily income.

***Outcomes of the 9 years effort of Bumaena Cluster Level Association****:*

By the end of 5years, Bumaena CLA still had 9 **SHGs** (18 members per Self-Help Group) existing and working very well in savings, loan taking and doing individual businesses. The women had registered improved savings and the skills as well, improved from saving **200** shillings to **2000** per sitting. The result of the above effort has been ability to contribute towards family needs including food, clothing and providing school fees for the children.







***(Inclusion in sustainable agriculture in the group)***

Secondly, they have been empowered economically to the extent that they bargain the prices of their produce. In this way they gain more after eliminating middlemen who make more profits than the farmers themselves.

***Socially***, the women in this **CLA** support each in times of need and sorrow. When one members loses their dear ones or gets a problem, the rest of the members will always come together to support. They equally dig for each other, make plate racks, dig compost pits among others thereby improving sanitation in their individual homes. The result of this has been social capital built .Recently the group was represented by one of the women on the international women's day held in the wales to go and share their experience of transformation and subsequently invited by mbale district still to showcase the same potentials achieved other women in the community.

***On the political side***, they women after being trained in communication and leadership leaderships, they were able to participate in decision making in their homes and in the community. Some were able to elect and be elected in local governance. The result of this has been influencing decisions at household and community levels leading to the attainment of their political rights.

Before the Community Based Project supported by **KNH** phased out, it linked the **CLA** to the Sub-County officials and **METGE**, an organization that promotes ecosystem management in Elgon region.

**BRDC** in association with **METGE** trained the women in making tree nursery beds and management. The aim was to build their capacity to manage their local environment sustainably. It also aimed at promoting agroforestry trees for soil improvement, fodder and nutrition and climate change resilience.

After training, they have produced and distributed **720,000** agroforestry tree seedlings of assorted species. The tree survival rate increased from **18%** to **72%** in the 4 years of project intervention. This has led to improved tree cover in the area and improved micro-climate and its associated advantages of Bukiende as a Sub-County and Mbale District as a whole.





***(On the left is the British high commissioner and on the right is Sylvia from IFCDE on their visit to the women)***

Additionally, for tree cover sustainability, the project trained the very women in the construction and use of Lorena fuel saving stoves. By the end of **2024**, a total of **864** Lorena stoves had been constructed by the trained women. The trained women continued to train other women in the community for some little income especially in the villages outside their community. This has boosted their income.

The impact of the Lorena stoves has been reduced smoke on the kitchens, reduced fire accidents especially for the children, and reduced faring of trees for fire wood by **95%.** Through **METGE** we were able to train them in sustainable land management practices, soil nutrient management and bee keeping. These sustainable agronomic practices have led to improved yields and for the last four years they have solved the challenge of food shortage as well as household income.





***(On the left the group is engaged in making trenches and on the right is soil nutrient management)***

Besides, the environmental project, the **BRDC** and **METGE** gave Bumaena **CLA** a grant of **UShs 13,000,000 (Thirteen million shillings)** to boost their revolving fund from which each member of the SHG would borrow. To date the **CLA** has a running capital of about **Ushs. 25,000,000/**. The growth has come about due to the fact that the women borrow, carry out profitable businesses and pay back the loans with minimal interest.

From this fund the women have been able to open up business to manage their families through the loans taken.

***MENTORSHIP:***

Since the women have successfully involved in several activities like financial discipline and agroforestry they have become mentors and trainers for other groups. They have become a point of reference in a sense that other groups come for learning exchange visits just to replicate the ideas to their interventions.




***(A learning exchange visit of butta women's group of manafwa district)***

***OBSERVATIONS:***

- BRDC observes that people, especially women have God given potential that when unleashed, it helps them to develop.

- The women after coming together to support each other, they found it working very well and gained mileage.

**Recommendations:**

- With help the group is capable of graduating into a community based organization.

- Since it is already registered with a running Constitution.
- They have also been able to interlink with other organizations within and outside their community.

- Need to access training in agribusiness practices of enterprising such that they can access the international market, transform from subsistence to large scale production and also create market for their produce.

- There is need to create more model groups in and around Mbale District since we believe that almost **75%** of the population especially in Mbale still leave below the poverty line and there is need to empower them.