



Gender and Labour in the Global South

Video Transcript

Poor people want to save money

NARRATOR: Anonciata Musabyimana is a casual agricultural worker and lives in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. Since January 2020, Anonciata has been a member of the Twitezimbere Savings Group. They save and invest money as a group. Every week, each member saves 250 Rwandan Francs. In the following statement, Anonciata describes her life as a member of the savings group.

ANONCIATA: My name is Musabyimana Anonciata. I am a mother of five and I have a husband. How this group helped me: we used to work for Muzehe, which means 'the old man'. And the 700 Rwandan Francs they paid us in daily wages, we would spend them in a day. It was not getting us anywhere. But even since you encouraged us to form groups, we have come together and created a group. After creating the group, we collected money and put it in our bank account. But after putting it in the account, we realised that it would get us nowhere and no profit would be made.

It was the president of our group who advised us and told us: "Let me tell you what we can do. Look, we are all poor; the only way to get something to eat is to work, so let's use this money to buy something so that every member can have something to develop themselves." As mature people, we agreed together to contribute money on a monthly basis and to buy goats for one of our members to take home. And so we did.

Every 25th of the month, we sit together, gather all the money, and go to the market to buy a goat for a member. And we would do the same for every following month. It was on June 25 that we completed the distribution to all 26 members of the group.

For my part, how this group has benefited me – honestly, I am very poor, I only have one house in the village, and I only get food after working for Muzehe, 'the old man'. Now I have been able to own a goat, whereas before, I used to be a desperate person. However, now I can meet with others, share ideas and fellowship together, and feel that what was bothering me in my heart is fading away from me.

NARRATOR: These casual agricultural workers are employed by an agribusiness and paid per working day. They are engaged in different farm activities, from planting to harvesting to seed sorting. The COVID-19 pandemic affected not only the access to the agribusiness market: casual agricultural workers were



also affected by a reduction in work days. In the following statement, Sylverie Mudaheranwa, another member of the Savings Group, talks about how the crisis affected him.

SYLVERIE: We work in different farms in different areas. When this lady Mutesi has work to do, she gives us a job and we come and do it. But in case she doesn't have a job for us, we go to different areas to look for farm jobs. We contributed 250 Rwandan Francs each and managed to purchase those goats you saw. So far, we have accomplished many things to develop ourselves. However, we still have challenges. Among them is the one we are currently facing. That is, COVID-19.

As we speak, there are people who own land here. Some are from Kigali, others are from Rwamagama and others from Nyagatare. Those people used to give us jobs. But now they are not able to come here to give us jobs, so we can't work as usual. Farmers used to pay us 700 Rwandan Francs and if the season is good, they can pay us 800 Rwandan Francs. But at the moment, we can't even get money because of the dry season. We expect to get money in September.

Another problem is that when trying to reach out to farmers for a job, they will tell you that they are not making any sales. I used to sell my harvest to Kigali, but now I can't sell them there, because the trucks that distributed them are hard to find. So whenever you approach someone looking for a job, they will tell you that there are no jobs, and finding money becomes problematic. In fact, if you can get opportunities to find jobs, or get support, we can achieve sustainable development by building on what we have accomplished so far.

Briefly, this is how we have experienced the challenges of COVID-19. And this prevents us from achieving our development goals as we had planned. However, we must do our best to be able to send our children to school.

NARRATOR: Access to finance is important as it can open up new possibilities for income generation. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced the income of casual agriculture workers and affected their food security. Casual agricultural workers are important stakeholders for a sustainable regional development and must be taken into account in development projects and policies.