



## FOLLOW-UP REPORT AND ACTIVITY OVERVIEW JANUARY-MAY 2009

All 29 Rwanda Knits groups received technical training on how to use the approximately 650 knitting machines currently in Rwanda between 2005 and 2007. When Rwanda changed its cooperative law and began to encourage the formation and capacity building of cooperatives in 2008, Rwanda Knits began shifting its primary focus from technical training to business development.

The current program objective is **to increase members' incomes through the formation of a cooperative union, an artisan/manufacturing business that serves the domestic, regional and export markets for knitwear and is 100% sustainable by the end of 2011.** To this end, Rwanda Knits is currently pursuing three major project initiatives:

### **1) Systematic training and registration program of nascent Rwanda Knits primary cooperatives:**

The Rwanda Knits Director of Cooperative Development, Laura Hanson, worked with the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (then Cooperative Task Force) to design a primary cooperative training module based on Rwandan law in the summer of 2008.

Since then, five primary cooperatives, including Nyagatare Women (Nyagatare District), Dian Fossey (Musanze District), Hosiana (Gasabo District), Urumuri (Rwamagana District), and Mpore Mama (Gasabo District) have participated in the primary cooperative training program based on this module. Workshop content is responsive to each group's needs, focusing on cooperative structure and management.

Ms. Hanson facilitates workshops for Rwanda Knits cooperative members and supports their cooperative registration process in collaboration with their respective Director of Cooperative Development. To date, the five groups mentioned above and several others around the country have received their registration certificates at the District or National level.

Rwanda Knits will continue to support business capacity building and registration of primary cooperatives of all 29 groups throughout 2009, but with a particular focus on Gasabo District. Additional workshops are currently planned with Rwanda Women Network (April 21-24) and Women for Women (mid May), both also in Gasabo District.

A recent development was Rwanda Knits' partnership with Orphans of Rwanda, an American program that pays university fees so orphans from the Genocide can get college degrees. RK will be working with these students to do follow-up with the cooperatives to be sure they understand and implement good business practices, especially in the area of accounting.

### **2) Formation and registration of a cooperative union in Gasabo District:**

Thus far, three well-organized and managed cooperatives in Gasabo District have initiated steps to form a cooperative union, which would centralize knitting production and marketing for Rwanda Knits groups throughout Rwanda.

Mr. Musilikari, the District Cooperative Officer (DCO) of Gasabo, just outside of Kigali, and Ms. Hanson have been working collaboratively to train and register these three groups, Hosiana, Mpore Mama, and Rwanda Women Network, in cooperative structure and management under the auspices of the systematic training and registration program. Representatives from these groups will soon form a Cooperative Union Formation Committee that will meet regularly to discuss and formalize their union registration process.

It should be noted that members of Mpore Mama are all members of Inshuti, an association of HIV+ women. In 2008, the members of Hosiana, a small but technically experienced cooperative, lost their knitting center. However, Mpore Mama and Hosiana are now working under one roof, a major accomplishment since the stigma of HIV is still strong especially among the very poor.

Another aspect of this initiative is a program of advanced business skills training in partnership with the Centre Iwacu. Representatives from four Rwanda Knits primary cooperatives participated in a four-day cooperative union workshop in August 2008. Another workshop on Marketing and Sales invited representatives from six Rwanda Knits primary cooperatives, including the three prospective cooperative union members, took place in Remera, Kigali from March 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. This workshop was entirely funded by Dining for Women.

The Rwanda Knits staff will continue to collaborate with the Centre Iwacu to ensure that participants implement the skills, such as writing contracts, product pricing, and accounting procedures, they learned at this workshop. Additional business training and follow up will continue. Please see 2009-2012 Work Plan for further details.

- 3) **Construction of a Cooperative Union Center in Gasabo district.** This relatively new development resulted from meetings with DCO Musilikari and the Deputy Mayor in Charge of Social Affairs of the district, Mr. Narcisse Ndagijimana where they offered to build a knitting center in Gasabo. Rwanda Knits will need to contribute to the center, most likely by providing the furniture such as knitting tables and chairs, however. This will be a process that will take time, but the results will be well worth the time spent.

The number of women the Dining for Women funding supported included not just the members of the Cooperative Union but all the cooperatives who sent representatives to the workshops funded by DFW. The total number of women directly benefitting come to approximately 156, however each of the cooperatives is training more members, so there will be more that ultimately benefit.

Please note in the attached financial report that it covers the period from the receipt of the funds to a projection into August. Additional costs will be incurred that the small remainder of the funds will pay for.