

Mpigi, Wakiso women groups get rich from pig rearing

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About 10 years ago, Ms Molly Mukasa, a resident of Buwama received a donation of Shs70, 000 from a friend, Ms Ilse Schummer, coordinator of Friends of Uganda Germany.

Then, the housewife was in bondage of myriad responsibility, but with no source of income. So receiving such a gift was marvel to her. After pocketing the cash, she thought of starting her own business to avoid looking up to her husband for each need. But her biggest worry was which type of business to set up since she had laughable capital and limited space.

Ms Mukasa then opted to start her fortune with rearing pigs. She bought three piglets at Shs15, 000 each and spent the balance of the money constructing a 7 by 10 feet wooden pigsty, which she has maintained up to-date.

She says by then, her family's income was below what was needed to achieve basic needs.

"I opted for pig rearing because it is quite simple and its returns are realised within a short time," Ms Mukasa says. "Moreover a pig is cheaper, requires less care and is less prone to diseases than a cow or a goat."

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She adds that within a year, she was counting 31 piglets worth Shs465, 000 and two mature pigs worth Shs300, 000. This marked the beginning of her entrepreneurship project she has depended on until now. Due to limited space, she retained only five piglets and sold off the rest.

"Since space has remained the same, I keep only five pigs on average, which produce piglets I sell off when they reach one month old," Ms Mukasa says.

She says the breed she rears takes about nine months to grow and at that age, a sow is ready to mate. When it mates pregnancy

hardly lasts four months and then 10 or more piglets are born.

This means Ms Mukasa receives more than 100 piglets annually, which she sells at Shs25,000 each to earn Shs2,500,000 per year. Although she rears a small number of pigs, Ms Mukasa says she doesn't regret investing in pig rearing because she has benefited a lot from the project.

"While several women in the trading centre burden their husbands for resources, to me, money is not a concern anymore," Ms Mukasa says. "I have managed to construct an eight-roomed house and acquired two plots among other assets."

Though some people claim that pigs are expensive to feed, to Ms Mukasa, it is up to the farmer to choose whether to feed pigs locally.

She says pigs enjoy feeding on food peelings, some grasses, leftovers and maize brands among others. But she discourages feeding the animals too much maize brand because it generates unpleasant fats. Fatty pigs are bought cheaply compared to those with slight fats. Furthermore, treating the animals is also easy since she uses local herbs to cure them once they fall sick.

However, Ms Mukasa is not the only woman who has progressed because of Ms Schummer donations. Thousands of other women in Mpigi and Wakiso districts can support their families.

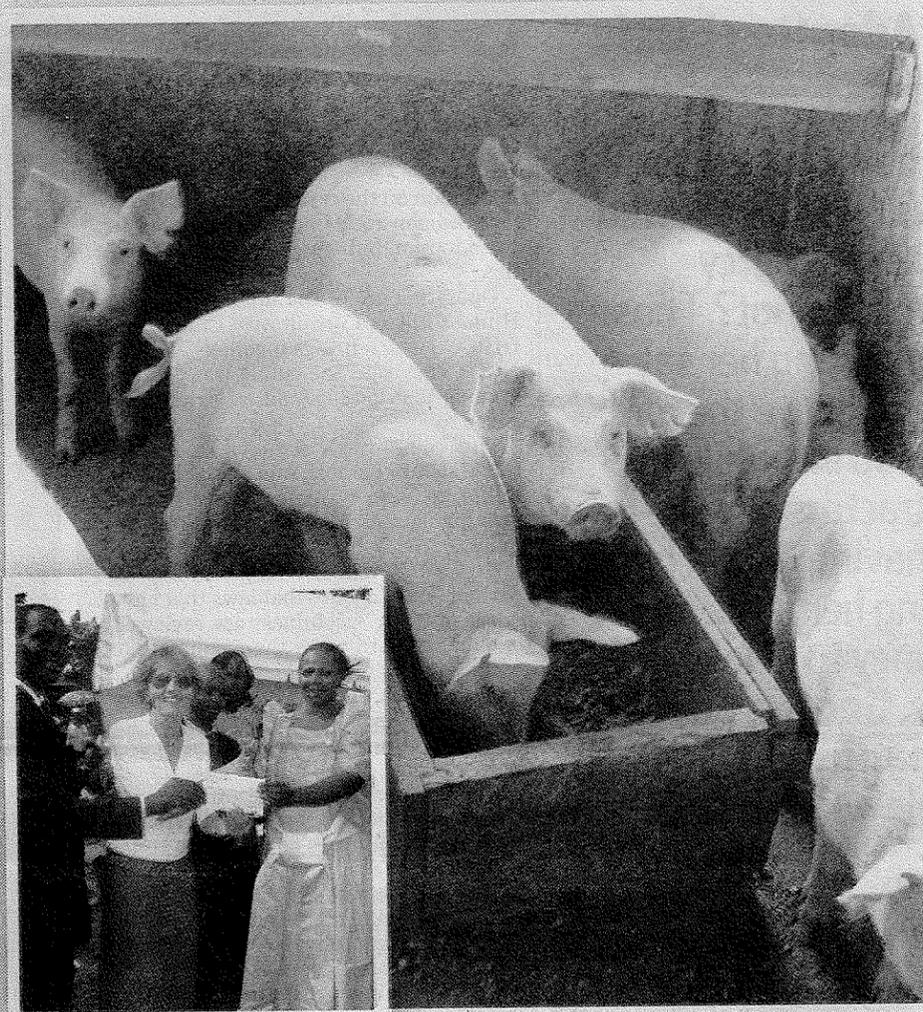
Ms Schummer, who flies into the country annually to bring donations she solicits from friends in Germany, says she was inspired to come and support Ugandans by a film she watched of deprived women in 1986 guerilla war.

"It was in 1990, while seated in my house, I watched a stunning film that was about the war which had just ended. In the film, I saw women who were happy and educated but they lacked capital," Ms Schummer says.

When Ms Schummer arrived in the country 10s years ago, she met Mawokota South MP John Bosco Lubyayi who led her to Mawokota County-Mpigi, where she distributed the money. Ms Mukasa was among the first beneficiaries.

But before she left the country on her first visit, Ms Schummer advised her new friends to form women groups so that the educated and strong can assist the weak.

Through Voluntary Action for Development (Vad), Friends of Uganda Germany has donat-



INSET: Ms Molly Mukasa receives a donation from Ms Ilse Schummer. Ms Mukasa's determination and hard work to earn a living from pig rearing has inspired other women in Mpigi and Wakiso districts. PHOTO BY JOSEPH MITI.

ed billions of shillings to women purposely to boost their social welfare, food security and household incomes.

Currently, Vad is coordinating five umbrella groups with over 100 in Wakiso and Mpigi.

According to Vad Executive Director, Mr Lubyayi, the Germany-based organisation has earmarked Shs4bn grant for a women and youth group for the next three years starting

this year. The organisation has started extending assistance to rural primary schools with cement and iron sheets donations.

Since some women have grown strong and richer, Ms Schummer says they have also introduced a credit and saving scheme to enable women learn to save.

She says women would access small loans at no interest.