



**Spotlight Initiative**  
To eliminate violence  
against women and girls

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations



## **Spotlight Initiative strengthens rural women’s livelihoods and wellbeing**

When rural women have skills and funding, they are more likely to create work, which provides an income and enables households to deal with poverty. These skills do not only help the individuals mend their own lives but also give them a way to take an active role in the rebuilding of their community.

The LGDA led Consortium through its Spotlight Initiative project funded by the European Union, organized a series of events to commemorate this year’s International Day of Rural Women (IDRW). The commemorations which were globally marked on October 15 under the theme: “Rural Women Cultivating Good Food for All”, aimed at recognizing the key role women play in promoting agriculture, economic growth, and the wellbeing of families.

In an interview with the Guest of Honor for Muzarabani IDRW Commemoration, Budiriro Secondary School Headmistress, Madam Murowa, she said it was important to consider the critical role rural women played in promoting rural development, food security, agriculture, and eradicating poverty. “Women face a lot of barriers in terms of power distribution, roles and responsibilities, unpaid care work and domestic work. We all know that rural women can do more and better when given the opportunity and support to enhance growth and development,” she added.

Among the rural women groups showcasing their projects during the commemoration were the Red Star Queens, Ward 11, Chinyani a Community Based Organization (CBO) formed in 2020 through the Spotlight Initiative Programme. The CBO is composed of 14 determined rural women who are into sewing of face masks, sanitary pads, undergarments, and school uniforms.

**Fig 1: Red Star Chairperson, Mai Mhofu (Right) and Mai Murombo**



**Photo: B Musemwa**



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In 2020, under the Spotlight Initiative Project, the group benefited 13m blue and 38m white material, two and half meters of elastic and three rows of thread and they managed to produce 634 face masks. The facemasks were then bought by LGDA and partners for a total of \$USD561.40. This sewing project helped build rural women 's resilience in the wake of COVID 19.

“With the amount raised, we managed to buy more sewing material but this time targeting Apostolic Sect women and vulnerable girls. We sew white undergarments and pads. There are many vulnerable girls in our area who sometimes fail to attend school during their menstrual cycle period because they cannot afford sanitary wear. Some have to share the same piece of cloth to stem menstrual flow with their mothers due to poverty while others resort to unhygienic alternatives such as cow dung. So as a group we saw it fit to donate pads to those girls to reduce poor girl performance in school,” said Mai Mhofu, the group Chairperson.

A month ago, the Red Star Queens benefited \$500 USD from Spotlight Initiative, a sub-grant meant for designing and implementation of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and SRHR programmes at community level. With the funding they managed to purchase 2 more sewing machines and enough sewing material to produce 150 school uniforms for Budiro Secondary School girls, Centenary, Mash Central.

***Fig 2: Sewing material bought with funding from Spotlight Initiative***



***Photo: T Murombo***

These hard-working women are now able to meet their daily subsistence needs including basic healthcare, and education for their children through the self-sustainable sewing project. “I found a sense of purpose and confidence through this sewing project, and I can see the impact it has on the other members. This project makes me feel empowered,” added Mai Mhofu



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Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development(MWACSMED),Muzarabani District Development Officer, Mrs Banda appreciated the partners' efforts in empowering rural women. "The skills imparted on these rural women will go a long way in eliminating gender, sexual and domestic violence and harmful practices among other issues affecting women and girls. They also help women and girls to recover from the current global challenges and position them on the path to sustainable economic growth. Rural women and girls need interventions and empowerment programs like these considering how the devastating economic effect of COVID-19 on livelihoods had aggravated their plight in all diversities," she concluded.