

**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME  
(AMSDP)**

**FIRST MILE PROJECT AND GENDER**  
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**Introduction**

This report responds to enquiries on gender issues as they pertain to the “*First Mile*” project piloted in Tanzania through the AMSDP for ten months between June 2005 and March 2006. Some information on how women were targeted and involved in the project implementation are presented. The enquiry goes further to ask several specific gender related questions and includes excerpts from AMSDP’s Mid Term Review Technical Report, Volume II: of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

**An Overview of the First Mile Project**

The First Mile project was piloted in Tanzania to test technologies on information and communications for smallholders engaged in agricultural marketing. The project was implemented in selected areas where the **AMSDP** activities are being implemented. The project was about smallholder farmers, processors and traders; individually or in their groups, organisations and/or associations in villages learning how to build a marketing chain from producers to consumers. In this process, the project used the “*linking local learners*” model through the information and communication technologies to improved market linkages. Key to the learning facilitation was the development and exchange of the experiences and good practices obtained in their localities.

First Mile encouraged the emergence of people and firms capable of linking producers in remote locations where there was neither electricity nor telephones linked to the internet they needed for communicating with the rest of the world to secure a market for their produce. Hence, the project took its name, the *First Mile* from this challenge to give rural people an access to the internet. Thus, the pilot phase of the project sought to address the challenge by:

- Facilitating learning amongst local groups so as to improve market linkages;
- Generating locally developed good practices in building market chains through the use of information and communication technologies; and
- Empowering smallholder farmers to access market information and market intelligence, as needs emerge.

The pilot project was based on the foundation pioneered by the AMSDP to strengthen the organisational, leadership and financial management systems of the producer groups. The pilot phase, therefore, concentrated on building the capacity of small teams of rural service providers, known as district core groups, which were established in 14 districts of Tanzania. These core groups linked farmers with other participants in market chains and built partnerships. Somewhere, the core groups helped farmers to broker for better sales deals.

The model, *linking local learners*, combines face-to-face learning, in which local groups discussed pertinent issues and shared experience using an internet learning platform. Capacity building of the rural service providers involved facilitating them to use the internet and mobile phones to get fast responses required to improve marketing. The project looked on the possibility of building information and communication technology facilities and services in districts, which lacked them.

### **Technical Challenges Encountered**

The activities of the First Mile project have been built on an understanding of what is required to achieve an impact at the community level through the use of information and communication technologies for agricultural marketing. The project has also built an understanding of how to create a dynamic environment for information sharing and learning amongst the field staff, which they can exchange directly with each other. However, technical challenges emerged during the project's pilot phase, which included:

- How to tap the potentially increasing number of mobile phones in villages for agricultural marketing;
- How to assure standards and sustain quality in the production-marketing systems to enhance crop sales revenue and increase farmers' incomes;
- How to improve exchange of learning using the internet-based learning platform combined with the use of local radios;
- How to master the operations of district-level databases that enable farmers and traders access to updated locally relevant market intelligence via short messages, and to expand the databases to additional districts;
- How to ensure reliable income for the services being rendered and provision of reliable connectivity in rural areas;
- How to improve and popularise the model, *Linking Local Learners* for use by project staff and replicate it for learning and sharing by other programmes and/or projects.

### **How Gender Issues were Addressed During the Pilot Phase**

#### ***Group Selection***

The Programme's target to bring traders, processors and producers together was limited by the difficulty in mobilising traders and processors. While the Programme has succeeded in mobilising producers into groups, not much progress has been made in mobilising traders and processors. These tasks were carried out prior to introducing the First Mile project.

Generally, there was good progress in most districts, especially where district core groups were comprised of adequately qualified and experienced members, working closely with the beneficiary groups. In a number of districts, district staff from the planning, agriculture, cooperatives, natural resources, trade and community development departments worked in close cooperation with the core groups.

District core groups together with Programme and district council staff conducted meetings at district and lower levels, in which the village leaders and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) were sensitised on the project objectives and the intervention approach. The core groups also used these meetings to better understand

the project areas, listen to ideas from the community and gain their support during the actual implementation. The meetings were carried out in focal areas, which had already been selected through the opportunity mapping studies and for First Mile intervention.

The core groups worked with the district councils and ward executives to compile a list of existing producer groups. The lists were then subjected to the following criteria provided by the PCU in order to select target groups for the districts: market orientation; proximity of group members; and cohesion. The criteria made the selection process easy for the core groups and ensured transparency. In a number of cases, some of the existing groups didn't satisfy the criteria. The criteria also did not negate crosscutting issues, like gender relations; environmental conservation; and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

So the issue of gender was addressed even before introducing the First Mile project to the participating groups in June 2005. The project tested modern technologies for information and communication for market linkages for the rural poor in Tanzania. This being the case and given time limitation, the main focus was on documenting the project's technical aspects. Hence, little was done on socio-cultural aspects in the documents regarding how women were targeted and involved in the implementation of the project. The field implementation phase scheduled for the financial year 2007/08, will emphasize on the use of Programme monitoring and evaluation system, to capture data and information, which are gender disaggregated.

### *Introducing Gender Changes in Communities*

AMSDP faced challenges in introducing gender changes in communities. Efforts to mainstream gender in agricultural marketing implied introducing changes in community social and cultural institutions, which had strong influences in shaping the socio-economic system. The process required transformation in the existed structure and systems, which were the root-causes of gender disparities. Whatever their causes, the gender disparities in the local economic systems formed the equilibrium in the community socio-economic systems. Hence, the process of transformation meant introducing imbalance that led to new equilibria of gender equality in the economies.

In Tanzania, there are 124 ethnic groups, known as tribes. Local people have values (things they believe to be "good" or "bad"). These values are the results of social interaction, which differ from one tribe to another and they change over time within the same tribe. Usually, value systems are established over a long period of social interaction. They are much more stable and only change gradually subjected to restraining forces.

AMSDP has learned that there were factors, which influenced gender in agricultural marketing, which included:

***Socio-cultural factors:*** People living and interacting together over time develop a way of living that they accept as a model. They develop values, beliefs, taboos, norms, rules, laws, language and ways of doing things (technology) with which they produce material things to sustain their living. The common thing with these socio-cultural aspects is that they are learned through socialization process that takes place from birth to death.

Socio-cultural factors have a strong influence in the determination of marketing opportunities. For instance, in some tribes young people are not allowed to mix-up with the elderly, for the belief that they lack adequate knowledge to share with grown-ups.

**Communication systems:** Communication systems facilitate interaction amongst communities with different cultural backgrounds. That is, communication system dictates the manner one community interacts with another and in the way it influences change in its cultural aspects. Some tribes do not allow a woman to speak in front of men.

**Economic factors:** Economic factors such as access to resources, direct and indirect costs, opportunity costs that are further influenced by the socio-cultural systems dictate the gender status in agricultural marketing. For instance, traditions of some tribes do not allow married women to own productive resources because they belong to the husband's clan. Others do not allow young people to own resources as long as their parents are still alive.

**Political factors:** Political systems at different levels set priorities and pressure that influence gender issues in the community in question. Any agricultural marketing system may be influenced by political factors and hence the status of gender in marketing. The situation is more complex when the macro-economic factors influence micro political systems. Women are only allowed to contest for special seat allocated by political parties.

**Networking:** The contacts people make and the exposure they have help them to shape their socio-cultural aspects and therefore influence gender concerns in agricultural marketing. People get the opportunity to question their own socio-cultural value systems and change or make modifications.

AMSDP has also learned the reasons for people's resistance to gender change, including:

***Due to resistance to personality:***

- Habit of a person that develops as one is used to doing things in a particular way. A person wants to see things he or she is used to;
- Things learned for the first encounter tend to be the role model;
- People tend to have selective perceptions and would not like to see changes, which are different from their likes;
- Dependence relationship may make a person resist change; and
- Fear of insecurity by a person.

***Resistance to change in socio-cultural systems:***

- Conformity to community norms;
- Vested social and cultural interests;
- Maintaining sacred aspects of the community;
- Rejection of outsiders in fear of uncertainty; and
- Fear of change in one socio-cultural sub-system that may affect the whole socio-cultural system.

### **Responses to the specific questions**

The Programme Phase One targeted 40 per cent of the beneficiaries to be reached should be women. However, available records indicate that 45 per cent of the beneficiaries were women (Please, refer to the AMSDP MTR Technical Report Vol. II Attached). By implication, gender mainstreaming was one of the project objectives since it forms part of the Programme strategies for producer empowerment and market linkages. Every partner agency (firm or NGO facilitating group formation, strengthening and replicable market linkages) is obliged to incorporate gender issues and achieve the 40 per cent target to be women beneficiaries. PAs were given the condition for group formation, including the composition of at least 40 per cent women members.

AMSDP activities allow both men and women to form groups. When it comes to facilitation both men and women are given equal opportunities and chances to learn and practice the acquired knowledge and skills.

PAs have gender experts to ensure that there are both gender equality and equity in implementing group activities. Gender as one of the crucial crosscutting issues in Programme activities, has been given high preference by all PAs.

As stipulated hitherto, the Programme targeted 40 per cent women beneficiaries, but according the Mid-Term Review mission conducted in August to October 2006, this target was surpassed by 12.5 per cent to attain the 45 per cent mark. However, women form the most significant achievement on equity where they dominate a number of group leadership positions. Female group members lead about 20 per cent of all the 647 groups' top leaderships.

Some how women are over powerful, thus jeopardizing the democratic decision-making processes in some groups. For no good reasons, women leaders seem to have pre-determined decisions on certain issues. Citing examples of Endasak SACCOS in Hanang district and Meqbami SACCOS in Babati district, the female leaders are firm in their decisions, leaving no room for other option.

Most of the producers in the Programme areas are women. Programme interventions, including the First Mile project have benefited them the most. They have enhanced their access to market through brokered deals. For example, in Mbarali district where men initially dominated cattle marketing, the situation now changed. Women were linked to Comorian cattle traders. They are now doing lucrative business through their group known as Emanyatta. They have now improved their houses and changed their lifestyles generally.

**Excerpts/Extracts from AMSDP MTR Technical Report, Volume II: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

**3.1.4 Impact**

*Report by Kapunga Smallholder's Producer Group on how the Programme has made an impact on their lives. "Before capacity building by the PA, group members were not united, had no action plans and used to sell at a loss. There were no reliable markets and we were using the local measuring system "lumbesa". Production has now increased, members know how to calculate gross margin analysis, acquired marketing skills – know which varieties of the rice is best for consumers, have blended the varieties, diversified enterprises to include mats and hats made out of local materials and are participating in the WRS".*

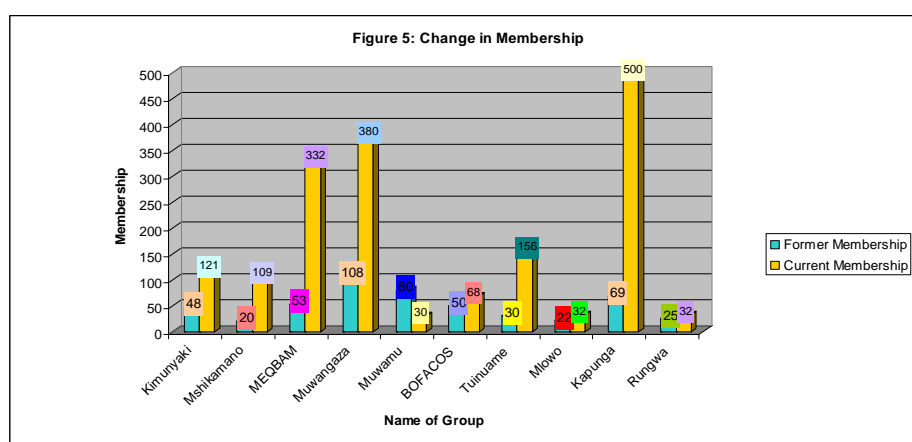
Component two aims at increasing the benefits that smallholder farmers and small-scale traders/processors obtain from interacting with the market in an organized and sustainable manner. Component three aims at increasing the level of commercial operations in rural areas through sustainable access to credit for small and medium-size rural traders/processors and farmers, with particular emphasis on the Programme Focal Areas.

The Programme has been effectively implemented for two and a half years. Though it is still early to assess the project impact, the following outcomes of the Programme indicate how activities of component two and three are positively affecting the lives of the beneficiaries:

- Increase in membership;
- Increase in profitability of enterprises;
- High participation of women in economic activities;
- Better enterprise selection approaches;
- High farm gate prices;
- Increased loan funds for SACCOs; and
- Reduced interest rates to farmers.

1) Increase in Membership Of Groups

The training and marketing support given to groups has given hope to members because most of them address the real issues that they face in their daily lives. This has resulted into growth in membership. Data on ten groups that were visited by the MTR team was compiled and analyzed on the change of membership. Figure five below and annex 6 illustrate the results of this analysis. They show that on average, there was an increase in membership by 25%.

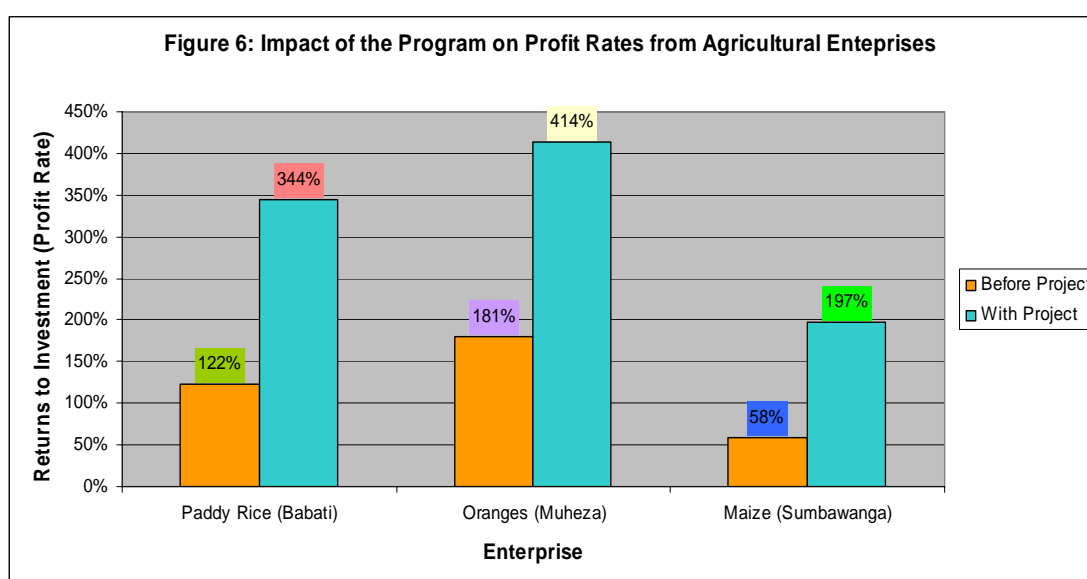


Source: Derived from Annex 6.

Members of these groups attribute the increase in membership to positive outcomes of Programme intervention, which have attracted others to join the groups. For example after being empowered to market their products, groups have been able to get better markets, which are translated into improved earnings. After noting this, their neighbors have sought to join the groups so that they can also benefit from such interventions.

## 2) Increase in Profitability of Enterprises

Training groups in gross margin analysis, marketing, and connecting them to viable markets have had a direct positive impact on the profits generated from enterprises. In addition the WRS has resulted into better prices making some agricultural enterprises more profitable than before. Figure six below and annex 6 shows the results of analyzing three enterprises.



Source: Derived from Annex 6.

The above figure clearly shows that profitability of the three enterprises increased more than three fold. The improved margins for the paddy and maize enterprises are attributed to better prices brought up by the WRS, while the improved margins in the orange enterprise are a result of better marketing techniques which have resulted into higher farm gate prices.

Some examples on how the program has contributed to improved household incomes were echoed by the following respondents:

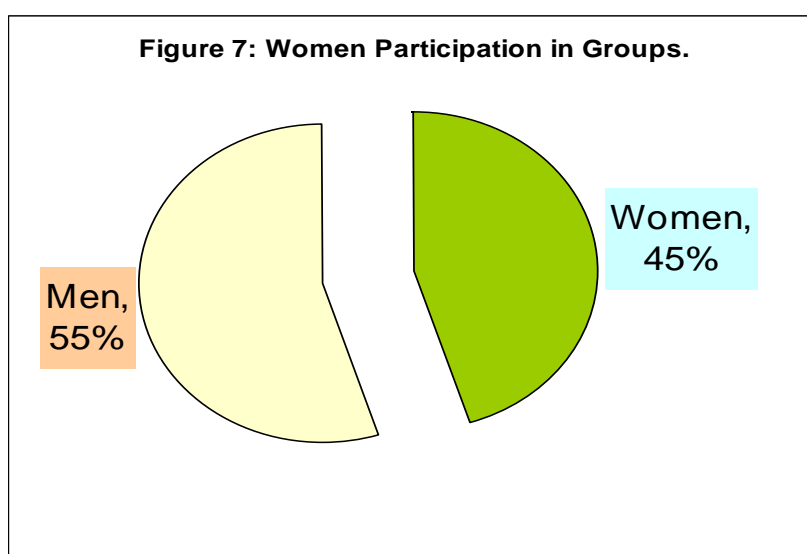
Fainesi Asilia is a woman who is a member of Kapunga Smallholder's Producer Group. She said "because of the increased yield of rice, better markets and high farm gate prices, I have been able to take my child to school; he is now in form three".

In this case while the improved yield is attributed to DAI Pesa Programme, better markets and prices are definitely attributed to AMSDP who facilitated the group to attend Nane Nane shows and learn about quality control and grading, enabled them to benefit from the WRS operated by Chimala and practice better marketing techniques as a result of the marketing training that they received.

Saidi Ngaya is a man who is also a member of the above group. He says “as you may have noted on your way coming, there are so many bricks being made, because there is a ready market for them from members who are now economically powerful. My children used to go to school on foot, but now I have bought them a bicycle and they ride to school”.

### 3) High Participation of Women in Economic Activities

One of the program’s target was to have at least 40% of the beneficiaries of the group as women and women headed households. Data on membership of 543 groups from twenty districts was collected and analyzed by the MTR team. Figure seven: below and annex five shows the results of the analysis. The results show that the proportion of women beneficiaries in the Programme is 45% which is within the Programme target.



*Source: Derived from Annex 5.*

During the field visit, the MTR team also noted that women were fairly represented in the management structures of the groups. The high participation rate of women in economic activities was achieved as a result affirmative actions promoted by the program through training and advice given to the groups.

52% of members of Emanyata Livestock Marketing Group in Mbarali District are women. Women also form 56% of the group’s management committee. One of the women gave this explanation for the good number of women representation:

“Women suffer most from lack of resources. When your husband goes to sell livestock, you never know how much he has received, but when you are also a member of the group you are better informed on what the buyers are paying. We now expect buyers from Comoro to come and buy from our group directly, we will be in the group and have first hand information on how much they will pay instead of waiting at home to be told by our husbands. When we heard about this arrangement in this group, we mobilized more women to join in order to overcome our financial problems. More are even willing to join”. Picture five below shows the high number of women in Emanyata group.



*Picture 5: Members of Emanyatta Livestock Group, MTR Team and District Council*



*Photo by MTR Team*

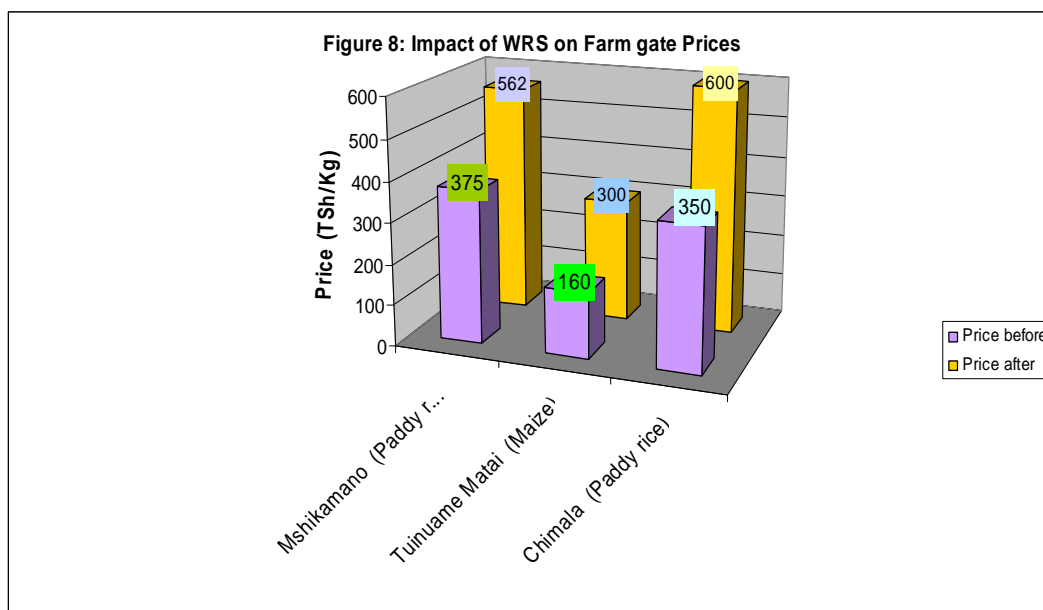
#### 4) Better Enterprise Selection Approaches

Training in entrepreneur skills and gross margin analysis has equipped farmers with knowledge in analyzing the various enterprises and selection of the most profitable enterprises whose products are highly marketable. A number of groups that were visited by the MTR team explained how they had used this knowledge to select enterprises which they are now concentrating on. Emanyata Livestock Marketing Group told the MTR team that they analyzed cattle, goat and rice enterprises and they decided to concentrate on cattle because of their experience in the enterprise, high margins and market available.

Further capacity building efforts for the groups should concentrate on the selected enterprises which will make them more specialized and thereby improve the quality and quantity produced. This will directly translate into commercialized agriculture.

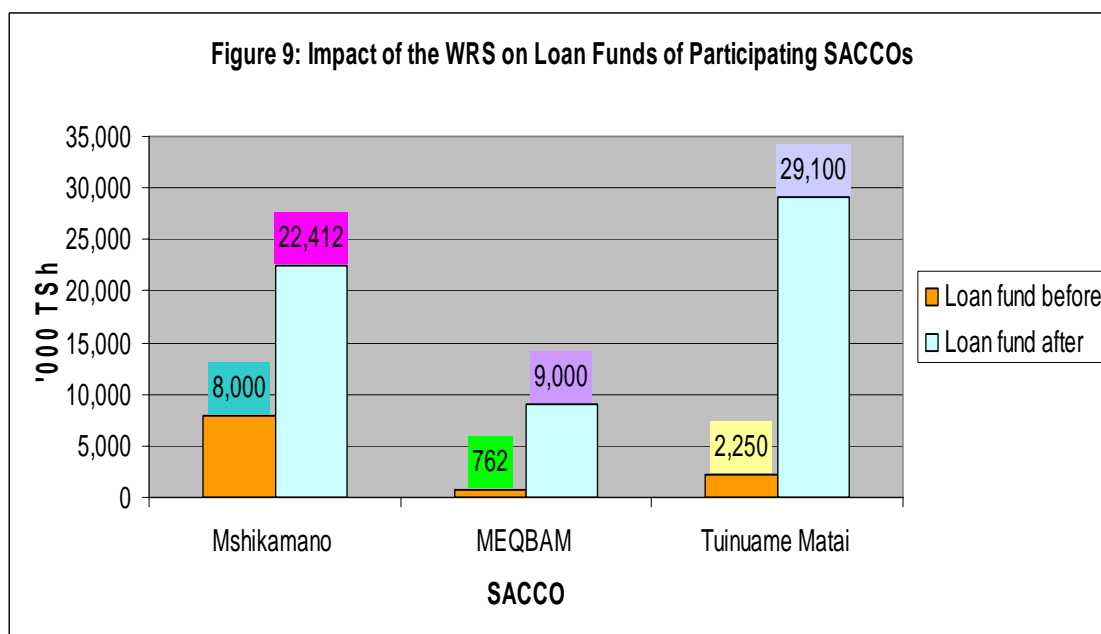
#### 5) High Farm Gate Prices

Among the major outcomes of the WRS has been the impact on the farm gate prices of crops that are being stored in the warehouses. Figure 8 below shows the impact on prices for these crops in areas where the system is operating.



6) Increased Loan Funds for SACCOs

As a result of participating in the WRS, SACCOs have accessed funding from PCBs. This has improved their loan portfolios by an average of 634% as illustrated in figure nine below and annex...



When the MTR team visited the General Manager of CRDB in Dar-es-salaam, it was informed that Mshikamano, which had just been taken over by CRDB from Exim Bank, had recently received TSh.130 million for the WRS. This shows that in the near future as implementation of

this scheme continues, most SACCOs will have adequate loan funds to meet the dire needs of farmers.

### 7) Reduced Interest Rates to Farmers

Better access to funding by SACCOs and the low interest rates charged by PCBs under the WRS has resulted into a downward revision of interest rates charged by SACCOs to their members. The MTR team reviewed the current rates charged under the WRS compared to the previous rates that the SACCOs were charging. Figure ten below and annex clearly show that there has been an average improvement of interest rates by 68%.

