

**THE SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF FARMERS GROUPS
IN TANZANIA (MVIWATA)**

9/14

BY

SUSAN VANDELIN MKENDA



**A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION IN AGRIBUSINESS OF SOKOINE UNIVERSITY OF
AGRICULTURE, MOROGORO, TANZANIA**

2007

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to assess the functioning of the Network of Farmers Groups in Tanzania (MVIWATA) which was founded in 1993 and formally registered in 1995. The research was conducted to analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) which face the organization. The main source of data used in this study was the secondary data collected from MVIWATA website, Sokoine University of Agriculture Library (SNAL), literatures from MVIWATA library, and holding discussions with MVIWATA members and technical staff.

The network has broad base grass root membership in 19 regions of Tanzania. The author spent six months of internship to learn how the network performed its day to day activities particularly those related to agribusiness. It was revealed that not all members of MVIWATA were producers; a few undertook trading and processing of agricultural produce at small-scale level. Members included traders of agricultural commodities who sold products from their own farms or products procured from other producers and small scale processors of various products. MVIWATA's mission is to link farmers' groups and local networks of such groups together into a sound and strong national Farmers Organisation capable of ensuring representation and advocacy of their interests in decision-making processes at all levels. MVIWATA's overall objective is to develop a strong and effective representation of farmers' interests in jointly pursuing their needs and challenges, mainly through participatory communication, lobbying and advocacy, plus organizational strengthening to provide agronomic and marketing services. MVIWATA advocates strong organizations for smallholder farmers, establishing reliable markets for their farm produce, ensuring provision of sustainable

financial and technical advisory services, as well as ensuring representation of farmers at all levels.

From this study a number of lessons about the structure and functioning of umbrella farmer organization were derived. First, MVIWATA as the farmer's voice helped the farmers to be able to understand the economic viability of their productive activities. Second, it also improves their communication skills and ability by participating in farmer-to-farmer dissemination workshops and exchange visits. Third, effective use and incorporation of the available information into improved technologies requires close interaction between researchers, extension staff and farmers themselves. Finally Organizations and agencies that focus on sustainable agriculture need more expertise in small business management and entrepreneurship, and organizations that focus on small business management and entrepreneurship need more expertise in on-farm applications. There is a need for networking and collaboration between organizations with good business and entrepreneurship information, and organizations that work with family farmers and the sustainable agricultural communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to a number of individuals who contributed to successful completion of this work. Special thanks are due to Dr. Gasper Ashimogo for his commitments in supervising production of this work. This work could not have been possible without his encouragement. Appreciation is also accorded to MVIWATA National coordinator Stephen Ruvuga, Finance and Administrative Officer, Jandwa Magoti, Agricultural Marketing Officer, Henry Wejja, and all MVIWATA staff for their advice, cooperation and support during the entire period of the study.

I record my appreciation to Sister Josephine Mkunda and my brother Gasper Mkenda for their advice, support and encouragement. My special thanks and appreciation are due to my parents, Mr and Mrs Vandeline Mkenda, brother and sisters, Thomas Esther and Grace for their moral support. Above all I thank God for bestowing me with good health and patience during the entire period of this work.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved husband Victor Pius Dilunga for his encouragement advice and moral support.

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LIST OF ABRIVIATIONS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMSDP	Agricultural Marketing System Development Project
FERT	<i>Formation pour L'Epanouissement et le Renouveau de la Terre</i>
FOs	Farmers Organizations
HIV	Human immunodeficiency Virus
LVIA	Lay Volunteers International Association
MVIWATA	Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania
MUCCoBS	Moshi University College of Cooperatives and Business Studies
NGOs	Non Government Organizations
PADEP	Participatory Agricultural Development Program
PELUM	Participatory Ecological land Use Management
SACCOs	Saving Credit Cooperative Organizations
SFGAs	Small Farmers Group Associations
SFGs	Small Farmers Groups
SRM	Support to Rural Markets
SUA	Sokoine University of Agriculture
SWOC	Strength Weakness Opportunities Challenges
UMADEP	Uluguru Mountain Agricultural Development Project

1.0 INTRODUCTION

MVIWATA (*Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania*) is a national network of farmers' groups in Tanzania, and was established in 1993 by small-scale farmers from the Morogoro, Iringa, Tanga, Mbeya, Kilimanjaro, Zanzibar, Kagera, Monduli and Dodoma regions (in the centre, southwest and northeast of Tanzania) who wanted to establish a farmer-to-farmer exchange forum. Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) at Morogoro guided and facilitated its establishment, which finally led to formal registration of the organization in 1995.

MVIWATA's mission is to link farmers' groups and local networks of such groups together into a sound and strong national FO capable of ensuring representation and advocacy of their interests in decision-making processes at all levels. MVIWATA's overall objective is to develop a strong and effective representation of farmers' interests in jointly confronting their needs and challenges, mainly concerning participatory communication, lobbying and networking advocacy, plus organizational strengthening to provide agronomic and marketing services. MVIWATA advocates strong organizations for smallholder farmers, establishing reliable markets for their farm produce, sustainable financial and technical advisory services, as well as empowered representation of farmers at all levels. In many areas MVIWATA is strongly represented at the village level; small-scale farmers (irrespective of age, gender, farm type, religion, geographical origin, or political opinions) can become members and hold

MVIWATA evolved from various social, economic and political factors, which brought about ideas for its formation. The factors include;

- Lack of recognition and participation on the part of farmers in decision making in formulation of policies, which affect farmers. Indeed, exclusion of farmers in policy making is not justified because they are the largest population in the country (over 80%) and contribute about 70% to the Tanzanian economy;
- Low prices of agricultural produce, lack of reliable markets for agricultural produce markets, and failure of state organs to effectively defend the interest of farmers;
- Lack of common voice and position on major issues that concern farmers as a result of lack of communication, forum and mechanisms in which farmers can present their common views;
- Lack of recognition that farmers are an important component of Tanzanian society;
- Poor implementation of government policies on agriculture;

2.2 The Vision of MVIWATA

The vision of MVIWATA is to become a strong farmers' organization that will guarantee small scale farmers' participation and representation in socio-economic and policy decision making process at various levels through learning, initiating, implementing and monitoring their own social and economic development processes.

2.3 The Mission of MVIWATA

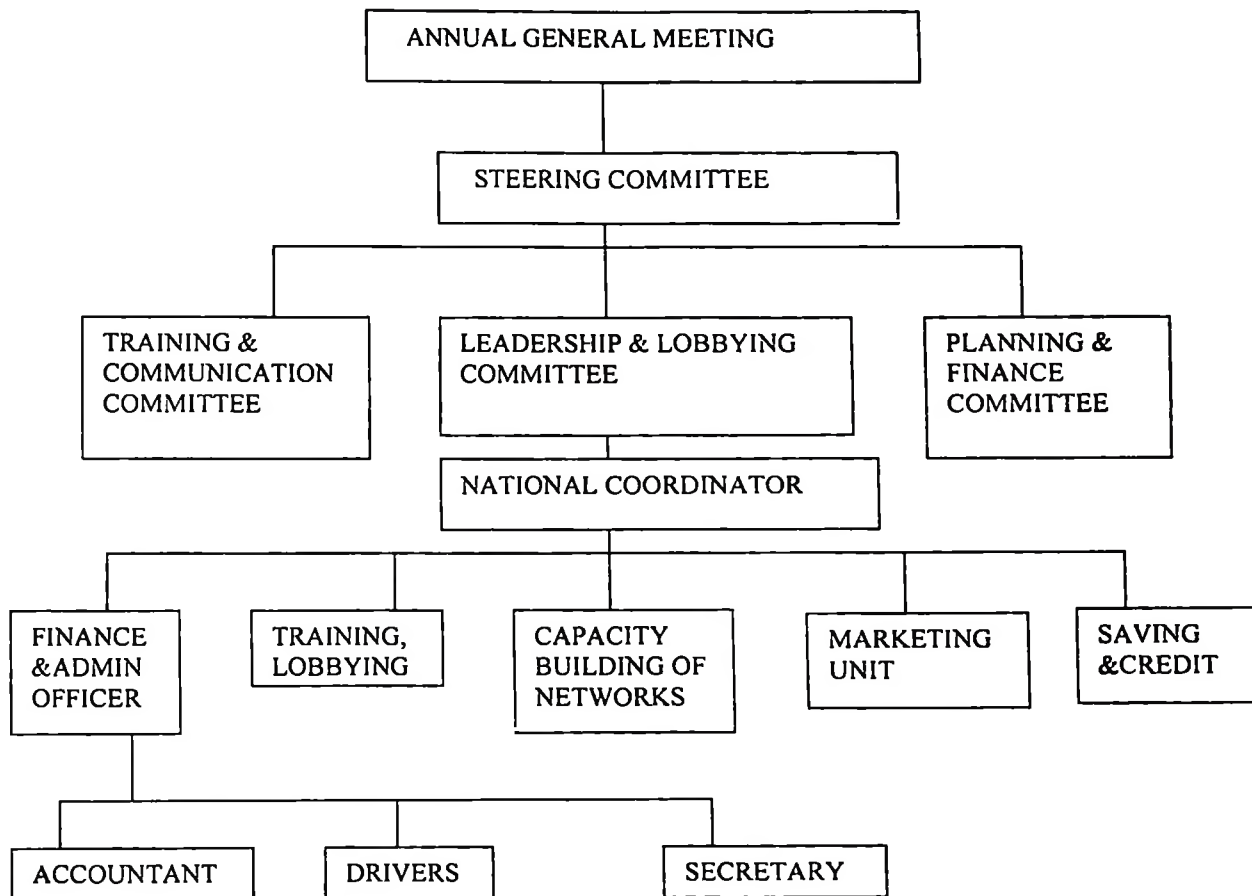
The mission of MVIWATA is to strengthen farmers' groups, local and middle networks to form a sound and strong national farmers' organ to ensure effective representation of their interests, to facilitate learning and training, to enhance communication and advocacy strategies to defend and promote their interests.

2.4 Structure of MVIWATA

The structure of MVIWATA provides for 4 categories:

- **Board of Trustees:** Seven (7) board members constitute the Board of trustees. Currently, the members are from Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies (MUCCOBs), Tanzania NGO's Network (TANGO) and 3 farmers' representatives. The Board of Trustees is the custodian of the assets of MVIWATA. It also advises MVIWATA on the orientation and overall policy of the organisation in order to ensure that the course of the organisation is consistent with the vision, mission and goals. The Board of Trustees is led by the Chairperson and the National Coordinator serves as the Board Secretary.
- **Steering Committee:** This is constituted by 9 members who are elected after every three years by the Annual General Assembly (AGM), which is the highest body in the organisation of MVIWATA. The Steering Committee is a decision

Figure 1: The MVIWATA Organization Chart



2.5 Network Organisation

There are 3 distinct levels of networking in the functioning of MVIWATA. The levels are essentially for facilitating communication among members and influencing policies at corresponding levels;

- **National level:** This is composed of representatives from zones. A zone represents 2 – 3 geographic regions of Tanzania. There are currently 9 zones in the set up of MVIWATA. The national level includes the Steering Committee and the coordination office. It is the role of the national level to solicit technical, financial, legal and similar supports to middle level networks and local networks;

Middle level networks (intermediary level): This is composed of farmers' networks at regional and district levels. The intermediary level has its own leadership which regularly liaise with the national level in order to establish common stands among all networks but bearing in mind variability of the networks and the local context. The middle level networks have the function of liaising with other stakeholders and actors at regional and district level when it comes to affairs of farmers;

- **Local networks:** Are networks of farmers groups and local producers at village, ward or divisional level, which meet regularly to discuss issues of their concern. The local networks have the responsibility of influencing decision making at local level such as village, ward and division. It has also to liaise with regional and national levels of MVIWATA.

2.6 Membership

MVIWATA has two kind of membership which is either individual membership or group membership, the criteria for membership is that the farmer should be small- scale farmer (land withless than five acres) and also should be a member of farmer group and those two are the key member of MVIWATA. Associate members are individual, organization or a group of people who are inspired by the purpose, objectives, growth and development of MVIWATA. Membership of this kind is endorsed and announced by MVIWATA's general meeting. Registration fees for individual membership is Tshs 1000 while the fee for registered group and networks is Tshs 2000; annual subscription is Tshs 2000 for individual member and Tshs 20 000 for groups and networks.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Secondary data was the main source of information of the data used in this study which are from MVIWATA website, Sokoine University of Agriculture library (SNAL), reading literatures from MVIWATA library, doing some discussion with MVIWATA members and technical staff.

4.0 STRATEGIES OF MVIWATA

The main strategies of MVIWATA are the following;

- **Strengthening local groups and networks through motivating self-reliance attitudes.**
The initiation of farmer groups and networks is done with the purpose of helping farmers to solve some socio-economic problems without waiting for conditioned grants or gifts from donors. In all areas visited by microfinance officer (2004), at least every local farmer network has either village cereal banking or a saving and credit cooperative organization (SACCOs) where members can ask loans to fulfill some of their basic needs;
- **Empowerment of small-scale farmers through provision of participatory training skills to network members through extension services and study tours.** After completion of the course, participants have to take the feedback to their respective groups and local networks so that the knowledge gained can be disseminated to all members;
- **Execute sustainable income generating projects owned by members of farmer organization mainly marketing and rural banking projects.** Four rural markets have been built by MVIWATA in Nyandira, Kinole and Tawa villages of Morogoro region and in Kibaigwa village of Kongwa district in Dodoma region and they are already operating;
- **Affiliation with national and international networks and organisations for lobbying and advocacy purposes;**

5.0 ACTIVITIES OF MVIWATA

The main activities of MVIWATA fall under the main areas of action of MVIWATA, i.e.

1. **Strengthening the institutional framework of MVIWATA** as a forum for organising farmers and building their capacity;
2. **Strengthening lobbying and advocacy** capacity of farmers and enhance their participation in processes that determine national and international policies;
3. **Improving agricultural marketing systems** for smallholder farmers including strengthening **entrepreneurship skills** of smallholder farmers;
4. **Improving micro financing and rural banking systems** including cereal banking as a means of enhancing capital generation of small holder farmers;
5. **Promoting natural resources management and sustainable production systems** for attaining rural household food security;
6. **Promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and gender equality** sensitisation in rural communities;

5.1 Other activities of MVIWATA

- ❖ Organizing farmer's exchange visits within and outside Tanzania for technology exchange and transfer. Up to now more than 600 farmers have been involved into farmer visit exchange nationally while more than 70 Tanzanian farmers participated in farmer exchange visits in various countries out of Tanzania.
- ❖ Organizing National and Regional Workshops for specific topics in related to farmers' welfare
- ❖ Organizing training for Board Members, Leaders of the local Networks and Local Network members. Up to now, about 137 farmers have been trained and they are now used for training other farmers.
- ❖ Documentation of farmers' experiences and activities through video and booklets like *Pambazuko* radio programmes through Radio Tanzania, and others.
- ❖ Production of a quarterly Newsletter, "*PAMBAZUKO sauti ya wakulima*". It focuses on informing producers on agricultural innovation technologies and organizations that are beneficial to them.
- ❖ Networking with other organizations and institutions which are involved in agricultural and livestock sector; such as Sokoine University of Agriculture and the University College of cooperative and Business Studies.
- ❖ Looking for funds for the agricultural and income generating undertakings of their members; After farmers have initiated their development programmes and priorities, MVIWATA try to contact funding organizations so as to support and strengthen farmers' initiatives.

- ❖ Implementation of rural markets development project and rural banking project to improve marketing and saving and credits facilities in rural areas.

6.0 PARTNERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

MVIWATA has strong working relationship with Sokoine University of Agriculture and University college of cooperative and Business Studies, which provide technical advice. It has also collaboration and partnership with a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations, local and international including;

- Government Ministries;
- Agriterra, an agri-agency based in the Netherlands;
- FERT, a farmers organisation based in France;
- OXFAM Ireland;
- VECO, non-governmental organisation based in Belgium;
- MS Danish Association for International Cooperation;
- TRIAS in implementation of MVIWATA activities in Monduli District, Arusha region and Kagera;
- Lay Volunteers International Association (LVIA) in the implementation of rural banking project in Kongwa District;
- Uluguru Mountain Agricultural Development Project (UMADEP) in the implementation of rural banking project in Mvomero district;
- Inades Formation in capacity building of farmers and strengthening of networks;

MVIWATA participates in the national steering committees of Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Project (AMSDP) and Participatory Agricultural Development Programme (PADEP)

Tanzanian government supports the organisation through attachment of its staff to the organisation.

7.0 TRAINING, LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

7.1 MVIWATA Training experience

MVIWATA (National network of farmers groups) had been conducting farmers' leaders training for fourteen years now (1995), at a rate of 20-40 farmer leaders per year. Up now about 340 farmer leaders have received training on leadership, lobbying and advocacy skills, marketing, savings and credits, farmer to farmer training, group formation and strengthening, sustainable agriculture and entrepreneurship.

MVIWATA uses various methods to facilitate exchange of information and new skills among farmers, be it on agricultural production, marketing, savings and credit or any other skills as identified by farmers themselves. These methods include community meetings, open group discussions to reveal the existing socio-economic problems and how they can come up to solve these problems, exchange visits, training to strengthen group organization so as to be able decide which development programme they can initiate themselves to fight against poverty in rural areas and documentation of farmers

experiences into visual media (booklets and video). Through these methods, technologies and innovations introduced by research organizations or indigenous knowledge are both valued and exchanged.

7.2 Training objectives

MVIWATA provide a range of services as described in the background information above to its members. However, training to farmers is a core activity to this organization. The aim of training to farmers is to build their capacity to be able to understand their potentials, analyze situations and take initiatives to improve their living standards. Training also aims to enable farmers to voice out issues and defend their interests and improve their leadership skills. On the other hand, the aim of training workshops is to sensitize farmers on the concept of farmers networking, strengthen their leadership capability, to train them on new skills and innovations and to build the capacity of farmers to train other farmers (farmer-to-farmer training). Farmers who are trained at the training centre of MVIWATA are called promoters. Promoters are therefore trained to practice what they learnt and transfer knowledge to the other farmers in their groups and local networks.

The core philosophy of MVIWATA is to facilitate communication among and between farmers on their common issues and welfare. Groups and networks are therefore considered by MVIWATA as the means to facilitate this communication and share

related to animal production. For example, the knowledge on the use of tephrosia to control ticks was disseminated and documented by MVIWATA in collaboration with its partners.

Members of MVIWATA have benefited from the training conducted by MVIWATA on the use of sustainable agricultural practices such as rainwater harvesting, incorporation of crop residues in the field after harvesting, use of animal draft, strip and ridge cropping techniques in crop production. These techniques have greatly increased production due to increased water use efficient. For the case of crop production MVIWATA has been active in facilitating exchange visits among farmers. Through exchange visits farmers have also been learning about new crops that they never knew before and share seeds and knowledge.

Farmers have been well trained on the role and advantages of trees on the environmental conservation measures. With respect to training on sustainable agriculture, farmers have initiated a lot of tree nurseries and tree planting projects. MVIWATA has contributed to environmental conservation through sensitization and mobilization of farmers to invest in land conservation practices and through influencing research and extension services suppliers to train, sensitise and mobilise farmers on the proper use and management of natural resources available to them. Study tours, field farmer schools brought in by research institutions and farmer exchange visits have

highly contributed to environmental conservation. Farmers try to imitate what is being practiced in the demonstration plots.

MVIWATA helps farmers improve and utilize their indigenous knowledge to increase their agricultural productivity. This is done through training which aim at enabling farmers to appreciate and value their own knowledge and documentation of knowledge in various forms (booklets, video and newsletter). MVIWATA improves farmers' awareness on the proper use of available natural resources.

Farmers' knowledge is also valued through research activities. Research institutions such as Sokoine University of Agriculture are carrying out many field experiments in Uluguru Mountains in order to enable farmers learn new technologies. MVIWATA collaborates with SUA to organise visits on the site for members to get exposed to new technology. As result of the knowledge provided to farmers through influence of MVIWATA farmers of the Uluguru Mountain have quickly adapted soil conservation techniques such agro forestry practices, row cropping; creation of water canals for irrigation agriculture; terracing and contour bands farming practices.

Dodoma region, farmers have adopted rapidly techniques like rainwater harvesting to increase water use efficiency, tree planting, agro-forestry techniques and share their knowledge through field visits and exchanges.

The extension services providers that collaborate with MVIWATA include INADES Formation Tanzania, PELUM Tanzania, UMADEP and others. These organizations in collaboration with MVIWATA provide farmers with training and workshops on various topics related to agricultural innovation. Leaders of farmer groups and promoters are being regularly trained.

7.4 Farmers Training challenges

- Poor communication infrastructure for the farmer-to-farmer dissemination of information is hindering training development and trained network promoters often fail to reach the target farmers in a timely manner;
- Farmers need continuous training especially on emerging issues concerning agriculture, local and international trade, due to limitation of resources is difficult to do so, then it caused to have promoter with different training packages in order to focus on current issues;
- Also due to limitation of resources is difficult to make follow up (monitoring/evaluation processes);
- The training needs among small-scale farmers differ/vary depending on locations and weather (types of crops produced at a specific area) type of farmer (a livestock keeper or crop producer) even farming system;
- Some of farmer's leaders are not committed, and sometimes enroll wrong participants who could not be able to deliver or train other farmers.

8.0 MICRO FINANCING AND RURAL BANKING SYSTEMS

The aim of MVIWATA in this microfinance department was to promote and support financial services in rural areas adapted to farmers' activities and a number of farmers groups emerged with positive indications of starting up income generating activities with the intentions of developing small saving and credit societies.

As a matter of growing pressure of farmer's needs within the project's pilot areas (Dodoma, Kilimanjaro and Morogoro), new rural banks with front desks and secured money custodies were put in place.

In Morogoro for instance there has started a need of starting cereal banking at Mvomero and Hembeti SACCOS proving to be an awareness success after late exchange visit in Kilimanjaro and Kongwa. At this projects terminal period most of the planned activities were satisfactorily accomplished. Though with mixed feelings, future sustainability of human resources in operating these banks, was assured by employing trained Loan Officers and posted them in Kilimanjaro and Morogoro regions. Dodoma (Kongwa) has its own method of supervising the SACCOS program from its head office – Kongwa. Generally most of the activities had a positive result in consolidating the sense of ownership and financial independency. This has come from people's minds and was attributed through practice, which has resulted into;

- A raised confidence among trained farmers including women in passing across their views and suggestions;
- Increased savings and shares in areas where banking operations outreach have good leadership;

- A fair understanding and application of cereal banking particularly in Dodoma region;
- Attraction in linking with Government and other organizations towards the farmers interests in recognizing people's union including production and marketing – Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing, financial assistance, SELF, Oxfam Ireland, VECO, MS, and CRDB.

8.1. Improvement of SACCOS system

There has been a lot of improvement as a result of planned training and exchange visits. The exchange visits has motivated a competition of performance among SACCOS. The budgeting and trial balance compliancy supervision is fairly making way to a true financial capacity in each SACCOS. There is however a strong task of gradually building the capacity of relevant SACCOS committees. New leadership in Kilimanjaro and Dodoma has indicated members will to point out and elect better leaders. This is a point of good governance in among the SACCOS. They all require a sustainable manner of owning their rural banks with honesty, commitment and build up a financial system both operationally and financially. In Morogoro, for instance already the SACCOS have developed a model of a discussion forum called MVIBEWA (A Network Group of Farmers Bank). They meet 3 times per annum or as need be to analyse, check loan portfolios and loan status in each member. This is a well-organized farmer's forum embracing SACCOS, which have, own constitutions and are registered or are on a process of registration. Though MVIBEWA is currently depending on 70%

of the regional loan fund there is a clear indication of a gradual inter SACCOS lending within MVIBEWA. LVIA has developed a Coordination Table (Round Table discussion) which is meant to be a Forum of discussion among SACCOS on various issues just like MVIBEWA in Morogoro. MVIWATA is impressed by the way the two partners – LVIA and UMADEP are building a consciousness of farmers ownership of their SACCOS and reduced their dependency syndrome through promoting particularly savings in Morogoro. In Kilimanjaro there is yet a process of building up regional forum, which could address in the same tune of local ownership. They are on a process of establishing a regional company limited by shares USAWA Kilimanjaro Ltd. as local network has been on progress. This anticipated company sat several times and in three of its meetings MVIWATA at National Level was invited. As it is MVIWATA's main objective to develop its SACCOS members at all levels in Tanzania, MVIWATA planned to be a rightful member in this network as in other networks. An understanding and clearance of its functional objectives with FERT as an international development trustee needs further attention and discussion.

8.2. The microfinance Success

- New SACCOS have been established and existing SACCOS at the beginning of the project have been strengthened. The project is currently supporting a total of 25 rural SACCOS: 8 in Kilimanjaro region, 11 in Morogoro region and 6 in Kongwa-Dodoma region.(see Table 1 below);

These comprise 15 newly formed SACCOS and 10 existing SACCOS at the beginning of the project;

- Smallholder farmers have joined SACCOS, bought shares and saved in the SACCOS;
- SACCOS are increasingly providing loans to farmers and farmers are repaying the loans though some cases of default have been observed;
- Farmers are receiving storage loans and structures for storing farmers products are being built;
- Loan beneficiaries have realized increased income and have used the income for various purposes including payment of school fees, investment in various income generating activities and construction of houses;
- MVIWATA has improved its service provision to promote and support the development of income generating activities by its member-organizations. Communication, information and training activities disseminate the methodological outputs of pilot actions and help develop similar projects in other regions .

Table 1: Distribution of existing and new SACCOS by pilot area

Pilot area	Existing SACCOS at beginning of project	New SACCOS			Total
		2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	
Kilimanjaro	1	4	2	1	8
Morogoro	7	0	1	3	11
Kongwa	2	1	3	0	6
Total	10	5	6	4	25

Table 2: Membership Situation Up to August 2005

REGION	SACCOS	No. of members	
		Male	Females
Dodoma -Kongwa	CAVI	171	108
	SAFINA	176	99
	KIFISACO	1 285	422
	KWOSACCO	22	7
	MKUKUPA	141	69
	CHAMTUMA	171	89
KILIMANJARO	USHAMIRU	91	85
	NGUVUMALI	130	53
	TUMAINI	158	24
	MUUNGANO	228	116
	JITEGEMEE	153	55
	CHEKIMAJI	132	76
	KISIWANI	100	44
	NURU YA MAENDELEO	72	70
MOROGORO	KINOLE	419	106
	LANGALI	94	45
	TCHENZEMA	92	61
	MVOMERO	189	88
	HEMBETI	125	57
	MKUYUNI	78	45
	KIKEO	63	37
	TAWA	30	8
	KIROKA	82	28
	MLALI	66	56
	MZUMBE	17	39

8.3. Economic Results

One of the major results related to economic improvement of farmers is initiative in solving credits problems for rural producers, 31 new savings and credit cooperative societies have been formed through the interventions of MVIWATA. The second quarter report of year 2004 shows that there has been an increase of 40% in SACCOs membership, 60% in resources (savings and shares) and 100% in credit transactions per annum.

As a result of the increase in savings and credit activities among the members of MVIWATA;

- Farmers have managed to increase cultivated land, on average from 5 to 8 acres of land after getting short-term credit for buying farm inputs. Correspondingly, yield has increased from 3 to 8 bags of maize per acre and consequently reduced the incidence of food shortages. (1 bag is equivalent to 90 kgs);
- Through credits, farmers have been able to hire tractors, buy ox drawn implements and buy improved seeds;
- Some areas particularly Dodoma – Kongwa, Gairo and Chitego are now conversant on the benefits of cereal banks;
- Through savings and credit, some farmers have managed to put investments that have social impact. For example, a farmer in Kinole, Morogoro Rural District bought a minibus and another farmer in Kibaigwa bought a truck, which improves rural transportation;

- There has been increase in capital for small scale enterprises from Tshs. 50 000/= in the previous years to a range of Tshs. 200 000/= to 500 000/=
- Farmers at the farm level has increased the turn over for medical and education services;
- There is an attitude of using rural banks in saving some money for wider investments;

Improvement of food security has been observed among some members of MVIWATA. This has been achieved through promotion of cereal banking activities. For example, 139 members of MVIWATA in Dodoma and Kilimanjaro regions have stored 592 bags of maize through the programme of storage loan worth Tsh 5,064,750.000. This initiative to promote cereal banking in two objectives; market price regulation and food security.

Formation of local structures which involves farmers in managing and overseeing management of rural markets in Morogoro Rural District, Mvomero District and Kongwa District. This has been achieved through the formation of Market Boards in Tawa, Tandai, Nyandira and Kibaigwa Rural Markets constructed during the implementation of Rural Markets Development Project. The farmers' representatives in the board are expected to look at the interest of farmers in marketing of agricultural produce.

9.0. THE MARKETING

MVIWATA has the marketing department which is also supported by different partners in which they help in facilitating different marketing activities like marketing techniques and training to its members also they give support to salary of the technical staff and other financial needs. MVIWATA has four existing markets in Dodoma (Kibaigwa) and Morogoro (Nyandira, Tawa and Tandai) which is now operating and the project is already phased out.

MVIWATA has another project which is officially started in April 2006 called the Support to Rural Markets (SRM), the major target group beneficiaries of the project are small scale farmers. The program has been designed to integrate small holder farmers into the rural market economy and increase returns from agricultural produces and other market related activities. About fifteen producers groups members are market their products in the supported markets and also are used by the MVIWATA network members who represent more than 50,000 household across the country. All Tanzanian farmers who represent over 80% of Tanzanian Population are directly benefited from the project.

The major objectives of the project comprises, among other things, improvement of the marketing infrastructures, support to agricultural market information systems and marketing conditions of smallholder farmers by encouraging local products and

sensitizing Government and civil society stakeholders to the importance of agricultural marketing issues.

LVIA is also a MVIWATA partner organization working in Dodoma region. Which support MVIWATA members in sesame production and Marketing with the purpose of improving the livelihoods of poor rural households in Dodoma Region through promotion of sesame production and marketing to Increase income earnings of smallholder producers through better market opportunities for sesame sub-sector, use and production of quality declared sesame seeds, adoption of SCAT techniques that contribute to reinforcement of the civil society in Dodoma Rural areas and strengthening of institutional and lobbying capacities of producers and farmers organizations. The aim is to help farmers to produce what is demanded and not sell what is produced. This project also facilitates capacity building, organization of meetings and workshops, farmers exchange visit, AIDS-HIV prevention campaigns and resources management.

10.0 MVIWATA'S APPROACH TO AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

One of MVIWATA's key institutional innovations involves forming a network of farmers and groups in order to create fora for communication, information exchange and sharing experiences. MVIWATA uses a bottom-up participatory approach in which farmers fully participate in designing and implementing innovative technologies and approaches for enhanced agricultural productivity. The methods used include community meetings and open group discussions to reflect on the situation of farmers, reveal their challenges, inventory farmers' own capabilities, identify constraints and decide on actions that can be taken. MVIWATA therefore builds up farmers' capacities to recognize their own capabilities and identify solutions within their own means. In this way MVIWATA strengthens local farmers' groups and networks by motivating self-reliance attitudes.

MVIWATA trains farmers on how to join together in order to be in a better position to decide which development programmes they themselves can initiate in the fight against rural poverty. The organization establishes farmers' groups and networks to help farmers solve socioeconomic problems without waiting for conditioned grants or gifts from donors. With regard to agricultural R&D, two sides are always emphasized simultaneously: in marketing terms it is important to have at least a potential market for a new product or process; and in productive terms, relevant technologies are required (this may mean generating new scientific and technological information, or just using adaptive research and dissemination). Through the initiatives of MVIWATA and its

partners, farmers' groups carry out income-generating activities such as: SACCOs, inputs supply, vegetable and fruit production/processing, raising dairy livestock, producing tree seedlings etc.

11.0 RESULTS OF MVIWATA'S ROLE IN AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

The results achieved by MVIWATA are evident in at least three areas. Firstly, farmers' knowledge is recognized as valuable and important information that is readily available, the effective use and incorporation of this information into improved technologies requires close interaction between researchers, extension staff, and farmers themselves. Secondly, it is becoming increasingly clear that institutional change is required for FOs to be positioned in such a way that they become meaningful representatives. Thirdly, farmers' groups have become deeply involved in facilitating the improvement of smallholder's livelihoods through income-generating activities for which innovation and hence knowledge is required (MVIWATA functions as the knowledge broker).

11.1 The Farmer's Voice

Farmers in MVIWATA farmers' groups are beginning to realize the need to raise their collective voice, as well as the importance of group work and collective action to improve their socioeconomic conditions. In MVIWATA's operating areas, farmers have become confident in addressing their problems and are involved in village and ward development committees. MVIWATA has representatives on steering committees and

boards, and farmers have been involved in marketing board committees. The strengthening of local farmers' groups and networks has also enabled farmers to strongly interact with extension staff. Farmers in these areas have generally improved their ability to initiate their own development projects and take responsibility for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

11.2 Income Generation

Some of the farmers who have joined MVIWATA have improved their livelihoods, including their income-generating activities. On the other hand it is also realized that farmers often identify more urgent obstacles than technology development and dissemination (e.g. input access). The fact that MVIWATA's involvement in some situations does not appear to have an immediate impact on farmers' economic performance sometimes forms an obstacle to mobilizing support for agricultural innovation development programmes.

11.3 Valuing Indigenous Knowledge and Adoption of improved Practices

MVIWATA also emphasizes attitude and perception changes that aim to improve the value of farmers' indigenous technical knowledge and take advantage of such know-how in adapting new technologies. MVIWATA encourages formal research to improve indigenous knowledge already practiced by farmers in order to make agriculture more rewarding. In this context, developing new products and processes through innovation focuses on the needs of the clients, placing particular emphasis on user participation in

decision-making and evaluation of innovative technologies. Some agricultural innovations that have recently been adopted by MVIWATA farmers' groups include the replacement of conventional cultivation systems involving frequent ploughing and tillage to 'conservation agriculture'. For example on the slopes of the Uluguru Mountain in the Morogoro Region, farmers have adopted improved soil conservation measures (such as terracing and contour band farming, row cropping across the slope and agro-forestry practices), as well as zero and rotational grazing. They have also introduced new crops such as tomatoes, Irish potatoes, and sunflowers, and have dug water distribution canals for better management of irrigated agriculture. In the drought-prone Dodoma Region, farmers have adopted techniques such as rainwater harvesting and agro-forestry, and are addressing soil fertility issues by leaving crop residues in the field and incorporating them into the soil to encourage nutrient recycling. In many areas farmers are successfully applying these improved technologies and have significantly improved their income levels.

11.4 Dissemination of Farmers' Knowledge and Experiences

MVIWATA plays an important role in facilitating the exchange of farmers' practical and successful experiences, including the dissemination of farmers' best practices through written materials, radio programmes and newsletters;

this includes work on technologies as well as on the management of dynamic groups.

MVIWATA has several mechanisms for disseminating innovations, including:

- its own radio programme called '*Ijue Mviwata*' and various television

programmes;

- Booklets that document best practices;
- Quarterly newsletter on technology dissemination '*Pambazuko sauti ya wakulima*';
- training workshops that are held regularly to train farmers' leaders and trainers;
- local network meetings to discuss new information useful to farmers; and
- exchange visits during which farmers share their knowledge and experiences.

These study tours expose farmers to different environments and sources of knowledge, while also allowing them to learn new technologies through interaction with other farmers who already practice these methods.

12.0 CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES FOR MVIWATA

Farmers united in MVIWATA have tried to ensure an effective representation of their interests. However, both MVIWATA and the majority of its members are facing a wide range of challenges and bottlenecks that hinder agricultural technological innovation. At the national level the gap between resources and ambitions results in an ongoing discussion by the MVIWATA steering committee on what should be the main priorities in assisting member farmers and groups. On the one hand, poor communication infrastructure for the farmer-to-farmer dissemination of information is hindering innovation development and trained network promoters often fail to reach the target farmers in a timely manner. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient market capacity to absorb increased supply is also a major challenge.

The lack of adequate communication facilities and appropriate markets has contributed to failures in adapting and implementing otherwise relevant agricultural innovations. In areas with intensive agriculture, farmers often point to the poor quality and the lack of timeliness (of chemical input supplies) as important reasons for slow adoption. Some farmers have misconceptions about the role of MVIWATA, confusing the services supplied by the network and the economic activities of the farmers' groups. Some farmers join local networks with a perception of obtaining loans or grants from the government or NGOs, rather than gaining knowledge, information and experience from extension service providers and/or other farmers. However, MVIWATA does not provide funds to farmers, it only facilitates farmers' capacities to influence research and extension services providers, and provides access to training opportunities.

Group dynamics and leadership are sometimes also considerable barriers to innovation development and adoption. Some leaders of farmers' groups and networks are insufficiently competent to coordinate the agreed activities. Many farmers' groups and networks fail to achieve their goals due to the lack of coordination and, out of frustration; farmers then frequently decide to elect new leaders. Under such circumstances, it becomes difficult to make any real progress in technology transfer and adaptation. Another challenge for small-scale farmers is the introduction of market liberalization, which leads to competition between producers in terms of the quality of farm products. The lack of financial resources to run a small business is a frequent constraint, particularly in combination with the lack of adequate skills and knowledge.

SACCOs often do not save sufficient funds to meet the demand for seasonal loans and agricultural credit.

13.0 AGRICULTURAL CHALLENGES FACED BY MVIWATA

Limited access to micro-finance: Agricultural credit is essential for growth and competitiveness. Other financial services such as saving schemes (SACCOS) rural banking project and cereal banks initiated by MVIWATA are also helpful. There is equity and economic arguments for subsidies, so service provision cannot be left to the private sector alone the government should find a way on supporting those initiatives.

Greater access to and control of knowledge: Small producers and their organizations (MVIWATA) need appropriate technical and financial assistance and training, based on research relevant to their needs. This should cover the development of processing activities and the challenging task of producing export-quality goods. Example in Tanga (Lushoto) and Iringa regions apples are produced in large quantities but in most supermarkets and mini supermarkets in Tanzania apples imported from South Africa and other countries.

Achieving scale and valued-added: Small producers can only survive in more open markets if they acquire 'critical economic mass', and this means developing associative forms of economic activity, covering joint purchasing of inputs, processing and marketing. The state's role is to actively stimulate these organizations through education, advice, financial support and by providing a favorable legislative and fiscal framework.

14.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

MVIWATA farmers are optimistic about their future economic prospects in the long run because of a (world -wide) growing urban population and increasing standard of living, which is favorable for agricultural procedure in a country like Tanzania. These developments means that there is a growing demand among farmers for an organization that can defend their right and interest, render services and create income generating opportunities, and which can offer them a forum to share information. The sustainability of the social and political changes that Tanzania adopted during the past two decades can only be achieved if further growth and development of strong farmer the organizations Could be put in place. To date Government policy plans show a growing awareness of the role NGO's such a as MVIWATA have to play in developing the rural economy.

From this study a number which lessons about the structure and functioning of umbrella farmer organization were derived. These include the following:

- MVIWATA as the farmer's voice helped the farmers to obtain quantitative proof of the economic viability of their productive activities. It is also improved their communication skills and ability by participating in farmer-to-farmer dissemination workshops and exchange visit.
- The effective use and incorporation of the available information into improved technologies requires close interaction between researchers, extension staff and

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