



Cheese and Yoghurt Project Mambo Mee Women's Group

December 2010

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Preparation:

The Project preparation was developed within a short time period. This required a lot of cooperation and organisation from the owners of Mambo View Point with the two presenters of the course.

The main requirements were:

- Selection of participants. The focus was to be on women participants because we believed that women would be more likely to use extra income deriving from the course for the purpose of improving the health, nutrition and education of their children.
- Availability of kitchen for production. This proved to be vital. MVP provided a classroom for instruction (The India House), and kitchen facilities for the production of fresh cheese and yoghurt. Since no other venue exists in the vicinity of the village, the course would not have taken place but for the generosity of MVP.
- Procumbent of equipment. Some equipment was brought from Switzerland (thermometers, sieves, tea towels). Some was purchased in Dar es Salaam (Bowels) and some at the Lushoto market (thermos flasks) and some was provided by MVP (pans, blankets, stirrers, cutlery, grater).
- Investigation of quantity and quality of milk. It proved impossible to procure a milk quality control mechanism. See below for future risks.
- Investigation of local availability of yoghurt cultures, flavours etc. We were able to procure two types of base culture for the production of culture in Dar es Salaam.



Course:

The ten-day workshop took place with seven women in attendance. The aims of the first day were to get to know each other, how many cows each women had (all had one cow), how much milk the cow gave each day (on average 2 litres), and what steps they took to protect milk quality (the key steps involved were discussed at length). The women were highly motivated from the beginning because it was clear that a market for their products already existed. MVP had committed to buying product from the women – provided the quality was up to standard for MVP guests. The emphasis on quality from the very



beginning was important because it gave a clear message that the way to success (financial and otherwise) was based on quality of the milk, the milking process, and thereafter, the quality of the production process.

It was agreed that we would visit all cows during milking time to observe the milking process and to gain an understanding of the issues surrounding feeding and caring for the cows.

Visiting the Cows

The inspection of the cows took place over the following two days. The following was revealed:

- The cows remained in the stable and were not permitted to graze anywhere outside.
- Milking hygiene was of a high standard,
- The cows were fed a low nutrition grass (elephant grass) or banana tree leaves, resulting in an average daily milk of 2 litres.
- The cows were given one bucket of water each evening – too little and the women were asked to give the cows at least three buckets per day.



The things that went well:

The selection of the women participants was a fundamental ingredient in the success of the workshop. The women were chosen on the basis of willingness to get along well with each other, have a certain independence or self-esteem, and be motivated to learn.

As instructors, we found it very important to come with an open mind, and able to adapt to the conditions as given. We came with clear goals but the path to achieving them was to be explored as we went. We had to continually adapt to local conditions (for example, the availability of local tools of production) and it was often necessary to improvise. This required some experimentation on our part, which happily was mostly successful .



All participants and ourselves were able to give a generous amount of time to the project. This proved especially important in the initial phase as it allowed the women not only to learn the processes of cheese and yoghurt making, but also gave them time to get to know each other and work out how to function well as a team.

The women were, right from the beginning, enthused by PRACTICAL learning. After one initial theory session, the rest of the workshop was practically based. The women responded to this with great enthusiasm and very quickly learnt the processes. Having a real product

(fresh cheese) that they themselves liked and which was highly complimented by the instructors, and the Lodge, reinforced their motivation to learn.

The women continually showed initiative and a willingness to develop their own systems of working independently of the instructors. From the beginning on, they understood that working with absolute hygiene was critical and were enthusiastic to work at an optimal level. This did not diminish over time. This demonstrated that they felt empowered to make the high quality products, and were confident that they were respected in showing initiative.

Towards the end of the workshop, the women met and decided that they were not earning enough for the number of hours that they were present as a group. We were able to methodically work through the issues with them and establish a more efficient work system, thus drastically cutting the number of hours they needed to attend as a group. This process demonstrated their ability to create realistic goals. It further demonstrated that their concerns were respected, and that subsequently the women were willing to adapt to become more efficient. Importantly the women remained empowered to make their own decisions for their own benefit.



The on-going co-operation and mutual trust between MVP and ourselves was critical to the success of the workshop. We, as instructors, were given every freedom to develop the workshop as we felt necessary. We too felt empowered!

As “wasungu” (white people) used to an entirely different work culture, it was important to have the following values and attitudes:

- To show respect for and interest in the women’s living conditions.
- To empower the women in such a way that they would work independently beyond the workshop.
- To be aware of changing group dynamics.
- To be well-prepared, both mentally and practically.
- To be able to anticipate difficulties before they arise.
- To remain focused on goals and keep the workshop on track.
- To value quality product and be able to impart that to the workshop participants.
- To empower the participants to achieve their own solutions to problems as they arise.

Things that could have been better:

We would have liked to spend more time on the theory of what could go wrong. For example, how poor milk quality arises, sources of contamination of the yoghurt culture, how changes in temperature effect yoghurt development and the consequences that follow, and so on. We left a fact sheet in the hands of MVP so that should problems arise, they could be dealt with. However, this did not satisfy our goal of empowering the women’s group itself.

From the very beginning of the workshop, perhaps we could all have emphasized punctuality more. This would have placed more focus on the efficiency of the processes that the women were learning. However, the desire for efficiency was offset by our perception that it was important from the beginning that the women bond together as a group and they were given time to do that without the added pressure of needing to be very efficient at the beginning of the workshop.

Despite good intentions, and despite the obvious necessity, we failed to put an adequate milk-testing regime in place to ensure ongoing milk quality. Although this has not yet become an issue, it is desirable to anticipate future problems with milk quality. This involves simple tests which do not need sophisticated equipment. Hopefully we can set up a fail-safe system for milk quality next time.

Some general comments:

Our goal as instructors was to improve the lives of the participants, and especially their children, by making it possible for the women to receive an income by developing high quality milk products. We hope that, as a result of this income, the children will have better nutrition, better schooling, and healthier living conditions as a result of the increased income the women can now enjoy. We also hope that women's work will be valued more highly as a result of their endeavours. We are uncertain of any benefits for the wider community but can well imagine there may be some at this level as well.



We remain uncertain as to what might be our next meaningful contribution to the MamboMee Women's Group and/or the village of Mambo itself. Time will disclose the true impact of the workshop and perhaps the potential for changing consumption patterns (yoghurt instead of soda), and distribution of product (yoghurt into schools). Also future workshops may develop new milk products (cheese) and new packaging that will facilitate distribution into new markets. We remain open to possibilities.



*Note of MamboViewPoint:
Besides the success of the products, like the yoghurt which is highly praised by the MVP guests, it appeared the cows give twice as much milk because Julian discovered the cows did not get enough water.*