

Thursday, Serenje (4<sup>th</sup> July, 2024)



### **CEJ EMPOWERS SERENJE SAVINGS GROUPS WITH BUSINESS SEED GRANTS**

Government has paid tribute to the Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) for empowering 8 Savings Groups with Business Seed Grants in Serenje District, Central Province.

Serenje District Commissioner Paul Masuwa said the Government takes pride in witnessing initiatives aimed at fostering economic empowerment and financial inclusion within the community.

Mr Masuwa said financial inclusion is a crucial instrument for improving the living conditions of people from excluded groups, which, in turn, promotes their economic empowerment.

He said the Savings Group Support Program addresses a critical need in the community by providing essential capital to savings groups.

The Senior Government Official said access to capital is often a significant barrier for small business ventures and income-generating activities.

"By empowering the community with financial resources and training, CEJ is taking a significant step toward reducing poverty and improving living standards. The program's comprehensive approach includes continuous training to enhance financial literacy and business management skills. Regular monitoring and evaluation will ensure effective utilization of funds and measure positive impacts on livelihoods," he said.

Mr Masuwa said the anticipated outcomes will see increased financial inclusion as Savings groups will be gaining access to essential capital and engaging with formal financial systems.

"We will see enhanced entrepreneurship and business growth, improved household incomes and livelihoods. The disbursement of support loans to each of the 8 savings groups in Serenje lays a solid foundation for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. Your commitment to uplifting socio-economic status and promoting sustainable development is commendable as it compliments Government efforts in alleviating poverty," he said.

Meanwhile, Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) Executive Director Maggie Mwape said the exercise was made possible because of the generous support of Bread for the World.

"This financial assistance represents an investment in the dreams and aspirations of our community members. These groups, comprised of low-income earners, have demonstrated remarkable dedication to improving their lives. In less than three months of establishing these self-led village banks, they have collectively saved over ZMW 40,000. Their hard work inspires us to bolster their group businesses through this grant," she said.

She said the CEJ Savings Group Loans Support Program operates as a community revolving fund.

"After the groups repay the loan, the funds will not return to CEJ; instead, they will be reinvested in another community, creating a sustainable cycle of empowerment and growth. We initiated this successful program in Sinazongwe, witnessing groups evolve into business owners, fostering economic resilience and community development. Today's empowered savings groups exemplify what determination and collective action can achieve. They have embraced the opportunity to save, manage, and grow their finances, demonstrating the transformative power of community-driven efforts," he said.

And Serenje Council Secretary Stan Mwanakayaya urged CEJ to roll out the empowerment exercise to more communities in the district.

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