



Success Story

Mr. Joseph Lopem

AGENT OF CHANGE

“The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land.” Deuteronomy 28:8

Holy Trinity Peace Village in Kuron has been working with the Toposa people since 2000. They are a mainly pastoralist ethnic group. However, with patience and constant contact at the grassroots level, HTPVK staff have been able to impact the Toposa in the area of food production and security. Through animal traction, introduction of a new plowing hoe, inputs of seeds and tools, assistance with bee keeping and many workshops and trainings, the Toposa people are beginning to appreciate the need for agricultural activities.

Lopem Joseph was born in Machia Village near Kapoeta and moved to this area with his mother and father when he was young. His father has passed but his mother is still active and known as a very hard worker. He is about 38 years old now. He has two wives and 7 boys. He wants to put these children in school but has not done so yet due to lack of funds. Most of his income is currently being used for subsistence farming. He has cows, goats and raises chickens which he sells to HTPVK. He does eat chicken but they are better to sell and get the money at the moment. His sorghum fields have all failed this year due to lack of rain.



Figure 1 Joseph Lopem 2nd from left, receives his loan from the CMSG committee

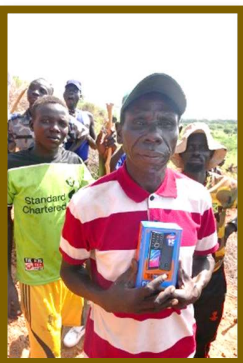


Figure 2 A satisfied customer with his first cell phone

Mr. Joseph was the first member of CMSG to receive a loan, invest the money in phones, sell the phones at a profit and then return the original load with 10% interest. He paid back the 33,000 SSP on time and with full interest. Mr. Lopem was the first to pay back the loan. This was a great witness to the other two. One other has paid back with his interest in full. Now it is only one remaining who is still in arrears over repayment as of 22.November.2022.

Mr. Joseph’s strategy was as follows: he purchased one phone at 1,400 KsH or about 10,000 SSP. He then barter that phone for one goat. The goat is worth 20,000 SSP. (July.2022) This means a 100% profit. That same goat sold in Kapoeta would make about 35,000 SSP. (Previously, Mr. Lopem and others would take their goats to Kapoeta but the problem is transportation and then extra costs like food and room while in Kapoeta. He does have family in Kapoeta who can help him.) He also purchased 13 plastic chairs Cost of each chair is between 600 and 850 KsH or the equivalent of one goat.

I was looking at other business people. I thought to myself, “Why can’t I do that? I feel I should be able to do that too. I knew there were people who wanted phones in my community. I decided to give that a try. It worked, Praise God!”

Mr. Lopem comments: *I have spoken with the business people of Napil and they gave me some suggestions. With the profits I have made I will purchase household supplies, food, and maybe buy more items for sale. With this profit and if I continue to do like this, I can afford to feed my family AND send the children to school. Already, my oldest boy is showing interest in what I am doing. He is active in plowing and asking questions about how I bought these things and sold them. He is sharp and my prayer is that he will become sort of like a partner to me.*

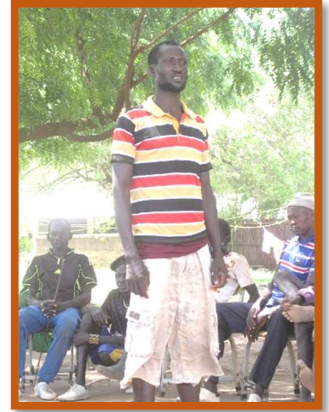


Figure 3 Mr. Lopem addresses his fellow villagers

The challenge for me is that in Kapoeta I have no problem. It is only if I go outside like to Kenya, where they speak Kiswahili. I have no wider knowledge of these people and how they do business. They could cheat me easily. I have no experience in these places. I am afraid to go alone outside. The additional transport costs would eat some of my profits. This time I got free transport from HTPVK due to the Exposure Trip.

CMSG meetings are a good forum to share the experiences of those who have taken loans. Others can learn from their knowledge and share how they used the loan. Many of the members are afraid to take the loan as they don't have any experience doing this. They are reluctant to try because they think they will fail. They prefer to wait.

There is an attitude change in Mr. Lopem as he comments: *"We now see ourselves not only as Pastoralists but also as Agriculturalists. And those in the CMSG also see themselves as potentially business traders."*

(Sources: Interview with Mr. Joseph Lopem. Translation - Mr. Juma Chelimo, HTPVK Agriculture Officer. In July.2022. edited/produced by Gabe Hurrish, Maryknoll Lay Missioner. Published on 22.November.2022 All photos property of HTPVK)