

## **Final Report, August 2022**

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### **Overview:**

I spent ten weeks in Harare, Zimbabwe, working with Women Advocacy Project (WAP) from May 21<sup>st</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022. I got this opportunity to work with WAP through the Advocacy Project (AP), which sends peace fellows every summer to its partner organizations to assist with their initiatives. WAP works on an incoming generating project to empower young girls and women in three different communities of Harare. The desired outcome for WAP is to abolish early marriage practices and increase the education attainment rate of young girls.

Since I am passionate about advocating for women's education and entrepreneurship, this project was a great opportunity for me to understand what it is like to work on the ground in a grassroots project that advocates for women's empowerment. Moreover, WAP's focus on economic empowerment allowed me to apply the skills and knowledge I learned from my business background to strengthen their project and make it more efficient.

Overall, the summer was rewarding in every measure. We were able to accomplish many tangible goals amidst various unforeseen challenges. I believe that I have grown personally and professionally from this experience. In addition, the knowledge I have gained this summer will help me be more prepared when I open my projects focusing on women's education and entrepreneurship once I graduate.

Below are the accounts of my goals, brief insights into the accomplishments (I have provided detailed accounts on many of these points in my interim report), and reflections on skills and lessons I learned.

### **Main goals:**

Before leaving for my fellowship, WAP, AP, and I had many conversations outlining what needed to be accomplished for the summer. Our primary goal for the fellowship was to strengthen WAP's incoming generating project by finding ways to cut the cost of production, increase efficiency, and decrease the use of plastic in their production. To summarize, we were going to focus on making WAP's project that produces and sells liquid dish soap into a sustainable business that can be a self-sufficient in near future.

In addition, another primary goal for my summer was to gather preliminary data for the education fund that AP is working towards. This education fund will be helping girls complete their secondary level education starting next year. This goal entails gathering information for potential beneficiaries, such as their profiles, school fees, class levels, and recognizing those who require assistance.

I am happy to write that I was able to accomplish my primary goals in many ways. By the end of the summer, production cost was reduced in many areas of the project, and production

efficiency was increased. In addition, the soap facility was entirely equipped with solar energy as well. I also helped WAP establish a new recycling option that reduces the use of plastic in their production, which leads them into becoming more sustainable. As of right now, we have successfully equipped and facilitated the soap factory to run smoothly and produce every month.

Similarly, for my second primary goal of gathering information for the education fund, I handed over to AP a complete file that included all the required information for the education fund at the end of the summer.

The next section will give more insight into how these goals were accomplished and what works were performed.

### **Brief insights into what I accomplished this summer:**

One of the first things I did when I arrived in Harare was organized my goals based on priorities. I assigned each week to have themes according to my goals. For example: having a new WAP soap facility up and running was a big priority; therefore, I assigned weeks one and two to tackle that goal. Likewise, every week had a theme based on goals, urgency, and importance. Doing this helped me stay organized and keep track of progress made on each of the goals.

As mentioned earlier, most of the things I listed below were explained in my interim report in detail. Therefore, I will keep the information for some of the points very brief. Please refer to my interim report if you would like to read more about them.

- 1) Set up the new facility or the soap project:** This was an important goal for my summer. One of the first steps for WAP to be a self-sufficient operating business was to have a facility that caters to its production need. When I completed my summer, this new facility was completely equipped with solar energy. Aside from solar energy, the facility had water, transportation, and other basic infrastructures needed for production. By mid-June, the facility had already started producing 4,000 bottles of soaps.





- 2) **Acquired vehicle donation for WAP:** This was an unexpected accomplishment that I am very proud of. I wrote an application to receive a car donation from the Swiss Ambassador of Harare, who was looking to donate his vehicle to a non-profit organization. Though the competition was tough, we were chosen as the recipients of the car. This car will help WAP to be more efficient with their time and production. Before this donation, WAP had constantly struggled with transportation breakdowns and interruptions.



- 3) **Organized WAP's financial management system:** As reported in the interim report, I helped WAP enhance its financial management process by creating files and sorting its financial activities into different categories. While doing this, I wanted to ensure the files I created were user-friendly and manageable by WAP leaders and beneficiaries. In addition, I trained them to use these files and educated them on how to maintain them.





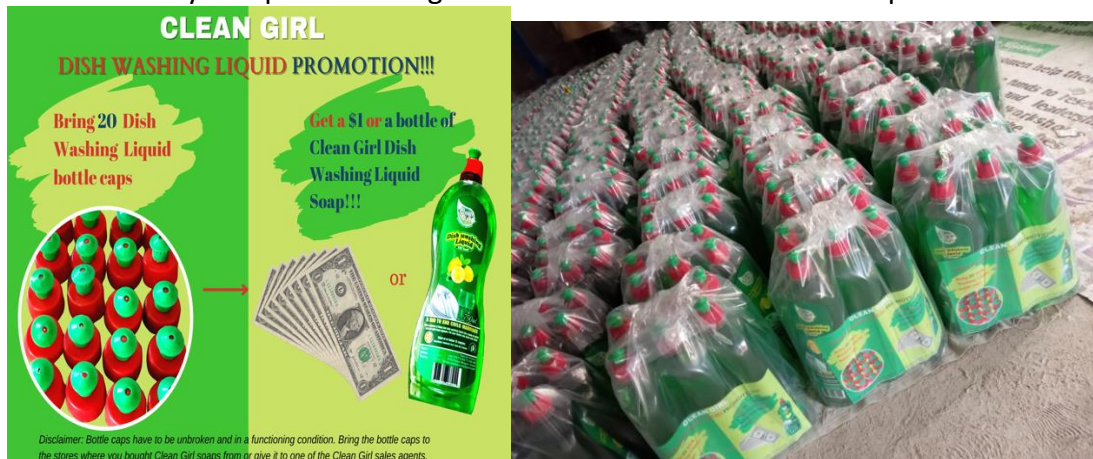
**4) Cutting the cost of production and increasing production efficiency:** I accomplished this goal in the following ways:

- **Reducing the cost of soap labels by half:** I was able to reduce the price of acquiring dish liquid soap labels by half by finding a new vendor who supplied label stickers at a lower price. In addition, since this new vendor provided pre-cut stickers (the old vendor supplied large sheets of stickers that needed to be cut individually before sticking them onto each bottle), it also increased time efficiency in the production.
- **New and improved case packaging:** This summer, I also helped WAP find a vendor that supplied cheaper case packaging that packed 6000 bottles for \$100. Their old vendor supplied packaging that packed 4000 bottles for every \$100. Therefore, there was a saving of 2000 bottles packaging. In addition, the older packaging required electricity in packing for shrinking purposes which caused delays and issues when there were power cuts. But the new packaging eliminates the need for electricity entirely from the process and is more user-friendly. This was a significant achievement for this summer towards cutting costs and increasing production efficiency.





- 5) **Recycled and reduced the use of plastic in production:** It was essential to find a way to be more sustainable and reduce the use of plastic in production. Doing so would help WAP lower its costs, be more environmentally friendly, and expand its funding scope. After consulting and much trying, I found a way to recycle and reuse the caps used in the soap bottles. I created a promotional flyer that asks customers to turn in 20 reusable soap bottle caps to WAP in exchange for \$1 or a bottle of soap for free. We printed 500 copies of the flyer, put them in each case of the soaps, and distributed them to the markets in July. I hope WAP will get the feedback and results of the promotion soon.



- 6) **Conducted an impact assessment survey:** To have a better understanding about what is working and what needs improvement in WAP's efforts to serve its beneficiaries, I conducted an impact assessment survey in the three communities it serves. The study result was shared with WAP, and this information served as a vital tool while planning for WAP's future goals.





- 7) **Gathered information for the education fund:** Since this was one of my primary goals, I ensured that, throughout the summer, I kept collecting information and data for the education fund. By the end of the summer, I was able to provide a detailed file that answered all queries and logistics information that will supplement AP and WAP to initiate the education fund starting next year.
- 8) **Organized an official opening ceremony of the WAP soap facility:** Before leaving Zimbabwe, I wanted to recognize our efforts for the summer to establish the new soap facility and give an opportunity to all 60-plus beneficiaries to visit the facility. So, with the help of AP and WAP, I organized a small opening ceremony for the facility. This celebration consisted of cutting cakes to recognize the opening of the facility, dancing and talent competition between beneficiaries for fun, guest community leaders who came to encourage the beneficiaries, and a local news journalist that covered the WAP celebration. Overall, this was a successful event that marked a big achievement in WAP's journey to be self-sufficient and a long-term business. I think, more than anything, this celebration validated for the beneficiaries that WAP is there to stay for a long time to come and continue serving them.



- 9) **Published blogs:** I have produced ten blogs documenting my journey in Zimbabwe. Here is the link to them: [Dawa Sherpa Blogs](#). Blogging was a great way to tell my stories and journal what was happening.

These are the main achievements for the summer. In addition to the lists above, there were many moments of small accomplishments and efforts that made my time in Zimbabwe very fruitful.

**Professional and Personal Reflection:**

Following were the skills and lessons I learned by the end of the summer. I will definitely utilize these learnings in my future projects.

- I recognized that I couldn't do everything in just two months. No matter how much you want to solve all the issues an organization has, it is simply not possible to tackle all of them in such a short period. Therefore, sometimes you have to make a hard decision to prioritize certain issues over others and be realistic about what is possible. It's better to say "No" than to give false expectations.
- I learned that every interaction is an opportunity to attract new customers. Whether going for research or just scouting around for a new vendor, it's always good to promote your product and give them a sample to try. Sometimes, these can lead to getting a new customer base.
- It's important to celebrate every small achievement while working through tough projects.
- Research and behind the scene works are critical. It's not always about the jobs that generate measurable results. Doing due diligence, research, talking to people, and scouting for new vendors are very important works that can lead to more efficiency and improvement.
- Teamwork is everything. Especially in a work where the budget is tight, you have to find people who are in it for the right reason. It is hard to encourage someone to put in extra effort if they are not passionate about the cause and see the project only as a job.
- Maintaining relationships with partners who support your efforts and staying transparent with them is crucial to sustaining the project long-term.
- Sometimes setbacks and failures can lead to finding new ways that are better than the old process. Therefore, every setback can be an opportunity to explore new ideas, and look for improvements.
- The concept of time management and work ethics are very important things to recognize while working in a different country. Not everyone will have the same understanding or discipline of time management and work ethics. This can be a

significant setback sometimes. For me, personally, more than any other challenges, this was the toughest one to deal with.

- Being adaptable is very important. During my time in Zimbabwe, I went through many challenges, such as transportation breakdown, power cuts, and water shortages. This taught me that being adaptable, thinking on my feet, and being agile and flexible to pivot your strategies to serve the situation better are essential skills to have.

Overall, this summer was an important summer for me personally and professionally. I met many wonderful young girls whose stories resonated with me. Coming from Nepal, some of the issues they were dealing with were similar to what I went through while growing up. I am thankful for the friendships I was able to build with them as well. Professionally, this project marked as my first women empowerment project. I learned and gained tremendously important skills and lessons that I am very thankful for.