



RUTH ELINEEMA

Ruth Elineema, Co-Founder
of Gongali Model Company

INNOVATION FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND BEYOND

The Gongali Nanofilter initiative provides women with employment opportunities as well as safe and clean water

Innovations that expand opportunities for women to start a business can improve their access to resources and build their self-determination to succeed and take on new roles in the community – leading to greater economic security for them and their families.

Yet for many women in Tanzania, accessing business finance in the form of credit or a loan is fraught with barriers. Minimal savings and restricted access to finance, refusal by husbands and family to support loans, and limited self-confidence all make it difficult,

if not impossible, for women to turn their ideas into action.

By providing funding to businesses looking to solve community water and sanitation challenges, HDIF is supporting women entrepreneurs like Ruth Elineema through funding which helps them take their innovative ideas to market.

As co-founder of the Gongali Model Company, Ruth works alongside her husband Dr Askwar Hilonga, designer and promoter of the award-winning Nanofilter, to bring a sustainable drinking water supply to

“You don’t necessarily need to do everything yourself, join hands with others through technology or innovation.”
Ruth Elineema

communities across the Arusha region of Northern Tanzania. As well as selling the low-cost filter systems to individual households, the company also leases them to third parties who in turn sell purified drinking water to their communities. So far, Gongali has established 30 Nanofilter stations, with HDIF providing funding for an additional one hundred. All the entrepreneurs running the stations are women, often from poor backgrounds with little or no education. Gongali is providing them business skills and training as well as access to safe and clean water for them and their children.

Striving for gender equality is important to the company – almost 50 per cent of Gongali's core staff are women. To date, the Gongali Nanofilter initiative has provided 130 women and girls with employment and business opportunities, and provided 5,180 women and girls with safe and clean water services.

The same things that led Ruth's own journey from modest beginnings to CEO of a successful business – the inspiration she took from her mother, her sadness as she watched friends give up their dreams and a determination to succeed – drive her

passion for nurturing other women's ambitions. To tackle what she sees as the limitations that some women place upon themselves that can lead to low performance, Ruth plans to develop training, performance-based evaluations and other activities with the station attendants that develop their confidence and uncover their potential.

HDIF and the Gongali Model Company

HDIF is exploring how innovations may differentially impact the lives of girls and women, how gender dynamics affect innovation, and what may be successful approaches to addressing these challenges. As one of HDIF's current 37 grantees, Gongali demonstrates how increased competency and access to entrepreneurship opportunities through non-traditional means can transform the lives of girls and women and their families. The Nanofilter was designed by Dr Hilonga from the Nelson Mandela Institute of Science and Technology. The filter, that is locally manufactured and customised to local needs, selectively removes any water contaminant and produces ten litres/hour of clean and safe water.

"So many appropriate technologies solve women's problems and need women to take them up! Do not kill your passion, work on it. We are needed."

Ruth Elineema

About HDIF

The Human Development Innovation Fund (HDIF) is a £39m United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) innovation programme in Tanzania managed by a Palladium-led consortium with KPMG, Newcastle University (EG West Centre), Loughborough University (WEDC), and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

HDIF seeks to accelerate the experimentation, commercialisation, and diffusion of innovations in health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

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