

May 28th, 2019



Cenia: Keeping Budadidi Fashion Forward

Life before WMI

Cenia only had one sewing machine before her WMI loan. Now she has eight! She was only able to tailor clothes and could not create items, nor did she have funds for the necessary quality fabric to do so. As a member of the WMI loan program since 2010, the extra funds have enabled her to buy more materials, which has in turn brought in new customers and creative requests.

Business Background

Cenia learnt to sew at school here she honed her craft. She then travelled to Kampala where she stayed with her brother and worked for the first time on a sewing machine. Within three days she was an expert. After two years in employment, she returned to Budadidi and using her savings she bought her first sewing machine, which cost 200 shillings (0.053USD) at the time.

Shop Operations

Cenia generates business by running a reputable establishment. She ensures each garment is well crafted and word of mouth ensures new clients. Although there are other tailors in the area, they tend to specialize in either uniforms or Gomesi (the traditional Ugandan dress with high pointed shoulders). Cenia can design, create and fix everything. Customers mostly women and girls, have the choice to bring their own fabric or choose one of hers, however she finds most customers opt for the latter. At times she can be extremely busy but averages 5-6 clients per week who usually request for 1-3 outfits to be made. Roughly it takes about 3 days to finish an order once it has been put in but it depends on her backlog.

She employs one member of permanent staff. Namonia Sylvia has demonstrated 10 years of loyal service and the bond between them is clear. If Cenia is ill, she is able to leave the shop open in Sylvia's capable hands so that she does not lose out on business.

Community Impact

During our time, two young girls were working at the front of the shop. Cenia informed us that she also runs a training program for young girls. She began this practice in March 2018, and has successfully trained 17 girls over the one year period, many of whom have gone on to open their own shops in neighboring villages. She charges 500,000UGX (133USD) for the year, which she receives over 3 installments. So far there has been no issue with the payment plan she has set up for her students. She recognized this gap in the market because the only other option to for girls is to go to a nearby school for a 1800,000 UGX (478 USD) 2 year course on tailoring which is very expensive in comparison to her rates. Her students complete the course in half the time and at a more advanced skill level. This is down to her solely practical approach to learning, which is implemented, from the beginning. The girls first practice on cement package

paper until their skills are honed before moving onto real fabrics and thereby ensuring minimal mistakes are made.

Products and Supplies

Cenia makes dresses for women at 15,000 UGX (4 USD) per item and Uniforms at 3,000 UGX (1USD) per item. These prices include the cost of tailoring, labour, linings, buttons and zips only. She also makes the bags for the WMI graduation ceremonies, many tailors applied for the position but she recalls being selected and trusted with the responsibility. They make 260-280 bags every quarter year and make around 15-20 bags per day when commissioned to make them. No extra tailors are required to assist in this production. In relation to her supplies she cleverly buys her sewing machines at discounted rates from dying businesses that need money quickly. The sewing machines are still in perfectly good condition and are purchased at 350,000 UGX (93USD). Her fabrics are sourced from the capital Kampala in order to get the best quality material. She usually bulk buys around 80 to 100 pieces for 35,000UGX per 6 yards (9.3 USD) and then sells it for 40,000 per 6 yards (10.6 USD).

Biggest Business Challenges

The only current challenge facing her business at the moment is space for her training sessions. When she had 16 girls all training at the same time, 8 would come in the morning then the following 8 after lunch. The place was very cramped and although she was able to manage, it was far from ideal. Aside from this, she was proud to share that she does not have any issues with creditors, as items cannot be made on credit.

Goals and future plans

In the hopes of addressing her main business challenge, she is looking to buy a bigger space so that she can pursue her dream of opening a tailoring school. Here she would be able to manage all business operations from this base and would not have to pay the annual 500,000UGX rent fee. She estimates 30M UGX (7,980 USD) for the cost of buying land, construction and the purchasing of machinery and fabrics. Cenia is keen to start saving for this and believes saving 30,000 UGX (8 USD) a week will enable her to reach her goal.

Financial management and trainings

Currently there are no records in the shop of sales or expenses. Excess funds tend to go straight towards buying fabric or machinery therefore she would like help to keep track of her finances so that she can save effectively. She left us with the promise that she would start keeping tracks of her sales so we had something tangible to review.

Impact of WMI

Cenia did not have any children of her own but is now kept extremely busy looking after her elder sisters grandchildren and is able to feed them, cloth them and send them to school. Without the loan, she would not have the training school, an avenue through which she is able to pass on her knowledge.

A Day in the Life of Cenia (Every day is a work day)

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 5 am | Wake up, prays and takes care of her goats. |
| 6.30am | Goes to the shop to open up and organize. |
| 1pm | Eats at a local restaurant |
| 5pm | Finishes work |
| 6pm | Eats supper |
| 9pm | Goes to bed |



The front of Cenia's shop.



Cenia working on a garment.



Namonia Slyvia hard at work.



Cenia's two trainees.



From left: Milly (BWA Finance), Hilary(intern) , Cenia, trainee, Phyllis.



Cenia's and Slyvia with their wall of fabrics.



Cenia teaching a student.