



EMPOWERED BY COLLABORATION: THE STORY OF NOORPARAKUO

Noorparakuo Olomaaja Makko is a 66-year-old Maasai woman, a mother of five children, and a small shop owner living in Kirtalo village. Like many pastoralist women, her life has been shaped by hard work, resilience, and a deep desire to support her family. Married at the age of 18, and a co-wife, Noorparakuo was deeply involved in livestock keeping and contributed significantly to her household’s income.

However, for many years, Noorparakuo faced financial struggles. Without access to reliable income or capital, she could not meet her basic needs, let alone invest in a business. Life was a daily challenge, with no clear path forward.

That began to change on 12th March 2023, when Noorparakuo and a few of her neighbours, friends, and relatives came together to form a small VICOPA group called Ekenywa Group. The group initially consisted of just 6 women and 2 men but grew to 15 members. Through regular savings and small loans to each other, they built trust, unity, and a modest pool of capital.

In 2024, Ekenywa Group was introduced to Engishon Microfinance Limited. After receiving training in financial literacy and small business skills, the group qualified for a loan of 3 million TZS (USD \$1,200). Noorparakuo’s share was 373,500 TZS (USD \$150), which she used to register and open a small retail shop, her first formal business. “Before the Engishon loan, I struggled to meet my daily needs,” she says. “Now, I have a business that helps me buy food, cover small household costs, and live more comfortably.”

With her new income, Noorparakuo has gained stability and independence. Her retail shop has become her main source of income, allowing her to purchase items she could not afford before and reducing her daily stress. Noorparakuo is especially grateful for the training that came before the loan, saying “The business knowledge we gained gave us the confidence to use the loan wisely. I now understand how to manage and grow my shop.”

Today, Noorparakuo is a highly competent retailer and a symbol of hope for other women in her community. She encourages Engishon to empower other women through training and financial support. “I want Engishon to keep helping more women like me,” she tells us, “Because with just a little help, our lives can truly improve.” Noorparakuo’s journey out of poverty demonstrates that with the right tools and a strong support network, women like her are able to thrive and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

