



## Completion Report

ZAF-HAD-EMP-P04 Eastern South Africa  
Reporting Period: August 2017 – May 2018

### Women of South Africa

**Budget:** \$40,000 project – Fully funded – two-year project.

**Update:**

This project targeted entrepreneurial poor women, creating self-help trust groups with five women per group. These women had the desire to help themselves break the cycle of poverty but lacked the start-up capital to run their own small business. Our partners made this possible through an initial, small loan which enabled the women to work, earn a consistent income, provide for the needs of their household, establish savings and bring hope for entire families. The creation of local micro-enterprise initiatives is a business tool that promotes fair trade, income provision and economic empowerment. Our in-country implementing partners have established strong relationships within the communities in which they operate. Group rather than individual loans develops a support network for beginning businesses and improves the rate of return. Economic empowerment is a proven tool in community development that supports not only the individual but those in her community and family. This project has impressive results.

During this period our partners, who are going from strength to strength, distributed 2,228 first-time loans across their 31 branches. Entrust funds created 130 groups and the opportunity for 650 loans to be distributed across three branches. With each woman representing a household with an average five dependents, these 650 loans have helped 3,250 lives. Our partners report that the overall repayment rate across the three branches was an outstanding 98.2%. First-time loans supported businesses such as baking, catering, selling clothes, cosmetics and fruit and vegetables.

By growing rapidly to achieve economy of scale, year on year our partners are improving their overall ability to sustain their operations. Their current sustainability is at 75% based on income versus expenses, up from 66% in late 2016. Their shortfall in operating costs is covered by groups such as Entrust. A new mobile platform to bring efficiencies, save time in reporting and allow data to be accessed quickly and easily was trialled and was rolled out during this period to great effect.

Entrust CEO Richard Beaumont and Project Manager Jenny Crameri visited some loan recipients in May 2018. They met “Mary” whose husband died, leaving her with no income and a teenage daughter. She lived in a shack with no power or water. Her daughter stopped attending school. Our partners came along at the right time. Mary came up with



the idea to make and sell floor polish. With some support and business training, Mary was given her first loan to get started. That was 18 months ago and Mary has been selling the polish from door-to-door and through word of mouth, supported and encouraged by our partners. It has gone so well that Mary is considering making detergent to add to her start-up business. Mary has moved from the shack to a basic cement brick room – “the first room of my house”, she told us with a big smile! And my daughter is back at school!

Without the chance to “get ahead” financially, people like Mary are trapped in a hand-to-mouth existence or systemic poverty. Their options are to risk great debt by borrowing money from loan sharks at exorbitant rates or stay poor. Something as simple as good training, strong selection procedures and implementing methodology combined with a microloan enables sustainable business opportunities, builds dignity and hope, and breaks dependence on handouts.

**Mary and Entrust thank you for supporting the women of South Africa!**