

# WANAWAKE NA UYOGA TANZANIA (WUT)

Intensive program of health & economic empowerment of rural women through mushroom production in Tanzania.



## WANAWAKE NA UYOGA TANZANIA (WUT)

### INTENSIVE PROGRAM OF HEALTH & ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH MUSHROOM PRODUCTION IN TANZANIA.

Tanzania is endowed with a variety of wild mushrooms species with a mild tropical climate and optimum temperature for growing major varieties of mushroom, its population is approximately to **60 million**, more than **70%** of the population live in rural areas, where agriculture is the most source of employment. Agriculture contributes more than **26%** in Tanzania **GDP**.

It is believed that, women contribute more labor force in agricultural sector compared to men, although women constitute the highest labor force in the agricultural sector, they are faced with countless challenges such as shortage of arable land amongst women and continuous neglecting of responsibilities at home by men.

Due to the very reason that, women mostly take care of their families, economic and health empowerment of women through engaging in mushroom production which is a home based activity that requires a small piece of land and locally available materials, is the BIG deal. To empower a woman is to empower next generation.

Mushroom provides important nutrients, including selenium, potassium, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin, proteins and fiber. All together with a long history as a food source, mushrooms are important for their healing capacities and properties in traditional medicine.

**Figure1**

**Nutritional values:** Mushrooms contain all 22 amino acids required by humans. Mushrooms contain 40% protein 3% fat, and provide vitamins and minerals.

**Social values:** Just about anyone, including many with disabilities, can carry out mushroom farming. Mushroom farming is easier and more profitable in comparison to other cash crops and is an ideal additional income-generating activity because there is little work to be done in between the preparation phase and harvesting.

**Economic values:** The world market for mushroom industry is growing fast. Mushrooms are a high value product and can have added value by being dried, powdered, and packaged or canned. Mushroom production is also an avenue to self-employment.

**Environmental values:** after mushroom have been harvested, the leftover substrates becomes very good feed for animals. This is because the mushroom mycelia have broken down the substrate's cellulose into digestible proteins and amino acids. The leftover substrate can also be used as compost in the garden for the production of organic vegetables. Small-scale mushroom farming does not compete with agricultural land.

**Medicinal values:** Researchers have proven that mushrooms possess abundant pharmacological values. The consumption of mushrooms help ease symptoms of the following ailments: heart problems, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer, cholesterol, and kidney problems.

## **Mushroom Production Justification.**

Increased production of protein-rich and nutritious food products by unconventional methods could help meet the demand for protein by the growing world population. Mushrooms are one of the highest protein products per unit and provide a good aid against malnutrition. Most people in rural Tanzania follows a vegetarian diet because they could not afford meat, nutritious diets remain expensive, and out of reach for many.

In Tanzania, a substantial proportion of household expenditure is on food, and it is even high in poorest households. Consumption of unhealthy foods by children is on the rise as these are very often conveniently placed and affordably priced. Mushroom production provide the cheapest way to address nutritious issues to the poorest, because mushrooms can be produced on a small piece of land within a short period of time, and under small capital investment. Mushroom production can be done throughout a year which offers food security.

Women's involvement in mushroom production reduces workload, increases income, food security and uplifts their status in society since it can be done inside a house or an open access piece of land.

**Figure 2**

**Key Facts about Tanzania Nutritional status.**

**34% of children under 5 are stunted**

**Obesity in women increased from 5% in 2000 to 11% in 2016**

**Non-communicable diseases account for over one third of all deaths.**

**Nutritious diets remain expensive, and out of reach for many**

**Figure 3**

**Key facts about Traditional Agriculture**

**There is a decline in income of farmers in traditional agriculture. To ensure that the farmers get assured income year after year, there is a need for diversification in agriculture, that is, needs to cultivate different types of crops. One of the options is to grow mushrooms which can be done grown on straws and other agricultural wastes.**

**Unlike plants, mushroom in an indoor activity can be done throughout a year under controlled conditions.**

**Soil infertility and weather fluctuations are the major factors hindering traditional (subsistence) agriculture, but none of them affects mushroom production.**

## **WUT PROJECTS**

- a) Training women on the sustainable wild mushroom harvest.
- b) To analyze and documents edible wild mushroom varieties which are present in Tanzania.
- c) To give training on proper ways of wild mushroom processing.
- d) To sensitize more on health benefits of mushrooms.
- e) Training women in the localities on mushroom production.
- f) Setting up a pilot demonstration mushroom farm and solar dryer in rural areas.
- g) Assisting in setting up women mushroom grower cooperatives groups.
- h) Providing access to spawn and basic equipment required for growing mushrooms to the women mushroom grower cooperatives.
- i) Providing business and entrepreneurial skills to rural women.
- j) Marketing, branding and selling of both raw and processed mushroom products from the women mushroom grower cooperatives.
- k) Training government and private sector extension personnel in mushroom production.

## **WUT'S PARTNERS**

- a) UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM
- b) ENVIROCARE
- c) KINONDONI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
- d) KOICA