



MASSMART

GROUP UPDATE

## Massmart is focused on **developing rural women** in South Africa



Images: WDB & Mykel Nicolau

*Massmart supports the empowerment of women. Within its retail network, 44% of employees currently in management-level positions are women. It's Massmart's aim to grow this figure even further as well as seize the opportunities that exist to make a difference in the lives of women outside of its business.*

### **Over R2 million for rural women to start their own businesses**

Massmart focuses on creating income-producing opportunities for rural women, historically among the most marginalised in South African society. In 2007 Massmart established the Massmart - Women's Development Businesses (WDB) Rural Women's Development Fund with an initial donation of R1 million. WDB is a non-profit organisation that provides production loans to poor women in rural areas to start up new businesses or expand existing businesses. So far, the fund has assisted 3 092 women in Malelane and rural Mpumalanga, South Africa. The businesses these entrepreneurs are engaged in include the running of medium-scale farms; operating public phones; selling clothes; making and selling school uniforms and curtains; manufacturing steel

products such as basins, drums and three-legged pots, and selling fruit, vegetables, cellular airtime, snacks and more.

### **Finding community-based solutions that work**

Based on the success of the programme, Massmart made another R1 million donation in 2009. Importantly, Massmart has made further contributions of R118 800 and R114 000 to help subsidise a portion of the salaries paid to WDB field workers, called development assistants. These assistants process loan applications, follow up on repayments and offer support to the clients, most of whom are illiterate and have never handled significant amounts of money before.

Interestingly, the Massmart - WDB Rural Women's Development Fund

uses the Grameen bank group lending method, where collective responsibility means the women help pay back one another's loans. This community-minded approach works well, and with their profits these women have the funds to school their children, improve access to healthcare and boost the nutrition of their families. For many, this means eating three meals a day for the first time in their lives.

Continued support of the Massmart - WDB Rural Women's Development Fund is one of Massmart's most important social development goals.

Now as a member of the Walmart family, Massmart is part of a global R700 million drive to economically empower women all over the world. ■