



SUCCESS STORY

Small Loans Boost Small Business

Access to credit gives small businesses license to grow



Photo: Chemonisi/Laura Lantigue

Suzie Cici sells smoked fish at a market in Yei, Southern Sudan.

“I’ve learned that hard work will make you prosper,” said Cici. “I’ve bought a plot of land and built a house on it from the money I’ve earned after taking out a loan.”

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Suzie Cici, a single mother of four, is a true entrepreneur. She sells smoked fish at the market in Yei, Southern Sudan. With the help of loans from the USAID-financed Sudan Microfinance Institution (SUMI), Cici has managed to buy a plot of land and build a house for her family. She was even able to buy a car with her business proceeds — a difficult feat in post-war Sudan. She now plans to diversify her business and open up a restaurant. “Now I’m motivated to work hard,” says Cici, “because I’ve learned that hard work will make you prosper.”

SUMI has been an integral part of USAID’s effort to promote stability and foster economic recovery in Sudan as its people face the challenge of rebuilding their country after a 22-year civil war. The first financial institution to open its doors in post-war Southern Sudan, SUMI provides small loans of \$100–\$3,000 to small businesses, targeting historically disadvantaged groups including rural communities, women, and those displaced by war.

SUMI is well on its way to becoming an independent business. With an all-Sudanese staff, CEO, and board of directors, it now has four branch locations and an overall repayment rate of over 95 percent — an extraordinary accomplishment given the challenging environment. The SUMI board meets quarterly to make operational decisions and monitor policies and procedures, which further enhances the organization’s accountability and sustainability.

But it is SUMI’s clients who show the true success. Now that they have access to credit, clients like Cici can learn how to take advantage of formal loan processes and finally help their small businesses grow.

Cici says that all four of her children are now in school, and that many of her friends have also benefited from SUMI loans. “We have all succeeded. Now we are encouraging other women to take out loans so that they, too, can succeed.”