

# Visually and Physically Handicapped Women to Benefit from Milk Chilling Plant

*BY Jane Kithuka*

SOT Dairy Company Limited is rejoicing the official launch of their milk chilling plant. The plant which has a capacity of 6,000 litres was opened by Director of Livestock, on behalf of the Minister of Livestock Development, Hon. Mohammed Kuti on December 5, 2009.

Residents from Longisa Division and Bomet Central gathered in thousands to celebrate this great achievement. Dignitaries including Director of Livestock, District Commissioner, Area Member of Parliament, representatives of EADD Steering Committee, EADD Partners from Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania, Provincial Director of Livestock, Provincial Director of Veterinary Services amongst others were present.

One unique group in the Dairy Farmers Business Association is a group of 65 visually and physically impaired women who have decided to beat all odds from their state of dependency to independence and even helping others by being successful smallholder dairy farmers. **Longisa Set Kobar Women Group** was formed with a clear mission of restoring their dignity and hope, attaining food security and stable income among their families and the community. They are now in the forefront of spearheading development in the division. All group members are interspersed in various locations in Longisa Division, Bomet District in the Rift Valley. Set Kobar is one of the groups funded by Heifer International for their Dairy Project.

In a bid to ensuring a steady and reliable market outlet for their milk Longisa Set Kobar Women Group joined hands with Longisa Dairy Farmer Groups and Bomet Central Dairies by investing Kshs 1.5M into Sot Dairy Company Limited, the Dairy Farmer Business Association towards meeting a need in milk marketing by setting up a milk chilling plant.

Speaking on behalf of the Minister of Livestock Development, the Director of Livestock expressed the Governments gratitude towards the continued support the donor (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) has given livestock farmers of this country. The Director expressed the Ministry of Livestock's continued support towards such initiatives so as to realize a vibrant livestock industry for enhanced food security and economic growth.

“The success of this plant after commissioning will influence policy towards rural infrastructure with the government coming in to improve roads, water supply, electricity and telephone services.” Was the Ministers speech and famers were challenged to redouble their efforts in order to increase milk production from their herd so that the milk chilling plant will operate to its full installed capacity.

In his concluding remarks, the farmers' were urged to be fully committed and participate in all activities initiated by Government and the development partners to ensure sustainability of this initiative even after the project has come to an end.

The area Member of Parliament, Hon. Mrs. Kones acknowledged that the opening of SOT Dairy was just the beginning of good things to come, a dream that has been fulfilled. Hon. Mrs. Kones articulated the farmers past frustrations when marketing their milk despite the high volumes but with the launch of the cooler their frustrations will be a thing of the past.

Speaking about the project, Kristin Grote, representative of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation motivated farmers to increase their milk volumes from 1,200 Kilos by either tripling or quadrupling resulting to much more milk flowing and that the processor (New KCC) would be picking the milk a couple of times in a day.

On fostering partnerships, Dr. Sahr Lebbie, Heifer International Vice President for Africa Program, expressed his gratitude for the participation of EADD collaborators; Government, New KCC and Kenya Dairy Board. "...this is a very important partnership. We add value to each partners work...the success of this dairy (plant) will depend on the support that you give. We are all partners in development and we assure you that you have our support. We will always work with you" Said Dr. Lebbie.

The Treasurer of SOT Dairy Company Limited upon being interviewed was confident that with the set up of the cooler through EADD facilitation milk prices are competitive and this will transform the standards of living of the farmers in the area.

SOT Dairy Company Limited was also given an Artificial Insemination semen storage tank complete with liquid nitrogen and 1,200 semen straws. The Director of Livestock encouraged the farmers to stop using bulls and embrace artificial insemination. He further instructed the local administration to assist in castrating the bulls which should be using only for ploughing.



*Director of Livestock officially unveiling SOT Dairy Company Limited plaque. Below, the Director plants a tree.*



# Photo Gallery

*Amos Mwasi, (right) EADD Business Advisor takes visitors to a tour of the milk chilling plant*



*Women participation: Women turned out in large numbers*



*Kristin Grote, representative, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation joins Set Kabor Women Group in song and dance*



*EADD Steering Committee Members congratulate board members of SOT Dairy Company Limited*