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EfG NEWSLETTER

Redefining Power for Tanzania's Women Traders



Power
Protection
Progress

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A Message from our Executive Director:

Dear Partners, Supporters, and Colleagues,

Warm greetings from Equality for Growth (EfG). As we close the first quarter of 2026, I am struck by our progress. For years, we worked to bring women traders from the "informal" margins into the heart of decision-making. This quarter, that shift became a reality. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our partners and government stakeholders; your support is fundamental to our shared mission of building an inclusive economy.



We have seen incredible momentum. From securing "Special Seats" for women in market governance to seeing the physical bricks of our first Market Childcare Centres, our work is changing the actual landscape of the markets we serve. These achievements, including the legal empowerment of over 10,000 traders, prove what is possible when we work together.

We are also encouraged by our growing alignment with national policies. Whether it is our roadmap for Market Crèches or our push for gender-responsive infrastructure, we are turning ideas into practical reality. We are standing with pioneers like Prisca Victor, transforming grassroots passion into formal, safe standards.

Through the stories in this newsletter, from the Legal Shield at the Ferry Market to the Civic Power in Mbeya, I hope you are inspired to join us in championing a fair and safe trading environment for everyone.

Jane Magigita -Executive Director, Equality For Growth

BABY CRÈCHES: Investing in the Next Generation of Market Traders



Bridging the Divide Between Motherhood and Trade

No child grows up in dust—she made sure of it



If you walk through Mchikichini Market, you'll find Prisca Victor surrounded by bags and purses. She's a great businesswoman, but her real story is about what she does for the children in the market.

The Problem Prisca Saw Every Day

For a long time, Prisca watched her fellow market mothers struggle. She saw babies crying in the dirt and toddlers playing near heavy crates because their mothers had no choice but to bring them to work.



"It hurt my soul," Prisca says. "I saw kids who were tired and weak because they had no place to sleep or play while their moms were busy selling. I knew I couldn't just sit and watch."

Trying to Make a Difference

In 2024, Prisca decided to do something about it. She didn't wait for permission or a big budget. She used her own money to buy mattresses, carpets, and toys. She even brought in a TV so the kids could watch cartoons. She turned a small corner of the market into a "safe haven" for the little ones.



Motherhood Meets Trade

For a few months, it worked. Mothers could finally focus on their customers because they knew their babies were happy and safe nearby.



The Hardest Part



But things got complicated. Because the center wasn't "official" yet, government officers had to close it down to make sure health and safety rules were followed. Prisca was heartbroken.

"I put everything I had into this," she explains. "But I was more worried about the kids. When we closed, the moms had to go back to the 'double burden' of working and babysitting at the same time. Some even had to stop working and go home."

A New Start with EfG

Prisca didn't give up. She realized that to keep the dream alive, she needed to do it the right way. That's when she reached out to us at Equality for Growth (EfG).

Now, we are walking this path with her. We are helping her connect with the right people and obtain the legal permits she needs. We want to show everyone that Prisca isn't just a trader, she's a hero for these children.

Our Goal

We are working hard to make sure Prisca's center opens again, but this time with the government's full support. We want it to be a safe, official place where kids can be kids while their mothers build their futures.

For a mother trading in a busy market, the choice between her child's safety and her daily bread is an impossible one. For too long, childcare has been viewed as a "private burden" for women to solve on their own.

However, our recent survey of markets in Ilala and Temeke revealed a different reality: childcare is actually the single biggest barrier to a woman's economic growth. When a mother has to constantly worry about her child's safety, health, and nutrition while managing a stall, her business suffers.

This quarter, EfG shifted the conversation; we stopped treating childcare as a personal issue and began treating it as a fundamental right for workers.

To turn this new perspective into action, we moved from research to on-the-ground results. One of our most significant milestones this quarter took place at Tabata Market. After months of evidence-based advocacy and strategic dialogue with the Ilala Municipal Council, we have secured a permanent, designated room for breastfeeding and childcare.

This achievement represents much more than just a physical space; it serves as a pilot model for the entire country. This "Market Crèche" provides a safe, structured environment where children can stay while their mothers focus on their trade.

By bringing this facility directly into the market, we are proving that gender-responsive infrastructure is both possible and necessary for a thriving economy.

While Tabata provides a model for infrastructure, we have also been working to break down the legal barriers that keep children out of markets. In the Mtwara region, our impact reached the policy level.

For years, outdated local regulations effectively banned children from being in certain market spaces. This forced many mothers to trade in fear, risking fines or being chased away simply because they had no one to watch their children at home.



Recognizing that these rules were a form of economic exclusion, our teams pushed for a total policy change. Following intensive engagement by our local staff, councils in Mtwara have officially lifted these bans. This victory removes a massive psychological and financial burden from women traders. Mothers are now free to trade with their children nearby, ensuring that no woman is penalized for being a parent while she works to feed her family.

To ensure these local wins are not isolated events, we have built a roadmap to scale this success across the nation. We have finalized our landmark strategic paper: "The Importance and Feasibility of Establishing and Managing Baby Crèches in Public Spaces, Particularly Markets in Tanzania."

This document is now our primary tool for national advocacy. It aligns our grassroots work with the National Multi-Sectoral Early Childhood Development Programme, showing the government and donors that market-based childcare is a critical engine for economic growth.

By documenting the "how-to" of setting up these centres, we are providing a blueprint that can be scaled across every region in Tanzania.

Ultimately, these efforts are about more than just logistics; they are about building a future of dignity. At EfG, we believe that the market should be a place of opportunity for everyone. By addressing the childcare gap, we are not just helping mothers; we are investing in the next generation.



A safe room for a child means a focused, productive, and empowered mother. Together, we are remaking our markets into spaces that truly support the women who drive our economy.

When we secure a safe space for a child, we secure the economic future of a mother.

THE LEGAL SHIELD

JUSTICE SHOULDN'T REQUIRE A BUS FARE



THE LEGAL SHIELD

For many traders, "the law" feels like something far away that only happens in expensive courtrooms. This quarter, Equality for Growth (EfG) continued to bridge that gap. We believe that justice shouldn't be something you have to travel far to find. That is why our **Social Justice Leaders (SJLs)** and Paralegals have taken legal aid out of the office and placed it directly onto the market stalls.



We didn't just talk about the law in general; we held eight structured sessions focused on the issues that matter most: land ownership, property rights, and the legal pathways to report discrimination.



By bringing help to where the work happens, we have built a protective "shield" around thousands of traders. Between January and March, our teams reached a total of **10,086** traders (**5,691** women and **4,417** men) across eight major markets in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. This outreach was intentionally inclusive, ensuring that **22 traders** living with disabilities were also empowered with the legal knowledge they need to protect their livelihoods.





However, knowing your rights is only half the battle; having the power to defend them without losing your income is where real change happens.

This is where our strategy of "Mediation Over Conflict" becomes so vital. In the fast-paced environment of a market, a legal dispute that drags on for months can bankrupt a small business. Our paralegals specialize in solving problems such as economic violence or harassment, right there at the market stall through mediation.

By resolving these issues at the source, we save women the time, stress, and high costs of formal court cases. This ensures that a woman's shop stays open and her income stays steady, even while a dispute is being settled.

While mediation solves immediate problems, we are also working to change the systems that cause these problems in the first place. A major highlight of this "Urban Revolution" took place at Kigogo Fresh Market. For a long time, women were participants in the market but were excluded from the leadership committees that manage it.

Through persistent advocacy and collaboration with local authorities, we have officially secured "Special Seats" for women and girls on the market's governing committee. These seats are now a permanent, mandatory part of the leadership structure.

This milestone marks a shift from participation to true power. Women at Kigogo Fresh are no longer just asking for better security or cleaner stalls, they are now the ones sitting at the table making those decisions.

The Legal Shield in Action

“EfG helped me find my voice. Now I use it to protect my community and ensure justice for every woman at the Ferry Market.”— **Batret Malemula, Dar es Salaam**

For decades, the Ferry Market in Dar es Salaam was a place of survival, but not always a place of dignity. Batret Malemula, who began selling dagaa (small fish) in 1992, remembers a time when the market was defined by more than just hard work, it was defined by risk. Verbal abuse, physical threats, and gender-based violence (GBV) were daily hurdles for women entrepreneurs.

From Victim to Defender

Batret’s turning point came when she joined EfG’s Legal Awareness and Leadership Program. For the first time, she saw the law not as a distant concept, but as a "shield" she could carry into the market every day. She realized that the insults and discrimination women faced weren't just "part of the job", they were violations of their rights.

Equipped with legal knowledge, Batret transformed into a community mobilizer. She didn't just report issues; she built systems to prevent them. She became the voice that challenged unfair treatment from customers and authorities alike, proving that a woman who knows the law is a woman who cannot be intimidated.





Securing the "Special Seats"

One of the most significant "Legal Shield" victories at the Ferry Market was the fight for representation. Batret knew that laws and market rules would never protect women if women weren't the ones writing them.

She successfully advocated for the creation of Special Seats for women in leadership. Today, because of her persistence, four women hold decision-making roles at the market, an achievement that was once considered impossible.

By securing these seats, Batret ensured that justice for women is now built into the very governance of the market.

Justice Through Infrastructure

Batret's advocacy extended to the most basic human rights: water and sanitation. She rallied fellow traders to demand clean water and equal toilet facilities, arguing that dignity in the workplace is a fundamental right. Her efforts led to the installation of a large water tank and new taps, bringing clean water directly to women's stalls and restoring their sense of safety and health.

A Legacy of Empowerment

Today, Batret is a veteran leader and a mentor. She has served as a Chairperson at both the Ward and District levels, using her political platform to shield other women from predatory debt and unfair trading conditions.

Advancing Civic Space & Justice

At Equality for Growth (EfG), we are not just supporting traders; we are fueling a national movement. By expanding the civic space for women in the informal sector, we are ensuring that the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression become a reality on the market floor. Today, Tanzania's women traders are more organized, informed, and influential than ever before.

From Stalls to Governance Structures

Our reach now spans over 10,919 women traders across 48 markets in 10 regions. This scale has translated into direct political power. During this quarter, 15 women courageously contested for leadership positions, with 6 successfully elected into office.

These leaders are now recognized as key stakeholders at both national and local levels, providing critical input into the 2025 Market Management and Operations Regulations. Women are no longer just participants; they are architects of market policy.

Turning Legal Awareness into Tangible Wins

Our legal empowerment framework has moved beyond awareness to collective action. By utilizing petitions and formal grievance mechanisms (resolving over 50+ critical issues), women-led advocacy has secured several landmark victories:

- **Mwanza (Mwaloni):** Secured permanent trading designated zones for women fish traders.
- **Tabata:** Facilitated the formal expansion of vending areas.
- **Mchikichini:** Spearheaded the installation of security systems to combat theft and GBV.
- **Kampochea & Mtwara:** Delivered infrastructure upgrades, including improved sanitation and the Chuno baby care center.

Overcoming Structural Barriers

While we celebrate the increased exercise of the freedom of assembly, we remain clear-eyed about the persistent structural challenges. High group registration costs and deep-seated patriarchal norms, especially during election periods, continue to limit full participation. Even so, our registered groups are gaining unprecedented legitimacy, signaling a gradual but important shift toward more inclusive civic engagement.

True accountability requires transparent, timely information. While 57% of women can access GBV prevention services, gaps persist, 55% of traders still call for better updates on market budgets. EfG is working to close this gap, advocating for a market system where water, sanitation, and safety are guaranteed rights, not requests.



CASE STORY



"EfG didn't just train me; it woke me up. Now, I help others wake up, too."

**Esther Ijumba,
Soweto Market,
Mbeya**

THE AWAKENING OF A LEADER

Esther Abrahamu Ijumba sells avocados at Soweto Market in Mbeya, but her story goes far beyond that. At 54, she's grown from dependency into a strong advocate for civic space, now leading a women's association across 10 markets.

Esther's journey into advocacy was born from a refusal to accept unfair treatment. While many saw the market as just a place of trade, Esther saw it as a place where women's voices were being ignored.

She began organizing women, fighting gender-based violence, and standing up against the patriarchal norms that kept women in the shadows.

It wasn't easy. "Some men discouraged their wives from listening to me," she recalls. "They even formed a committee of young men to mock and insult me, hoping I'd give up." But Esther didn't blink. She understood that her right to speak and assemble was her greatest tool for change.

Demanding Dignity in Public Spaces

For Esther, civic rights are tied to the physical environment. She continues to lead the charge for better market infrastructure, pointing out the gap between the revenue women generate and the services they receive. "We feed the nation, and we deserve dignity," she says, as she advocates for safe water, modern bathrooms, and clean trading spaces.

A Legacy of Leadership

Today, Esther is no longer just a vendor; she is a key stakeholder in Mbeya's governance. She plans to return to school to sharpen her leadership skills even further, proving that once a woman's civic consciousness is awakened, there is no limit to her reach.

EfG News Highlights: January – March 2026



EfG is working closely with the Government (Prime Minister’s Office–PO-RALG and the Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups) to create official guidelines for market childcare centres. This is a huge step! These guidelines will help establish safe places where children can stay while their mothers focus on their businesses, increasing both safety for children and income for mothers.



In February, EfG participated in the Legal Tech Symposium 2026, where the Deputy Minister for Legal Affairs, Hon. Zainab Katimba, was the guest of honor. We explored how digital tools, such as mobile apps and online advice, can help women in markets access legal support more quickly. We are committed to using technology to bring justice closer to those who need it most.



UN Women Visit to Mchikichini



We recently hosted the UN Women team at Mchikichini Market. They visited our Gender-Based Violence (GBV) desk to share feedback on how to improve it. This partnership helps us improve how we prevent and respond to violence, making sure that public markets are safe spaces for every woman to work.



Expanding Justice Together

EfG was honoured to host leaders from LEVO (Lushoto) and Bumbuli Paralegals. We have been working with these partners since 2014 to strengthen legal aid at the community level. By supporting paralegals on the ground, we ensure that legal rights are respected even in the most remote areas.



We send a big thank you to all our partners!



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