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ILLOVO'S SMALL SCALE GROWER PROJECT – EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITIES

...Impacting the development of cane growers while contributing to job creation and transformation...

28 January 2021: Through its Small-Scale Grower Cane Development Project, the Illovo Group's South African subsidiary, Illovo Sugar South Africa, partnered with the National Treasury's Jobs Fund in 2017 on a R126 million grant to plant 3 000 hectares of sugarcane on communal land over three seasons in the Kwazulu-Natal area. The project used 119 local contractors, developed 1 630 growers, and empowered women growers and contractors in rural communities to grow their own cane. This enterprise development initiative stimulated economic activity by creating direct employment and transferred valuable farming and business skills in rural households estimated to receive R80-million in income annually by leveraging these built capabilities. The funds have already been used to pay for education, clothing, monthly expenses, transport and housing in the community.

The project has developed and empowered this community of people on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast by creating sustainable jobs and has visibly transformed the landscape from a sparse sugar cane crop to rolling green hills of healthy cane. The annual supply of sugarcane arising out of this project has also helped boost the cane throughput of Illovo's Sezela sugar mill by about 350 000 tons. To date, Illovo and the Jobs Fund have invested R126-million into this initiative and created 860 sustainable jobs. The Small-Scale Cane Growers Project, in partnership with the National Treasury's Jobs Fund, aligns strongly with Illovo South Africa's Thriving African Community purpose.

Mamongae Mahlare, MD of Illovo Sugar South Africa says *"We could not have achieved this level of success, which has contributed to the retention of our BBBEE Level 1 status, alone. The contributions of our industry partners, SA Treasury, SA Canegrowers Association, SAFDA and other organisations and people, have been integral to this multi-stakeholder project. However, it is the passion and entrepreneurial spirit of the people of the South Coast community that made it impossible to fail."*

Below are some of the inspiring thriving community stories shared by women cane growers on how this project has empowered, enriched and changed their lives.



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Nomanesi Ngcobo

"I took over the sugarcane-growing business from my late husband. When Illovo Sugar reached out to our community with this project, my husband's sugarcane that had been planted years before, was no longer growing. The project came at a crucial time for us because the eMalangeni area had run out of sugarcane and many growers were struggling. Sugarcane farming is our bread and butter – it allows us to pay for our children's education. This has been a life-changing experience and we are so grateful to Illovo South Africa for empowering us and enriching our lives. "To be part of the cane grower's community as a black woman makes me happy, especially having come from an impoverished background."



“ We are so grateful to Illovo Sugar for empowering us and enriching our lives. To be part of the cane grower's community, as a black woman from an impoverished background, makes me happy. ”

Nomanesi Ngcobo, smallscale cane-grower and Chairperson of Umgwepesi Cane Growers

Nomvula Shozi

"Farming and agriculture have always interested me. I remember asking my father how sugarcane is grown and it remained a passion of mine. After finishing school and university studies, I moved to Durban to work. In early 2018, I learnt about the Illovo Small Scale Grower Development Project and decided to return and try my hand at being a contractor and grower. The training provided changed all of our perspectives about growing sugarcane as a viable business. Illovo Sugar helped us put protocols in place to ensure the sustainability of our businesses.

This initiative also helped me to start and grow my own contracting business, which supports other growers by planting and ratooning their lands. With this project, everything has been kept local and the money we make goes back into our community. I love what I do, and I am so grateful for the opportunity Illovo has given me to pursue my dreams,"

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Nomvula Shozi, small-scale cane-grower entrepreneur and contractor





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About Illovo Sugar Africa

Illovo Sugar Africa (Pty) Ltd is a Pan-African consumer centric agri-business with roots in growing and making sugar and related products. It is Africa's largest sugar producer and has extensive agricultural operations in six southern African countries – Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia - manufacturing sugar and downstream products from cane supplied by its own agricultural operations and independent growers. The Group is a wholly owned subsidiary of Associated British Foods plc (ABF), a diversified international food, ingredients and retail group operating in more than 50 countries. Illovo Sugar Africa employs more than 12 000 people in permanent positions across the group with a further 18 000 people employed on a temporary basis. In a recent independent socio-economic study, the company is estimated to support at least 71 443 jobs across the group and for each of Illovo's 29 663 direct employees, at least 1.4 additional jobs are estimated to be supported through grower communities and wider multiplier effects throughout the economy. Illovo has a proud history of significant contribution to local economies in which it operates and its positive social impact across this region on rural communities is substantial. Illovo's total economic impact, including direct, indirect and induced impacts, was estimated at R 23.8 billion in 2016/17