

## **The Groundnut Business**

The girls get their groundnuts from markets where most small scale farmers bring their produce to sell. They wake as early as 3am, and by 4am they set off for the markets (some of them have to walk for an hour to reach the markets). It is important to go to these markets early, as this is the only time they can get the produce at a cheaper price.

They buy the nuts in bags and when they return they wash them and then cook them. The cooking is done right where they sell the nuts on the side of the road. After this they are off to school; they have to do all of this and get ready for school before seven in the morning otherwise they will miss classes. Immediately after school they head off to sell the nuts, and they are there until after six in the evening. The profit margin is so small that they can't buy anything from the daily sales. So what they do is to form a group of girls anywhere from five to twenty: each member of this group will be given a number, according to the number of members in the entire group. Each member is expected to pay some money from their sales every day (say K5000 or A\$1), and when all the members have paid, the money is given to the first member on the list and so on, until all the members have taken their share of the money. In this way they are each able to have a more viable lump sum of money.

The girls sell not only nuts but also cassava, maize and sugar cane, according to the season. Right now it is sugar cane season, and they go and buy the cane from people who live near the river or stream. They buy between ten and twenty sticks of cane. The cane ranges between 2 metres and 5 metres in length, and they carry it on their heads. They can't afford to hire vans or pay people to carry it for them, as the profit margin is very minimal. If they get one piece of cane for K700 (14 cents) they resell it for K1000 (20 cents): so for ten sticks of cane they make a profit of K3000 - which is about 60 cents.