



Joyce Cudjoe participating at the MDF Multi-Stakeholder Forum in Accra, March 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Case Study on Joyce Cudjoe

By Edem Kwabena Dorvie – August 2018

Joyce Cudjoe has become a role model for girls, women and youth in the Wassa East District, encouraging them to take an active role in the development of their communities. Through a series of WAGES trainings, she has acquired significant knowledge on the Mineral Development Fund (MDF) and key mining-related laws and now facilitates sensitizations for women and youth across the district. She is also heavily involved in MDF-related activities, including monitoring MDF-funded projects implemented in her district. She further participates in a national technical working group that is developing a roadmap for finalizing MDF regulations, as required under the MDF Act 2016.

Context:

Wassa East District was classified as 140th out of 216 districts on the Ghana District League 2017 Table prepared by UNICEF and the Center for Democratic Development.¹ This ranking, places the District at the 65th percentile for performance on indicators in health, education, water, sanitation, security and governance – a low performance compared to the national average, even though Wassa East is endowed with natural resources such as gold, timber and rubber. These resources, if utilized well, have the potential to boost local economic development and increase employment opportunities and incomes of local communities, and in particular, for women and youth.

Joyce Cudjoe is a young, educated woman in her early thirties, who works with Support for Community Mobilization Projects and Programs (SCMPP), a Civil Society Organization based in the Wassa East District. She is passionate about community development work and issues concerning girls' education and women and youth empowerment. Joyce previously had knowledge in local governance and development but had few opportunities to use it. She explained that the problem in the District is that women are left behind; they are typically not given the opportunity to participate in training programs on local development and their voices often remain unheard when it comes to decision-making.

"I have benefited immensely from all the training programs which I took part in. To my utmost surprise, I was selected by the WUSC/WAGES team to participate in and lead community sensitizations on the mining laws in various communities in the Wassa East district. I was very humbled in representing women and encouraging them and explaining to them that they also have a role to play in contributing to the development of their communities" – Joyce Cudjoe

Agent for development:

Joyce had her breakthrough, and became a key agent for development in her community, when she represented her supervisor in a WAGES training on the Mineral Development Fund (MDF) at the District Assembly Hall in Daboose from the 12th to 14th of December 2017. There, she had the opportunity of learning a great deal and meeting inspiring women involved in decision-making, including the former District Coordinating Director and the Planning Officer. She says she had previously heard a lot about mining, but did not know about the laws and regulations governing its operations.

She then participated in other training programs organized by WAGES including: *Governance, Social Accountability and lobbying at the District level, Gender Equality, and Mining Laws toolkit sensitization*. She was very grateful to be afforded these opportunities, as typically these trainings are not easily accessible for women in her community.

Role model:

Joyce is now the CSO representative and member of a local MDF monitoring group. The group is composed of five Area Council Chairpersons, the traditional authority, a youth group

¹Ghana Center for Democratic Development (2017). *2017 District League Table Report*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cddgh.org/publications/The-District-League-Table/2017-DISTRICT-LEAGUE-TABLE-REPORT>

representative, a women's group representative, a CSO representative, and a media representative. The group meets on a quarterly basis and is tasked with monitoring how MDF funds are used in the development of Wassa East. Joyce was also selected by WAGES to take part in the Multi-stakeholder workshop on the MDF Regulations in Accra, on March 27, 2018. This event, in collaboration with the Centre for Extractive and Development, Africa (CEDA), was held to prepare a roadmap for developing the regulations for the MDF Act. Her knowledge of how the implementation of the MDF can help improve the development of the District, was a key factor motivating her participation.

A key outcome of the training programs has been the mobilization of trade associations, market women, and various youth groups, who are now power banks for development in the District.



Joyce participating in the MDF monitoring activity, in Ateiku, May 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

Joyce said with pride, that she is “now a role model to young girls, women and youth in the district,” due to her own journey of empowerment. According to the United Nations, rural women are key actors who contribute to transformative economic, environmental and social changes that are essential for achieving sustainable development.² The WAGES project sees itself as an enabler of these changes, that allows the talent and energies of the women of Wassa East District to come to the forefront and help drive their own development and that of their community.

The WAGES project aims to break the vicious circle in which local communities, especially women and youth, are excluded from the benefits of mining investments. Through WAGES, **World University Service of Canada (WUSC)** and the **Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI)**, work in three regions of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Guinea impacted by extractive industries. The project works to empower local communities, and specifically integrate women and youth, to participate fully in local governance, economic opportunities and the sustainable development of these areas. The project collaborates with local and national governments, select mining companies, as well as small and medium-sized businesses and civil society organizations to attain those objectives. Global Affairs Canada funds the implementation of WAGES from 2016 until 2022. For more information on the project follow this link: <https://resources.wusc.ca/project/wages>

²UN Women (2013). “The role of women in rural development, food production and poverty eradication.” Retrieved from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/rural-women-food-poverty/2013>