



Ms. M'balia Bangoura runs her own food processing business in Sangarédi, Boké Prefecture, Republic of Guinea

From discouragement and depression to enthusiasm and success: the case of M'balia Bangoura

*Case study of M'balia Bangoura
By Jean-Marc Cormier, February 2019*

Having lived discouragement after 5 years of internships in the mining field, without finding a permanent job, M'balia Bangoura decided to found her own company following a training in entrepreneurship offered by WAGES. She embarked on food processing and barely a year later, her company, Sago Naturel, is making remarkable progress.

Context:

The WAGES project is being implemented in the Boké prefecture in the north-west of the country. It is one of the five prefectures in the administrative region of Boké. It has one urban commune and nine rural communes. This area is experiencing significant economic turmoil, with major investment plans such as the Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (CBG) expansion project and several other mining and refinery projects. Nevertheless, local people still benefit very little from these investments.

M'balia Bangoura is a young woman in her twenties. Graduated in tourism management, she undertakes a series of internships at the Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (CBG), in the hope of being selected for a permanent job. These internships will unfortunately spread over 5 years at the end of which she will find herself in front of nothing.

"I was so depressed," she says, "that I chose to stay home crying over my fate, telling myself that if I could not get a job at the CGB, my life was screwed up."

Fortunately, M'balia one day sees a poster announcing a free training in entrepreneurship organized in the framework of the project West Africa Governance & Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES), piloted in Guinea by CECI. She quickly decides to join, thinking that this may be an opportunity to break out of her lethargy and make herself useful to her family and society.

This WAGES training has changed his life

"Then I took a life-changing approach, because before this training, I really thought I could not make myself useful anymore," she says. During this training, adds M'balia, I regained confidence in myself, I discovered my potentialities and I learned that I could exploit them. I left with a new energy and I was quick to make the decision to undertake."

Unable to invest, the young woman began by gardening on a small piece of land. However, as the harvest season arrived, she realized that the same products were on the market and she was forced to sell her produce at a low price to avoid losing it entirely.

"Still, I did lose some of my production. So, since everyone around me was offering the same products, I thought why not focus on transformation and conservation instead?"

So she devoted a part of her time studying the market and she managed to identify the products that she could profitably put in the market after having treated them for the conservation.



"First, I chose soubala, a typically African condiment made from néré seeds, and secondly shrimp cocktail. These are products consumed daily in our families and whose transformation does not require a lot of resources. This was my first real success", she explains.

Visibly delighted, M'balia Bangoura says: "This success gave me courage and I then launched several other products, including a flour for weaning infants from 6 months to 2 years. This is very convenient for moms who can not afford the more expensive commercial products. Together with my two employees, we also produce salted and caramelized peanuts, corn couscous, lemon juice and a corn-based novelty that is consumed in porridge and is particularly popular during Ramadan."

M'balia Bangoura tells us that her company even receives orders that she is not, for the moment, able to satisfy. She is pleased, however, that she has been able to rely on financial assistance in the form of a loan from the autonomous agency for integrated assistance to enterprises (3AE) which she has just obtained thanks to the support of CECI.

At the end of the interview, M'balia Bangoura expresses sincere thanks to the WAGES project for the training and support she has received.

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>