



Esther Dadzie facilitating a gender equality training for women farmers in Bogoso, Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality of Ghana, in June 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

BEYOND HER ROLE

A Case Study on Esther Dadzie

By Sheliza Ramji – February 2019

Esther Dadzie is senior mass education officer at the Social Welfare Department in Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality and is also the appointed gender desk officer for the Municipality. After undergoing gender equality training through the WAGES project, she developed confidence in herself to lead and facilitate community engagement activities. Today, she facilitates sessions with ease and is able to empower young women and youth to work through their problems and find solutions. Esther is also pursuing a counselling degree and is a part of the Fiaseman Mbaa Yiedie Kuo (FMYK) women's support group, to mentor young women and youth to increase their participation in decision-making and local economic development.

Her story:

Esther Dadzie, gender desk officer, facilitates a gender equality session for women farmers in Bogoso, in the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, located in the Western Region of Ghana. The session is facilitated under the economic development component of the West African Governance and Economic Sustainability (WAGES) project – a joint initiative of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). Witnessing this training is inspiring to say the least: her energy and confidence keep her audience alert; her messages are conveyed with conviction; and a sense of ease hovers around the room, enabling meaningful interaction with and between participants.

Esther is a vibrant woman who has been senior mass education officer at the Department of Social Welfare, in Bogoso, for almost 8 years. In this role, Esther has worked predominantly on teenage pregnancy issues. However, she previously faced challenges in getting important messages across. She lacked confidence and struggled with community engagement and facilitating sessions. She also had difficulty in communicating with people effectively and helping them resolve their issues. Watching her have command over an entire room now, it is hard to believe that she once struggled with the same – a change she attributes to the WAGES project.

The intervention:



Esther Dadzie (second from the left), with Department Heads, at WAGES green economy training, February 2019, Bogoso, Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, Ghana (Photo Credit: WAGES)

Esther was appointed as gender desk officer for the Prestea-Huni Valley Municipality, after WAGES facilitated the re-establishment of a gender desk at the Municipal Assembly in 2016. Following this appointment, she underwent a gender equality training in April 2017, facilitated by the WAGES project. The training was aimed at improving gender-sensitive and youth inclusion planning and implementation in the project's operational areas. Through the project's economic development and local governance components,

the project targets women and youth, and delivers trainings and sensitizations on gender equality and youth inclusion as cross-cutting themes. As gender desk officer, Esther is the focal point for WAGES on gender equality and youth inclusion issues in the Municipality, while still maintaining her position at the Department of Social Welfare. Esther is also in close contact with the WAGES Social Inclusion officer and they regularly discuss issues faced by women, young women and youth in the community.

The Result:

The gender equality training that Esther underwent in April 2017, helped her understand the scope of her job. She has since gained the confidence to engage with community

members, motivating them to work on solutions. She has a better understanding of gender issues and uses that knowledge to include women and youth where possible.

The training also helped Esther understand that financial necessity often forces young women to seek older men, become pregnant, and then be left with very little choice about their own lives. She therefore encourages young women to acquire a skill that will empower them economically, while also stressing the need to have several skills so that they have backup options during periods of uncertainty. Furthermore, after the facilitation of the gender desk, quarterly and annual reports submitted to the central administration and planning unit of the Assembly, include an update on status of gender-related activities such as the provision of skills training for income generation for women groups, youth groups, and unemployed youth to increase their employability.

WAGES training helped Esther:

- *Develop a gender equality and youth inclusion training tool and sensitization plan*
- *Facilitate gender and youth inclusion trainings*
- *Mediate conflicts affecting women and youth*

Beyond her role:

In addition to both her roles, Esther is pursuing a guidance and counselling degree. She feels this new knowledge, coupled with her increased confidence and public speaking skills, will help her to better contribute to the empowerment of women and youth in the Municipality.

Esther is also co-vice-chair of *Fiaseman Mbaa Yiedie Kuo (FMYK)*, a women's support group, who's creation was facilitated by the WAGES project in 2018. The group comprises women representatives from community groups of the project's operational areas. FMYK aims to sensitize and mentor women and young girls in the communities of the Fiasé Paramountcy, to increase participation in governance and decision-making activities and local economic development. Through her membership in this group, Esther will be more accessible to women and young women on the ground, enabling her to make great impact and also benefit from peer-to-peer learning, which she will then be able to apply in all of her work.

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>