



Constance Darko (right) with her apprentice (left) in Bogoso, Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, Ghana, June 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

DREAMING BIG

A Case Study on Constance Darko By Georgina Ampah – June 2018

Constance Darko is a seamstress in Bogoso. She started small and can now dream big. After the WAGES entrepreneurship training she attended, she has been able to implement improved customer relations which grew her customer base; keep business records and save 4500 GHC so far, acquire a bigger shop with modern machinery to further grow her business. Constance is hopeful about her future and believes that it is important to provide follow-up trainings and further boost businesses which may still have room for improvement.

Context:

Constance Darko is 30 years of age and comes from Bogoso in the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, located in the Western Region of Ghana. She has been in the sewing business for close to 4 years. After graduating from her local apprenticeship training in dressmaking, she received some financial help from her family to set up a shop – Hankon Fashion and Design – that she has been running since then.

Because she had little knowledge on business management, she really struggled to sustain and grow her business, recalling that “running a business, especially when you lack the financial management skills, is not easy.” She was not able to save money for reinvesting into the business and did not know much about customer relations. She also didn’t know how to keep financial records.

The intervention and the result:

Constance had the opportunity to participate in an entrepreneurship training held under the West African Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) project – a joint initiative of the World University Service of Canada and the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). The training was held under the economic development component of the project, with the aim of providing women entrepreneurs with basic financial management skills, in order for them to be able to sustain their businesses. The WAGES project works with the Business Advisory Centre (BAC) of the Municipality to provide financial management and technical skills trainings for entrepreneurs. The BAC is the branch of local government that is responsible for developing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, as well as providing Business Development Services.

Constance believes that the 3-day training had a great impact on her work and her life. Through the training, she acquired business management skills that ignited steady growth in her business as compared to when she wasn’t applying such skills. She only used to keep records on measurements, but now she has a register for her apprentices, a cash book, and also keeps record of all other expenses. She has come to understand the business as a separate entity and therefore makes sure to pay herself and save the rest of the earnings for re-investment into the business.

“Within just 8 months of attending the WAGES training, I was able to accumulate GHC4500 in the name of the business. I now plan to use this money to acquire a bigger shop with modernized machines for fashion design” - Constance Darko

Furthermore, the training has helped her to increase the number of customers by improved customer relation approaches. She can boast of a more than 50% increase in her customer base now. She has also instituted simple product promotional strategies like complimentary cards and community information centre announcements to advertise her business.

Dreaming big:

Constance is grateful for the training provided by WAGES and the BAC. She strongly believes that the project is making an impact in the lives of many people, but it is important to provide follow-up trainings, to boost businesses further and to help those that may still be struggling or may have room for further improvement. Constance is optimistic about her own future because now she has 4500 GHC to achieve her dream – investing in a bigger shop. She believes that this investment will help her expand her business and increase production through modern machinery.

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>