



Cassava processors, Sekyere Nyamebekyere, Wassa East District Ghana, December 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

A BRIGHT FUTURE

A Case Study on Cassava Processors By Isaac Danquah – December 2018

The Nyame Tease business group is from Sekyere Nyamebekyere, a community in the Wassa East District. The group falls under the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). The group is comprised of men and women cassava farmers. With cassava farming as the predominant trade in the community, there was always an abundance of cassava supplied to markets, with low prices, and consequently, farmers experiencing losses. After undergoing WAGES entrepreneurship and technical training, the group has learned new skills and has been linked to Tropical Starch Company, for supply of Cassava dough. The group has also acquired land to cultivate a cassava plantation, for cassava processing into dough.

Introduction:

Sekyere Nyamebekyere is a stronghold farming community of cassava processing and is based in the Wassa East District, located in the Western Region of Ghana. Approximately 12 men (5 youth) and 30 women (16 youth) cassava farmers from the community that engage in cassava farming, belong to a business group called *Nyame Tease*, under the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). The farmers harvest their cassava and process it into *gari* (cassava flakes) and sell it in the markets; this farming being their only source of income.

During peak seasons, cassava is harvested in abundance when all farmers take their processed *gari* to the markets in large quantities in order to sell. Due to the excess availability of *gari* in the market, the selling price is low, resulting in significant losses and poor quality of life.

Many of these cassava processors faced hard times, with little money for basic expenses, let alone maintaining their businesses. Their businesses were essentially collapsing due to poor customer relations, poor marketing strategies and lack of proper record-keeping. However, these farmers had no choice but to persevere and continue producing *gari* because it was their only source of income and they depended on it for the livelihood of their families.



A cassava processor from the VSLA, at training, Sekyere Nyamebekyere, Wassa East District, December 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)



The intervention and the result:

The Nyame Tease group had the opportunity to participate in an entrepreneurship and a technical training in November 2018, implemented under the economic development component of the West African Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) project – jointly implemented by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). The training was also implemented in collaboration with the Business Advisory Centre (BAC) of the District. The BAC is the branch of the District government, responsible for the development of local Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and providing Business Development Services to entrepreneurs. The training sought to equip entrepreneurs with basic entrepreneurial skills and how to tap into opportunities arising from companies in the District. The farmers also received specific technical training on processing cassava into cassava chips and dough, with the aim of making their products more marketable to other companies.

This new processing skill was a welcomed aspect of the training; before the training, the group could only process cassava into *gari* from their cultivation, but at the training, they learned new skills. They also started keeping basic records for their businesses and calculating profit – a practice they had no knowledge of prior to the training.

The group has also benefitted greatly from the environment and green economy session integrated into the entrepreneurship training. Before the training they used to either throw the unwanted cassava peels at unauthorised places or burn the unwanted cassava peels in an open space. After the training, they realized their previously-adopted approaches were harming the environment and so they created a specific hole in which they dump the waste. People now also use the cassava peels as feed for their sheep and goats.

A bright future:

As a business group, they secured land, and weeded and tilled it for cultivation as a cassava plantation, for processing cassava into dough. The group has been linked to Tropical Starch Company, located in Asebu, in the Central Region of Ghana, as suppliers for cassava dough. The process of finalizing a contract for this linkage is underway and is being facilitated by the WAGES project. The group is excited and optimistic since they expect that their livelihood will improve, particularly because processing cassava into dough for a specific company reduces labour time and cost, compared to *gari* processing for the general market, at a low price.

The farmers of the Nyame Tease group are grateful for the difference they are beginning to see in their lives and look forward to their brighter future, particularly as a result of the new linkage fostered with Tropical Starch Company.

The group is happy with their progress and looks forward to continue moving ahead and improving their standards of living.

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>