



*Estherine Mensah, participating in the WAGES 5th National Advisory Committee meeting in Accra, November 2018
(Photo Credit: WAGES)*

FROM AVERAGE TO #1
A Case Study on Estherine Mensah
By Sheliza Ramji – March 2019

Estherine Mensah is the Gender Desk Officer and the Planning Officer for the Wassu East District. She underwent a WAGES training on gender mainstreaming and youth inclusion for planning and implementation in the District. Since then, she has spearheaded gender equality integration in departments' action plans and reports; she has developed a gender-sensitive reporting template for Heads of Department; and, she has championed women's participation in preparation of the District Medium-Term Development Plan (DMTDP), leading to an increase in women's representation from 13% to 23.7%. Together, these steps led to the District ranking 1st place for the 2017 Annual Progress Report, in the whole of Western Region.

Introduction:

Estherine Mensah has been the Gender Desk Officer and Planning Officer in the Wassa East District, located in the Western Region of Ghana, since before the inception of the West Africa Governance and Economic Sustainability (WAGES) project in 2016. Due to many constraints however, her gender desk role took a back seat, and little was being done to institutionalize gender equality in the District.

In April 2017, Estherine underwent a Gender Equality and Youth Inclusion (GEYI) training facilitated by the WAGES project – a joint initiative of the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). 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 GEYI as cross-cutting themes. As gender desk officer, Estherine delivers these trainings and sensitizations, as the focal point for WAGES on GEYI issues. She 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 District.

After receiving training on GEYI and leadership from the WAGES project, Estherine was quickly able to make significant strides in institutionalizing GEYI. That was the beginning of much success in institutional gender mainstreaming. With two roles, she leverages her role as Planning Officer to propel the entire District in taking steps towards gender equality.

From Average to #1:

The District GEYI strategy that was supported by the WAGES project and finalized in 2018, is now a reference point and guides her work in promoting GEYI principles. She has helped various departments in integrating gender equality in their annual action plans and reports; she has developed a gender-sensitive reporting template for Heads of Department; she has championed women’s participation in preparation of the District Medium-Term Development Plan (DMTDP), leading to an increase in women’s representation from 13% to 23.7%. Estherine’s dedication in gender mainstreaming led to the District ranking 1st place in the Western Region for the 2017 Annual Progress Report, a stark difference from previously ranking average. The level of gender mainstreaming weighs heavily in the criteria for the evaluation of this report, highlighting the significant progress made by the District.

“I am thankful to the WAGES project for its constant support. We are very proud of our achievements, particularly in the District being ranked the best in the 2017 Annual Progress Report” – Estherine Mensah, Gender Desk Officer, WED

In her role, she ensures that quarterly and annual reports submitted to the central administration and planning unit of the Assembly include updates on the 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.

Estherine is also co-vice-chair of *Fiaseman Mbaa Yiedie Kuo (FMYK)*, the Women's Support Group, whose creation was facilitated by the WAGES project in 2018. Through her membership in this group, Estherine is more accessible to women and young women on the ground, enabling her to promote and engage in peer-to-peer learning. Estherine has also participated in other WAGES activities, including the Minerals Development Fund Multi-Stakeholder Forum and the 5th National Advisory Committee meeting. She has also presented her work and achievements to representatives of Global Affairs Canada at Canada's High Commission in Ghana.



Estherine Mensah (seated far left), with the Women's Support Group and part of the WAGES team at the 5th NAC Meeting in November 2018 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

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>