



Edem Kwabena Dorvie, (seated right) with Honourable Mozart K. Owuh, Municipal Chief Executive of the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, at the National Conference on the Minerals Development Fund, Accra, June 2019 (Photo Credit: WAGES)

MY TRANSFORMATION

A Case Study on Edem Kwabena Dorvie

By Edem Kwabena Dorvie – June 2019

Edem Kwabena Dorvie has been working on the WAGES project since March 2017. In May 2018, he was appointed as intern prefect. His leadership skills have been enhanced through the project and his role as an agent of change and active citizen within his community have been nurtured and are now visible. From learning to process gari (cassava flakes), to supporting women-led cooperatives to become registered, to business planning in order to start his own business, Edem is a role model for youth in his community and Ghana.

Introduction:

I am a young man in my late twenties and a 2015 graduate from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, with a degree in Accounting. I found myself in the Wassa East District, located in the Western Region of Ghana, to pursue my National Service, at the Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit of the Wassa East District Assembly. Towards the end of my National Service, I came across an advertisement for an opportunity as Community Development Facilitator, with the West Africa Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) project and decided to apply. I was happy to be among the successful applicants selected for the job.

Skills and knowledge:

The WAGES project is jointly implemented by World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). The project focuses on women and youth, as its target groups. As interns, we are beneficiaries of the project, just like the community members of the project's operational areas. While it is our role to facilitate community engagement processes, to enable smooth project implementation, the project's activities are also expected to benefit us in terms of capacity building, empowerment and knowledge acquisition.

When I joined the project, I simply envisioned an employment opportunity as a small stepping stone in my career. As I reflect on my progress as a result of the internship, I can definitely see the benefits extend beyond my initial expectation. I can see change in my capacity as a community member, an active citizen and as a young person in Ghana.

Before my encounter with the project, I struggled with public speaking, communication and reporting skills. My confidence levels have increased, and I can now partake in public speaking activities more confidently. Furthermore, I have benefitted from various technical and entrepreneurship trainings that were organized under the economic development component of the project, in collaboration with the Business Advisory Centre (BAC) of the District. The BAC is the branch of local government that is responsible for the provision of Business Development Services for entrepreneurs. Together, the BAC and the WAGES project, seek to equip women and youth entrepreneurs with basic entrepreneurial skills and how to tap into opportunities arising from the District. Through these trainings, I have learned to process Cassava into *Gari* (cassava flakes) and starch. My peers and I have helped create a record-keeping format for women entrepreneurs from the Daboase dressmakers and hairdressers' associations. I also follow up with these entrepreneurs regularly, to monitor their progress and whether they have been able to apply the skills acquired in their daily operations. Also, my peers and I are currently supporting approximately 100 women in oil palm processing businesses to form a cooperative that will enable them to acquire financial and technical assistance in order to boost their economic activity.

I have also started to develop my own business plan, in the hopes of starting my own business of providing business development services to the informal business and agribusiness sectors in rural areas.

Leadership & Transformation:

“The WAGES project has transformed me and enabled me to become an agent of change and a role model for upcoming youth in the society. I am very happy with my progress and to be able to play that role in my community. I hope that other young people can benefit the same way as I did” – Edem Kwabena Dorvie

Governance-related meetings and trainings have broadened my knowledge on decision-making processes and on how youth and women can be included in these processes. I have learned about mining laws, how royalties from minerals are shared and how affected communities can demand their share of the national cake from the authorities. Knowing this has made me want to be a leader and an active citizen.

My leadership skills have been enhanced: In May 2018, I was selected to be a WAGES intern prefect, in the Wassa East District. In this role, I work to foster a harmonious working team among all interns in order to accomplish activities, organize and delegate responsibilities before an activity, represent interns at programs to share our views on the WAGES project, share ideas and activities each has undertaken on in the week and we strategize together on how upcoming activities can be improved.

The WAGES project transformed my life: it has made me an active citizen and a leader. I hope the transformational changes that I experienced, can be felt by other youth and women, and that these transformations in turn, will lead to improved socio-economic conditions within the District.

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>