



A group of the Fiase Integrated Association after the technical and entrepreneurship trainings, Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, Ghana, in October 2019

THEY ARE CHASING OUR PRODUCE NOW

A Case Study of Palm Oil Processors in Ghana

By Noble Tagoe – October 2019

Fiase Integrate Association, located in the small community of Nyambekyere within the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality, faced many challenges processing palm fruits into palm oil. Through their participation in technical and entrepreneurship training, facilitated by the WAGES project through Asuansi Farm Institute and the Municipal Business Advisory Centre (BAC), the association has seen vast improvements in the quality of their palm oil and on the associations' own development.

Background:

Nyamebikyere is a small community within the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality located within the Aboso area council. The main occupation of the residents of the community is farming; some of the crops produced in the community include palm, cassava, and plantain. *Fiase Integrated Association* is a group comprising of women and youth, whose main aim is to produce palm oil for businesses and communities. The association was established ten years ago to help foster business growth among the members by giving help and assistance to one another. The group comprises of 16 women and 17 men, of which 10 are youth.

Problem:

During a focus group discussion, members highlighted their problem in the statement below:

“We had a challenge with the keeping of palm fruits for processing. We kept the bunch fruits in the soil with the fruits pointing upwards, which allowed water to stay in the fruits, making some to rot, which affected the quality of the final products. We were not separating the rotten and cut fruits from the good and whole fruits. We were also using any type of water for the processing.”

“We also did not separate the rotten fruit from the fresh one which affected the quality of our oil. We did not see the need to get registered and had a challenge linking with companies/organizations. Also, the association had challenges with finances to help set up a place for association members in their production of palm oil.”

Members from the Fiase Integrated Association - Nyamebikyere

Given these problems, members hoped for support to diversify their businesses, get machines for processing on a large scale among other things.

The intervention and the change:

The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) aim to support sustainable economic growth in two Districts, in the Western Region of Ghana, through their joint initiative, the West African Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) project. Prestea Huni-Valley Municipality is one of the two areas where the project is being implemented. Under the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development component, the project works with multiple stakeholders to empower entrepreneurs by enhancing their technical and business management skills.

The Association branch in Nyamebikyere happens to be one of the business associations that received Technical and Entrepreneurship Training from the WAGES

project through Asuansi Farm Institute and the Municipal Business Advisory Center (BAC) – a branch of district Government, tasked with providing Business Development Services to local communities. The trainees acquired the skills on bookkeeping and good customer service. They also received technical support to enable them to improve on the quality of palm oil they produce.

Impact:

After a few months of receiving training and technical support, there has been tremendous improvement in the quality of palm oil produced. The taste of this palm oil has also improved and can be stored for a longer period of time.

“We were taught how to keep our harvested fruits well, the separation of different palm fruits and even how to handle the machine that is used in processing. We were also taught how we could include more women and youth in the association and our business and how to prevent our production from affecting the environment negatively, especially how waste from our products is disposed” – member of Association

The palm oil now meets all the marketing standards of their customers leading to high demand for the produce. The group also has quality oil as their hallmark in Aboso and its environs, “customers chase us because of the quality of our oil,” said a member.

The group members’ ability to store the produce for a long time means that they are able to regulate the produce price to their advantage. Also the financial management training has motivated the Association to start keeping records on their business and savings with financial institutions, to enable them to apply for loans in

the future to expand their business. After the training, the group started separating their rotten and good fruits, which they use the rotten and bad ones for palm oil for soap production while the whole/good fruits and fresh fruits are used in producing edible oil. They also use clean water to prepare all their oil palm; this has helped in improving the quality of the edible oil.

Results:

The trainees indicated they applied the knowledge and skills acquired from the training which resulted in increased sales of their edible oil and the customer base due to the improved quality. Explaining further during the focus group discussion, a member of the association said “*we also link our members to customers anytime there is demand for the product which was previously not the case*”. Now, Fiase Integrated farmers-Nyamebikyere is known for quality palm oil in Aboso-Tarkwa and its environs.

Roles in the group are now shared among men, women and youth. Also, the men are supporting the women and youth to get access to the palm fruits and doing pruning for women who have the plantations. The gender equality training has made them aware of the need to give women and youth equal opportunity in the processing of palm oil.

They now make sure every group member is supported to produce to the required standard and quality.

They also now have individual accounts at the bank, the mother association Fiase Integrated has an account. An account for the Nyamebekyere branch is not yet in existence. *“The Association is now registered after we were educated on the benefits of registering businesses and associations. We hope we can establish a link with mining companies around and other organizations,”* the group leader noted. The association has employed female youth in the community to assist in their work and also train them in the production of the quality palm oil.

Conclusion:

Helping each other with constant linkages and applying what has been taught has brought a huge difference to the Associations’ development and also brought the group a lot of business growth.

The Association expressed its confidence in the WAGES project for support in accessing finance and expand their businesses and customer base. *‘Our dream of being one of the largest oil producing towns in the entire Municipality and Ghana at large is gradually taking shape,’* a member of the Association stated.

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>