



*Mustapha Badu providing a service to one of his clients at Bondaye, Prestea-Huni Valley Municipality in the Western Region (Photo Credit: WAGES)*

## **WAGES Project Supports in taking Youth out of Illegal Mining in Ghana**

**(By: Jonathan Ato Abraham- August 2021)**

### **Background**

Mustapha Badu graduated from St Andrews Senior High School, Dunkwa in 2020 with high expectations to continue his education at university. Being the eldest of four children, Mustapha's parents did everything they could to support him but his university dream appeared failing as a result of financial constraints. **“My parents advised me to wait a year so they could save up money to support my university education the following year”**. Waiting a year without doing anything was too long for Mustapha, this forced him to join the risky illegal mining activity popularly called “Galamsey” in Ghana to earn him a modest income to support his livelihood. **“I was working in ‘galamsey’. My job was to load the chaftan machine with gold dust. I was making a little income to survive but it was a risky job and load wasn't coming much to feed the machine so I wasn't getting much money”**.

### **The WAGES Approach**

The West Africa Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) Project training activity in non-traditional trades was rolled out in December, 2020 for women and youth from the Prestea-Huni Valley Municipality and Wassa East District. Mustapha Badu is one of the 55 women and youth including 22 females who were enrolled in the activity under the local economic development component of the project.

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## Mustapha's mothers' advice

Mustapha's mother, Monica Achaa, has previously been a beneficiary of the WAGES Project, so when she heard about the WAGE mastercraft training for women and youth, she immediately informed her son. The activity aimed at training youth and women in employable skills in various mastercraft trades. Mustapha made a decision to stop the galamsey and grab the opportunity to learn a skill through the WAGES project supported activity. **"My mother informed me about a mastercrafts program, where I could learn a skill, so I immediately decided to stop the galamsey, as it was very risky and I wasn't getting much money from it. So I took this opportunity to learn a skill which is much safer and also will enable me earn more income; save up and support my education"**. Mustapha narrated with a smile in his face.

## Why Mustapha chose the electricals module

Mustapha enrolled in the electrical module of the training "I chose the electrical stream, because it was a skill I have always loved to learn; I feel happy to see others do electrical work". Training has gone smoothly since he joined and has not faced any challenge. **"The training has been successful, I have received all my tools and safety equipment and I follow all workplace safety protocols, for such reason I have not faced any challenge"**.

There is a good relationship between Mustapha and his trainer, Master Kwesi Kyei, who motivates him, and teaches him everything he needs to know in the general electrical stream. **"Master Kyei is a very good man, he advises me a lot to focus on the work and not think about the money, he brings out the potential in me. He is very serious about his work and always make sure I follow all safety protocols to prevent workplace hazard or injury"**.

Master Kyei previously worked with the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), he is well experienced and retains many contracts including from the ECG and private individuals within and outside Bondaye. As such Mustapha is never idle, there is always work for him to do which has hugely impacted his practical experience. **According to him, he has so far learned all the aspects of wiring, fixing air-conditioners, photocell, metering and safety precaution. With the guidance of his master, Mustapha has already acquired an NVTI Certificate for Apprentiship and Internship. He is expected to go through the process to acquire a master's certificate after the completing the training.**

## What next for Mustapha after the training?

Mustapha plans to set up his own electrical shop where he can sell electrical appliances and also apply the skill acquired in the training to the benefit of the Bondaye community and its environs. He also intends to continue his education in Electrical engineering. **"My goal is to set up my own electrical shop to sell electronic gadgets and also put my skill to use to serve and solve electrical problems in my community and beyond. I also want to continue my education in electrical engineering. I want to work hard to earn money to support my family and myself"**.

Mustapha expresses his profound gratitude to the WAGES Project and the team for the opportunity offered him. **"No words are enough to thank WUSC for this great opportunity which has enabled me achieve such**

milestones, had it not been you I wouldn't know where I would have been, I really appreciate this opportunity and I promise to make you proud".

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>