

HOW IT BEGAN

OICI was contracted by Newmont Ghana Ltd to facilitate livelihoods restoration of Project Affected Persons (PAPs) in five host communities in Asutifi North district of Brong Ahafo region in Ghana. Among the various corporate social responsibility instruments associated with Newmont Ahafo Mining Development was the Skills Development for Income Improvement Program (SDIIP) for Tailing Storage Facility ECD4 Area. The SDIIP resources were targeted at 360 PAPs from Ntotroso, Kenyasi 1, Kenyasi 2, Gyedu and Wamahinso.

Faustina Opoku from Kenyasi 2 was one of the 360 farmers affected by the new mining developments in ECD4 area and was targeted to participate in SDIIP project with other PAPs. Faustina and her group chose mushroom enterprise development, which included six components: mushroom agronomy, Group Dynamics and Development, Market Advisory Services, Adaptive Technology Training, Post-harvest Processing, Food Safety and Quality Assurance. Faustina chose mushroom because mushroom provides quick returns, even from small plots, and the physical labor required is minimal. Most importantly, mushrooms already play an important

Metu emire kilo aduosa da biara na eho sika som sidi mpem mmienu bosome biara (I harvest at least 60kg of mushroom per day and earns an average of GH¢ 2000 per month)

A beneficiary (Faustina Opoku) watering her compost bags for Mushroom Production

Name of photographer:

Hamidu Issaka

Organization:

OICI-Ghana

Date:

4rd February, 2015

Location:

Kenyasi



role in household livelihood, food security and risk management strategies (consumed fresh or dried and stored for the lean season) in Kenyasi 2.

IMPACT OF OICI'S EMPOWERMENT OF FAUSTINA & OTHERS

The Newmont SDIIP facility served to empower Faustina and other rural women and men equally affected by the new gold mining developments. The project also enhanced Faustina and other women's access to productive resources (Finance, technical knowhow) and increased women's participation in decision-making at the project level, as well as in the mushroom value chain governance (farmer groups or producer group, mushroom trade networks).

Over the last five years, OICI has placed increasing importance on gender equality and women's empowerment, both as objectives in workforce development in-and-of itself, but also as a key instrument in the reduction of poverty and financial exclusion. One lesson from the SDIIP project: women

can become a powerful force, transforming the lives of their families and communities, but programs must acknowledge the value each gender brings and allocate resources equally.

Faustina is now a vibrant mushroom grower, registered by a number of buyers that have loyalty to her mushroom as wholesalers or as retailers/vendors. In the past Faustina, like other women mushroom producers, encountered significant discrimination, didn't have much information beyond what she had within her community and therefore being unable to negotiate for better prices. Faustina is an emerging role model farmer and an agent of change in her community.

"RAISING HOUSEHOLD INCOMES"

Akua Birago from Ntotroso was affected by Newmont mining expansion in the Amoma area. Her small plot of land, which happened to be the only source of supplementary revenue, aside from her husband's meager income was lost, leaving her family poor enough to need help from others. Her household was declared vulnerable after food security assessment and enrolled in the Vulnerable Peoples Program (VPP), where the household receives monthly food rations and other support. She was targeted to participate in SDIIP project with other PAPs. Akua and her group chose Bakery enterprise development which included six components: Group Dynamics and Development, Basic Baking Knowledge and Skills, Market Advisory Services, Safe Food Handling, Time Management and Book Keeping. Akua opted for bakery because it has ready market and provides quick returns on investment. Above and beyond all other considerations, bread has become an integral component of the breakfast of families in Ntotroso and demand exceeds supply.

OICI has placed emphasis on increasing incomes of families in rural areas, with particular attention to women who make critical contributions to household food security and incomes. It is worth mentioning that the SDIIP project has equipped about 1200 women and men alike with the requisite skills and tools needed to maintain livelihood and financial security at both individual and community levels.

Akua is currently a leading supplier of bread to vendors and retailers in the Ntotroso area. Prior to EARN's involvement in her life, her family's income was so meager that they were unable to meet their basic needs. In SDIIP, OICI brings to light how incomes of families could be improved through micro-enterprise development. Her household has been reassessed to be food secured and declared not vulnerable by the livelihood committee.

Me sikasem anya mpontuo naama me mma nso asan ko sukuu. Yedi adaune a yepe ne dodo biara a yepe. Metumi sie sika sidi ahaanu bosome biara wo abre a matete me ka nyinaa awie” (My financial improvement has allowed my kids to return to school and we eat the kind of food we want in the right quantities. I make savings of GH¢ 200 per month after all operational costs and household expenses have been deducted)

A beneficiary (Akua Birago) display baked bread

Name of photographer:

Desmond Opoku-Agyemang

Organization:

OICI-Ghana

Date:

3rd February, 2015

Location:

Ntotroso



THOMAS YAYEA REAPS

Rewards from the replication of Improved Agricultural and Marketing Practices

Thomas Yayea, now 30 years old, grew up in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia and looked forward to a life in the city. However, in 2004 and at the peak of the 14 year civil war, his dreams were dashed, compelling him and his family to relocate to his native village of Franzy, 11km from Zwedru, the provincial capital of Grand Gedeh. Thomas settled here with his wife, five along, eight siblings and his parents. When the civil war finally ended and the resettlement began, life was bleak and agriculture became the key activity for the restoration of livelihoods for most rural Liberians.

In June 2010, USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) awarded a Title II Multi-Year Assistance Program (MYAP), the Health, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development for Sustainability (HANDS) program, to the Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI) in River Gee and Grand Gedeh counties in southeastern Liberia. The overall goal of the program is to reduce food insecurity in the two counties through improved food availability and access. Prior to the arrival of the HANDS program, the main crop production techniques used by farmers

in Franzy were the traditional farming practices, characterized by low crop yield and income.

Consistent with OICI ethos on developing workforce, HANDS organized farmers into Farmer Associations. Individuals were selected based on criteria and trained in modern agricultural techniques. These farmers served as community-based role models and agriculture animators to provide on-site day-to-day training to their peers. These trainings were further given a boost by the HANDS Agriculture Field Agents working closely with the farming groups and setting up crop demonstration farms. HANDS provided these groups with assorted seeds and basic farming tools. The demonstration plots were used as the “surrogate” job placement sites to provide additional hands-on training and to facilitate the transfer of agronomic best practices. In addition, they provided opportunities for the farmers to simultaneously compare the improved production technologies to their own traditional methods. Furthermore, OICI administered Training of Trainers workshop for the Community Agriculture Promoters (CAPs) and Farmer Associations. The training focused on reorienting farmers to Farming as a Business and the modules included leadership, conflict resolution and management, marketing and post-harvest handling.

After eight to 12 months, the benefits of the program began to emerge. Thomas was one of the farmers with great promise. After some sales of cassava to the HANDS program for Super Gari processing, he concluded that this market outlet for his produce



was irregular and unsustainable and therefore sought other markets on his own. With income from the initial sale of cassava from his individual farm, Thomas purchased a motor bike for US\$900.00 and he presently uses the motor cycle to transport cassava harvested from his farm to the markets in Zwedru and the nearby the gold mines. With his cell phone, he has diligently kept the contacts of restaurateurs in Zwedru and the Super Gari center to supply them with produce as and when needed.

Thomas is also involved in the cultivation of rice, Liberia's staple food. With the kuu system (pooling of work force to carry on various farming tasks on a rotational basis) being active in his native community, Thomas has seized the opportunity to diversify into rice farming. Community members who work on his rice harvest fields are usually paid in kind, based on the bundles harvested. In the evenings, Thomas entertains his community by screening movies from his DVD player he purchased from his farm proceeds to further expand his sources of income.

When Thomas was asked how his life compares with the period before HANDS, he responded, "As a result of HANDS, my life has changed within a short period. My peers and community people now refer to me as the richest man in the community." Thomas already has eight cows and seven goats. Thomas also plans to build a house in Zwedru, on a parcel of land he bought from the family.

Thomas attributes his success to the trainings he received from OICI, the support of the HANDS and his commitment to all farming activities. His peers regard him as enterprising with a strong focus on execution.

Thomas is a farmer with audacious goals. He plans to expand his farming activities by introducing tree crops (cocoa) that has long economic life, continue his cattle rearing and improve his movies screening

during evening hours. When asked what else he had top on his agenda, he quipped " to provide better and higher education for my five children. My dream is for my children to acquire the education that I missed. Therefore, I will commit my labor and resources to become more successful in my farming endeavors".

Thomas' cattle grazing
in the field.
Courtesy - Jonathan Enders.



TOLUWANMI

Female 22yrs old has a certificate in Accounting from NOIC and is an EARN graduate. She is 1 out of 5 children and is currently looking for a job within the retail sector. She is most passionate about teaching and wants to go to lecture in fashion design. She is very good at using her hands and teaching. From the EARN program Toluwanmi has improved her skills in “feeling secure when talking to people” and has improved her communications skills.



ADEYEMO A.

Male 33 years old is currently a student at Lagos State University. He was voted by his classmate as the “class representative” and since then has stayed in contact with EARN alumni’s by creating a Facebook page to encourage spreading the word about EARN. Adeyemo describes himself as very motivated and “always willing to try something new to gain additional skills to give me drive...”.



ADEDOKUN

Female 29 years old describes herself as a women entrepreneur and would one day like to own a retail department store. Adedokun stated since graduating from the EARN program she has “more knowledge on how to prepare herself for the 21 century with skills needed in the retail industry.” She stated it is “difficult being employable when you do not have the skills employers need.”



JUSTINA

Female, 38 yrs old. Entrepreneur who has her own executive service company Desire's Venture. Justina reported she found the EARN program so productive that she sponsored 10 students to have the opportunity to participate in this program. Justina reported “customer service skills are essential for any field.”



MOSES

Male 26 years old describes himself as a person who “loves to make friends” and liked the EARN training because he was “free to talk and give his point of view.” Moses reported he found the most interesting part of the class the focus on women empowerment. And reported he now has a better understanding that “equality is needed”... in the workplace.