Building futures for Ghana's young people

Helping people with disabilities help themselves

January 2018

**In our first update from our Growing Economic Opportunities for Sustainable Development Project (GEOP) in Ghana we hear how your support is helping provide training for people with disabilities, opening up new opportunities to generate income and move towards self-sufficiency.**

Disabled and vulnerable

Almost half of Ghana's young people are unemployed and those who are disabled face further challenges in supporting themselves and their families.

Mary Cudjoe, 30, lives in a suburb of the Ellembelle district in the western region of Ghana, with her ten-year-old son and three-year-old daughter. Life has been very hard, as her condition means she is unable to farm or fish to earn a living, and she has been reliant on her parents to support her and her children.

Thanks to your support of this project, Mary has been learning how to make soap. She has now started producing liquid soap and hair products on a small scale to sell at local markets.

A brighter future

Mary said: 'I have now acquired the skills to set up my own business which will enable me to support my family financially. 'Business is gradually picking up and I have so far made some profit from the business. My dream is to have the biggest soap selling shop in the Ellembelle district and also have agents in nearby districts who sell my products.

'I have high hopes that my business will grow and make me self-reliant so I can cater well for my parents and children. Mary is growing more independent and now wants to help her neighbours. She says: 'I would want to extend a helping hand to other people with disabilities by training them in soap making in order to improve their living conditions. I would like to thank the supporters for their goodwill towards the project and I urge them to continue to pray for us.'

'I have high hopes that my business will grow and make me self-reliant

so I can cater well for my parents and children.' Mary Cudjoe

Accessing local markets

In total, 106 people with disabilities have so far been trained in soap making, leather work or bead-making. They've produced shampoo, conditioners, shoes, sandals, necklaces and bracelets.

Helping people to help themselves is an important part of the project. Trainees who have started their own businesses are being supported by Business Advisory Centres (BACs) which are helping them connect to local markets.

Kaku Famiyuh, a 40-year-old father of two and a member of Ellembelle People with Disability Association, was a cobbler with skills to mend shoes. He was selected for training with the project and taught others how to make shoes. With the support of the Ellembelle BAC he has sold 10 of the first 13 pairs he has made.

Kaku said: 'Living here is very hard as there are no employment opportunities especially for the youth and people with disabilities.

'Participating in the leather work training was a huge springboard for me to expand my business to produce different types of sandals, shoes and canvas to meet the market demand. I take pride in being the only shoemaker in the community, and through the shoe production, I have widened my customer base and I have people coming from far and near to buy my shoes.

'My income situation has improved and I am able to take very good care of my family. My dream moving forward is to expand my business and create employment opportunities for people with disabilities and the youth. I say a big thank you to the supporters of Christian Aid.'

Strong local support

Other progress updates in Ghana include:

• 37 young students from the Government Technical

Training Centre (GTTC) and National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) have been trained in International Institute of Welding (IIW) standards.

• Traditional authorities have committed to release land for the project’s farming activities which will train young women in improving agricultural land and selling crops, particularly cassava and sweet potato.

• Two business advisory centres have been presented with office equipment to help them best support communities and businesses in Ghana.

To bring about lasting change, the project is engaging with a range of stakeholders from various sectors, including local authorities, civil society organisations, the private sector and the media.

Project Officer Sadick Osman spoke of the strong cross-sector support for the project. He said: 'The commitment and dedication demonstrated by the stakeholders so far is very encouraging.

'Partners and beneficiaries are actively consulted and involved in planning and implementation of project activities which go a long way to promote ownership and sustainability of the project.

'The interest and passion of the beneficiaries engaged so far on the project cannot be overlooked. We look forward to seeing the impact on the communities and individuals involved as the project develops.'

'My income has improved and I am able to take very good care of my

family.'Kaku Famiyuh

**Please join us in our prayers for the project and Ghana:**

• Pray for the community, that they will be able to put the various skills they acquire to use, and through that improve their livelihoods and the living conditions of their families.

• Pray for the hearts of everyone involved in the project to be transformed. May they see their involvement as a service to their wider community.