Developing and delivering the tools for change in Ghana

Empowering people to create new futures

Late Autumn 2018

**In our fourth update, we learn how training for people with disabilities and apprenticeships for young people are opening new doors. And we find out about training community residents to gather evidence that will help persuade local authorities to support small businesses.**

Diversifying to thrive

Living in a slum community with high unemployment is extremely challenging for 38 year-old single mother Victoria Serwaa, who was born with a physical disability and has two young dependants.In an area where many young people turn to social vices to earn an income and the risk to personal safety is high, Victoria has focused on the active local market for small businesses and the opportunity to develop small and medium enterprises. Previously, Victoria only sold tailoring materials, but after taking part in GEOP training for vocational skills she now also produces bleach, antiseptic and liquid soap.

She said: 'Recognising the importance of diversifying my income, I did not waste any time in registering my interest in the training. From the little savings I had prior to the project, I invested GHS700 (around £110) as seed capital for the soap production business and have produced and sold 600 bottles each of bleach, antiseptic and liquid soap. The business is thriving and I have so far made a profit of GHS1,200. I have saved GHS500 and I intend to use it to expand my tailoring business as well as to cater well for my family. My source of income has been diversified as a result of the GEOP project. My family look happier and I can confidently say I have a real job now. Many thanks to the European Union and Christian Aid for supporting this life-saving intervention.'

Building for the future

After losing a leg as a child, Mercy Okyere struggles to use transport in the city of Accra and is reliant on creating a livelihood in her suburb. Since the birth of her daughter three years ago, Mercy had faced difficulties in making ends meet, but after taking part in training to make liquid soaps, she is now able to save money.

She said: 'I save GHS100 each month in an investment account I have opened in a bank, and over the next two years I intend to use that money to complete a building project I had started and stopped when I became pregnant with my daughter. Without the income from the sale of the soaps and detergents, I could not even dream of continuing the building project, as things became difficult after my daughter was born. But now, I foresee it being possible because my income sources have been diversified and I am more stable financially now.'

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New skills for young lives

Over 120 young people aged between 15 and 35 are building the foundations of a career, thanks to apprenticeship programmes made possible by GEOP. All apprentices are placed with master craftsmen in their own communities on programmes ranging from 3 to 18 months. They are learning skills for driving, catering, hairdressing, tailoring, ICT networking, and repairing phones and electronic devices.

Programme officer Sadick Osman said: 'We have been impressed by the continuous engagement of the trainees across the various apprenticeships. Among them are young single mothers who, in our various monitoring exercises, have expressed appreciation for the great work their master trainers are doing with them. They also express a sense of hope for their future and that of their children, now more than ever, because they foresee a future full of opportunities, a situation they could not have predicted until the GEOP project.'

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Gathering data to help bring about change

Fifty-five people from across the community in a district of Accra have been trained to engage fellow residents in a questionnaire on public spending and services for small businesses. Those trained will train others, in the hope of collecting significant data and forming a body of evidence to take to the local authorities, to call for more investment in provision for businesses. The training also included identifying advocacy strategies to help residents hold local authorities to account on issues of public service delivery, the business environment, and tax spending.

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

• Pray for the various field researchers who will engage with the questionnaire. That they will be well received within the communities and that whoever they are required to talk to will respond appropriately to the questions and make a meaningful contribution to the project goals.

• Pray that whatever is in the local and national news in Ghana, political and societal debate will stay on advocacies for better working conditions for people with disabilities and not detract attention.

• Please pray for strength for the project team. The spread of the project requires concurrent actions between travels, monitoring and execution which can be challenging. Pray for good health so the team can achieve what they set out to do.