

Success in the Village

In rural northern Ghana, young people see their prospects as waiting for them somewhere in the sprawling urban areas and cities of the south. Rural, urban migration is almost a question of when, rather than if. Even for those that don't migrate, the expectation that there aren't many activities that will impact their economic situation in the rural areas. It is the way things have been for, farming villages in Ghana, almost without exception.



An agroecological enterprise Songtaa Tietaa Enterprises, or STE from here on is making an attempt at changing this. Based in Zambo Nawonyelle in the Upper West region, STE is raising opportunities in the very villages many would be economic migrants would have abandoned. Through the fruits of the land.

This private organisation founded five years ago made agro processing into a form of employment for women and youth in the ten villages surrounding Zambo Nawonyelle. Its main activity being value addition of produce from local peasant farming like shea butter, rice, tuber flours, local spices and traditional cloth. STE also markets the same to national and international consumers and runs a show room for the various products in Zambo Nawonyelle.

Through STE's activities, a new phenomenon has emerged. Greener pastures in the very rural region. Green enough to keep young people, through with their elementary education around longer. Like Tracey Nuotuo, an 18-year old high school student and aspiring nurse. She is saving towards her college education from proceeds of her shea butter and shea soap products. Skills acquired through this enterprise have been put to good use in her shea butter and soap production.

The impact of STE goes further than keeping youngsters in the village. A few years ago, the same households producing surplus to sell were facing malnutrition, low yields and food scarcity. There was also little knowledge on how to convert the local farming into life sustaining income without watering down the quality of the produce. Today 30 local women and youth are employed as permanent processors at STE and a further 80 are employed on a part time basis. STE is also supplied by over 700 out growers from the surrounding areas.

While STE was registered as a private enterprise at its inception in 2015, the

enterprise has worked and continues to work with various partners. Both governmental and non-governmental organisations. These partnerships are part of the reason the enterprise has been so successful. It is how the trainings and capacity building for processors have been achieved.

The organisation has also received technical and financial support on food and safety hygiene, packaging and branding, good agronomy practices, and financial literacy by various agencies over the years.

The impact of this support chiefly reflected in production volumes which increased significantly all around and doubled in particular cases. But it helped in other ways too.

New skills acquired also brought about new product lines and through the loans granted by partners, STE has acquired processing machines. The interactions with the various partners also made STE more visible, further impacting sales positively.

There are still challenges for this Agro ecology Enterprise. For one certification with the Food and Drug Agency for most of the products is still slow in coming. Packaging and branding are also a work in progress. Even at this stage of growth, STE could



still use more grants and loans to increase capacity, produce more, engage more processors and therefore reach a wider area.

But this agro ecological enterprise, in rural Ghana has established itself as one of those that have risen above the odds. Forged solutions out of the ground. Literally.

Shea butter processing



Soaps making



Rice processing



Groundnut paste



Machine room

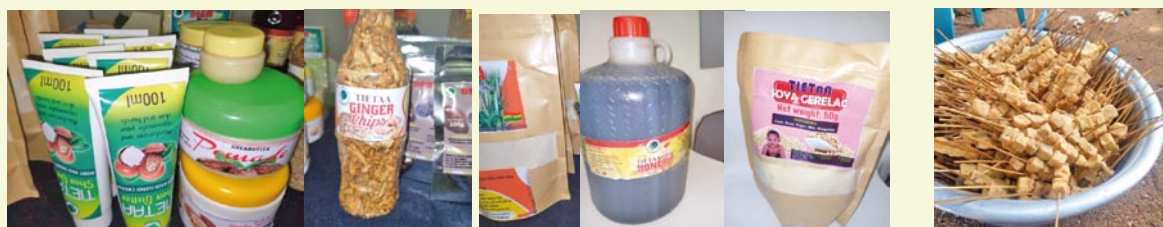


Soap making training

Dawadawa processing



Cross-section of some products



Soya product