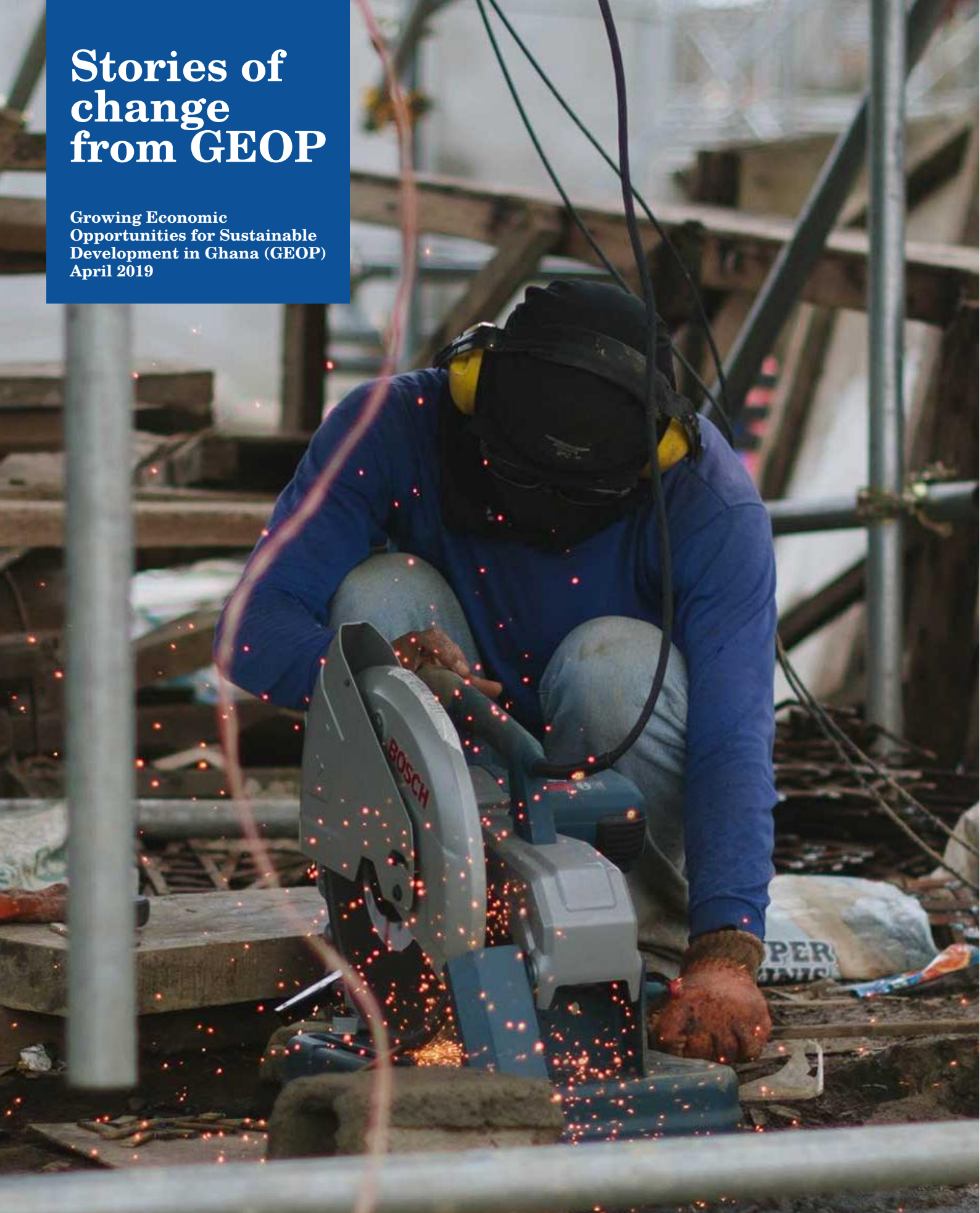


Stories of change from GEOP

Growing Economic Opportunities for Sustainable Development in Ghana (GEOP)
April 2019



GEOP
GROWING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Improving livelihoods through GEOP



Safiya Musah displays her finished products for sale, including bleach, liquid soap and floor cleaner, as a result of the training she received as part of the GEOP programme.

About GEOP

Growing Economic Opportunities for Sustainable Development project (GEOP) is a three-year, EU-funded project that aims to foster strong partnerships between civil society and local authorities, to promote local job creation, revenue mobilisation and expansion of economic activities.

The project is implemented in the Ellembelle District, Western Region, and Ayawaso East Municipal Assembly and Ablekuma South sub-metros of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Ghana.

Brief background

Safiya Musah has lived in Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana for most of her life. Unfortunately, in her youth, Safiya received poor medical treatment that had devastating effects. As a result, she now lives with a disability and for years was forced to rely on her family members for financial assistance.

Sadly, Safiya also lost her brother and is responsible for raising his two children. In 2001, Safiya moved to Accra to find work to support her family.

Life before the project

Previously to make a living, with the support of her elder sister, Safiya sold earrings at the Mallam Atta market in Accra New town. However, the business was not profitable, and she incurred significant debt.

In an attempt to secure a better livelihood, Safiya started selling face towels at markets both within and outside of Accra. This business was more profitable, but did not raise enough funds to support her family.

Soap making training with GEOP

Safiya heard about the GEOP project and the training opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) from the Focal Person from Nima Citizens Watch.

She registered immediately, recognising the difference that the training could make to her and her family.

Together with other participants in the Ayawaso East Municipal Assembly, they chose to be trained in soap making.

‘Participating in the training was the best decision in my life’, says Safiya.

Working with new skills

When Safiya started the training, she had very limited resources. She saved her travel allowance to the training to buy bowls, buckets and raw materials to start her business.

Safiya also received some money from her uncle, which she invested in her soap making business.

Safiya is now producing bleach, disinfectant and liquid soap.

‘I have been working for nine months now and I have so far produced 350 bottles of bleach, 300 bottles of liquid soap and 400 bottles of disinfectant’, remarks Safiya.

Through her strong marketing skills and the quality of her products she has been able to save 2,500.00 GHS, just over 400 Euros, as profit in her first nine months.

Safiya is also one of ten members from the programme who received a scholarship in Accra to learn how to make perfume, toothpaste and powdered soap. She is optimistic that these new skills will help her diversify her business, and increase her income.

Safiya currently has six buyers from Kade, Ntronian, Cape Coast and Accra, and her business is gradually growing. Learning from her previous business experience, Safiya has a cash only delivery arrangement with her buyers, as opposed to credit sales.

For Safiya, the project is life changing. As she explains, ‘The skills I learnt from the project have changed my life as I can work to support myself and the children of my brother who died’.

‘I can give them an education due to my increase in income. I would really like to thank Christian Aid and the European Union for improving my livelihood’.

Vision for business

Safiya dreams of growing her business and having a large shop to sell her products in the near future.

She would also like to train both people living with disabilities, and others, in soap making so they can use the skill to work and improve their standard of living.

Find out more about the GEOP project

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Enhancing welding skills for master craftsmen



Shaifu Abdul Razak welding a metal door at his workshop in Nima Down Side. Shaifu has learned new skills through the GEOP programme, increased his income and is looking to take on and train more apprentices.

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Brief background

Shaifu Abdul Razak is a 35-year-old single father, living with his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter in Nima Research, in the Ayawaso East Municipal Assembly of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

Shaifu lives in a rented self-contained room in a compound house. Shaifu explains that life is difficult at Nima Research, as there is a high rate of youth unemployment.

He believes that this has led to an increase in youth crime and gambling as a means to make money.

Life before the project

Shaifu has been working as a welder for the past 16 years. He has worked with three firms, building strong skills to fabricate and weld bill boards, pipes for vehicles, and is able to gas and arc weld.

In 2009, Shaifu established his own workshop at Nima Down Side with the support of four other master craftsmen. Shaifu has now been running the workshop for close to nine years.

Drive to participate in GRATIS training

To identify master craftsmen for the welding and fabrication training at GRATIS Foundation, the Ayawaso East District Citizens Monitoring Committee (DCMC) members visited Shaifu at his workshop to explain the GEOP project and training opportunities open to him.

Keen to learn more welding skills Shaifu registered to participate in the 6-month training. Shaifu explains, 'Learning how to fabricate and weld a tomato and pepper mill was a key highlight of the welding training for me. I can confidently say I can now do argon and zig-zag welding because of the skills I learned through the training.'

Shafiu currently has two apprentices and is passing on his new skills.

Significantly, the project team registered Shafiu and 23 other master craftsmen who participated in the GRATIS welding training for the National Vocational Technical Institute (NVTI) Proficiency I examination. All the registered master craftsmen passed the examination and Shafiu is now using the certificate to attract larger welding contracts.

Life after training

Shafiu is full of praise for the training as his knowledge and skills in welding have increased significantly.

Whilst the market for welding is quite low in Nima, in comparison to other areas, Shafiu has diversified his customer base from individuals to working on new building projects sites, which has increased his income. This he believes is also due to the customer service and basic entrepreneurship skills he learnt from the training at GRATIS Foundation.

Prior to the project, Shafiu was earning approximately GHS 700 a month. His average earnings have now increased to between GHS 700-800 per month. Through the training, Shafiu also explains that he has learnt a lot about safety practices in welding, thread cutting and measurement.

Future direction for business

Shafiu has a vision of growing his business and stocking high quality welding machines in his workshop so he can do different types of welding.

He recognises the unemployment challenge within his community and he is willing to take on more apprentices and develop their skills in welding and fabrication.

Find more about the GEOP project

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Increased savings for education



Susana Ackah displays beaded necklaces, earrings and bracelets she has made through the GEOP programme, at the 22nd International Trade Fair in Accra.

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Brief background

Susana Ackah, 40, has two children and lives in the Atuabo community, a suburb of the Ellebelle District in the Western Region of Ghana.

Employment is a challenge in Atuabo and there are limited opportunities especially for young people and people living with disabilities. The proliferation of the oil and gas industries in the region has also increased the price of living in Susana's community.

Life before the project

Before engaging with the GEOP project, Susana worked as a seamstress and on average earned just GHS 20 each month. Her work was seasonal, and so providing for her family was a real challenge.

For Susana, education has always been a priority, so despite her financial challenges she managed to support her daughter through secondary level education.

Participating in project training

Whilst looking for further employment opportunities to support her family, Susana heard about the GEOP vocational skills training for people living with disabilities, through the Ellebelle PWD association.

Susana immediately registered her interest and voluntarily participated in the needs assessment for the training and opted for bead design training.

Together with 15 other participants from neighbouring communities in Ellebelle, she received training to produce beaded necklaces, bracelets and slippers.

'I was impressed with the training by the facilitator and I was determined to use the skills from the training to work to be able to support my family', Susana explains.

Life After the project training

After the training, Susana did not have enough money to start her own business, so she borrowed GHS 100 from a friend. So far, Susana has produced different types of necklaces, bracelets and slippers, and her customer base stretches to neighbouring communities. Over a period just eight months, Susana made a profit of GHS 1500 from her business.

‘As a result of the increase in my income, I can now support my daughter to buy handouts and text books for her course at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) Distance Education campus at Axim. Providing the basic needs for my family is no longer such a challenge for me because I am able to make some money from the beads making business.’

Due to her strong craftsmanship, Susana was selected to be part of a team of eight GEOP participants, who live with disabilities, to exhibit at Accra’s 2018 International Trade Fair to exhibit their products and build market linkages.

Vision for the business

To expand her business operation, Susana saves daily with a microfinance institution and she plans to open a shop in her community to sell her products.

Prior to the training, Susana was able to save GHS 2 a day. Due to the strength of her new products and business experience, she is now able to save GHS 5 daily.

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Dignifying livelihoods through GEOP



Sadick Osman, GEOP programme officer (left), Victoria Serwaa (central), and a buyer (right). Victoria exhibits her finished soap products, including liquid soap, bleach and antiseptic liquid. Victoria's new business, started as result of GEOP training is already profitable. She is using the money to support her family and to invest in other businesses.

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Brief background

Victoria Serwaa, 38, is a single mother living in the Shukura community, a suburb of the Ablekuma South sub-metro.

'I have been physically challenged from birth and life has not been easy for me and my family. I have a son and two dependants. Shukura is a slum community and living here is extremely difficult because of the limited employment opportunities for the young and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)', Victoria explains.

Due to the high levels of unemployment in Victoria's community, many young people engage in crime which poses challenges and threats to people's safety.

Life before the project

Despite the unemployment challenge in Victoria's community, there is an active local market for small businesses which presents an opportunity for the development of small and medium sized enterprises.

Prior to the GEOP project, Victoria sold tailoring materials in a small shop. On average she made a monthly profit of GHS 150 from the business and used the money to support her family.

Being an active member of the Ablekuma South PWD association, Victoria learnt about the GEOP project and the training for PWDs in vocational skills. Recognising the need to diversifying her income, she registered an interest in the training.

'The training on soap production was very enlightening and I praise the the facilitator for making the training very hands on', explains Victoria.

Life after the project

After the training, Victoria focused on producing bleach, antiseptic and liquid soap. So far she has produced and sold an incredible 1800 bottles in just eight months. She currently displays her products in her shop and in her friend's shop, as well as working directly with a buyer to help market her products.

Victoria's business is thriving. She has made a profit of GHS 1200, of which she has saved GHS 500. She intends to use this to expand her tailoring business as well as to continue to support her family.

Victoria's testimony

'My source of income has diversified as a result of the GEOP project. My family looks happier and I can confidently say I have a real job now', Victoria reflects.

'I aspire to travel to my home town in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana to train other PWDs and able-bodied people on how to prepare bleach, antiseptic and liquid soap in order to improve their livelihoods'.

'Many thanks to the European Union and Christian Aid for supporting this life-changing intervention'.

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