

New Developments

UPDATE FOR OUR SUPPORTERS FALL 2010



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UNLEASHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RURAL GHANA



▲ With the help of EWB, the Titritorb farmer group in Ghana is collectively selling soya beans to earn an income.

The road out to the community of Gbangbanpon from the district capital of Saboba in Northern Ghana is not an easy one to travel. Although Gbangbanpon is only a 25 minute drive from Saboba, the red dirt is littered with bumps and deep holes, taking an expert to safely navigate.

It was here, along the main road perpetually in disrepair, that Duncan Farthing-Nichol could be found this summer working with the newly-formed Titritorb farmer group under the hot Ghanaian sun.

From May to August, Duncan was one of 36 EWB short-term volunteers – called Junior Fellows – working with EWB’s programs in West and Southern Africa. For four months, Duncan, a student from the University of Manitoba, was immersed in rural African life. His work with EWB’s Agriculture Team in Ghana focused on improving the lives of farmers and their families on a widespread scale.

TRAVELLING A DIFFICULT ROAD

In Ghana, EWB is helping rural families shift away from farming for survival, to farming as a business. Without a business approach

to agriculture it is difficult for farmers to effectively manage their harvests against the inevitable challenges that arise. As a result, families are often faced with insufficient crop production and unstable sources of income.

When he first met the Titritorb farmers group, Duncan learned from the group Secretary that not long ago each farmer was alone, struggling to harvest high-demand Ghanaian grains such as maize and rice to earn enough money and support their families.

Despite their high quality crops, the farmers earned a meager living. They had to sell their maize and rice right away, regardless of the price they would receive, because of pressing expenses like fertilizer and school fees.

And because Gbangbanpon is so isolated, the farmers had no choice but to sell their crops to ‘middle women’ a group of women who travel from village to village offering below market prices for farmers’ crops. Void of options, the farmers – including the group Secretary – were caught in an inescapable cycle of poverty.

“Even if they could afford expensive storage and transportation for their crops to get a better price, these farmers were too poor to not sell them right away to cover their food, healthcare and schooling expenses,” says Duncan.

CHANGING DIRECTIONS

For the past two years, 10 EWB volunteers have spent a collective 500 months living and working with rural farmers to develop a tailored solution to improve access to

► The Titritorb group has identified that soya bean is in demand at local markets.

market opportunities. Out of this experience EWB and the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture created the Agriculture as a Business program in 2009.

The program is a series of eight workshops that brings farmers together to farm in a group and improves their critical business planning, management, and analysis skills. Working in a group, instead of individually, ensures farmers have a better chance to mitigate inevitable risks and earn a viable income.

To date, the Agriculture as a Business program has helped 2,400 farmers better plan harvests, track profits and manage planting cycles. The program may seem simple, but it is giving farmers the practical tools necessary to innovatively address challenges as a group and earn an income.

“From the first day I met the Titratorb group, I could tell that they saw the opportunities created by coming together and working through their problems,” says Duncan.

MOVING FORWARD WITH PURPOSE

In early summer, the Titratorb group began the Agriculture as a Business program with Moses Abug'da, a Ministry of Food and Agriculture field staff. Duncan and Moses delivered the workshops to help the farmers identify new business opportunities, gain financial analysis skills, and build strategic planning capabilities.

Having now almost completed the eight workshops, the Titratorb group is finalizing a business plan to collectively sell soya bean – a crop that, with the help of the

“At our last meeting, Titratorb group thanked us for bringing them together and giving them the chance to work their way out of poverty through unity and self-reliance,” concludes Duncan.



“The Titratorb group has quickly understood business ideas and are working to put those ideas into practice in a lasting way,” says Duncan. “All they needed was the opportunity to do so.”

program, has been identified as high in demand at local markets.

Each of the group's farmers will grow the beans on one acre plots, then pool their harvest together in a collective storage facility. One group member will then transport the full harvest to sell at the Savannah Farmers' Marketing Company in Tamale – a town four

hours away – rather than each farmer selling individually in Gbangbanpon.

With Duncan and Moses' help, the Titratorb group identified that the Savannah Farmers Marketing Company pays US \$ 29.50 per bag, compared to the US \$ 18.26 they were receiving from the 'middle women'. A good acre of soya beans will yield eight to nine bags – and at 60% more revenue per bag, the farmers expect to significantly increase their incomes in the coming months.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Agriculture as a Business program is high impact because it takes into account and explicitly addresses the specific challenges facing rural farmers like those in the Titratorb group.

“EWB doesn't force farmer groups to fit into a program with strict parameters,” says Duncan. “It simply gives them business principles, space for innovation, and the support of a group they need to secure their futures.”

Because Duncan and Moses ran the Agriculture as a Business program for the Titratorb farmers group, farmers now receive significantly higher margins on their soya crops and a reliable source of income at specific points in the year.

And Duncan was just one of 36 EWB Junior Fellows who worked in West and Southern Africa this summer. The impact that he and so many others has had on the lives of farmers like those in the Titratorb group has ensured that hundreds of rural Africans and their families are equipped with the opportunity to live better lives.

STORIES OF IMPACT

IMPROVING CANADA'S AID EFFECTIVENESS

On June 3, EWB brought Canada's four major political parties together in Ottawa to support an agenda that will increase Accountability, Creativity and Transparency in foreign aid spending.

EWB's campaign – dubbed ACT – is advocating not for additional funds, but for existing foreign aid dollars to be spent more efficiently and effectively.

With this in mind, the campaign includes recommendations such as establishing an arm's length agency to evaluate effectiveness of Canadian aid projects and publishing Canadian International Development Agency project data to make successes and failures public.

“ACT is unique because we have politicians from all parties working together to present a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of Canadian foreign aid,” says EWB Co-CEO George Roter.

With the campaign in full swing, a team of 500 EWB will write letters and editorials, and meet with 50 Members of Parliament to bring them on board with the campaign's goals.

For more about EWB's ACT campaign, visit act.ewb.ca

BRINGING EWB INTO CANADIAN WORKPLACES

From July 12 – 19, EWB's leaders came together to engage professionals at some of Canada's well-known workplaces with the complexities of development in rural Africa. In just one week, EWB delivered 40 presentations to 1,000 professionals across the country - right in their offices.

“I was excited to see change in perspectives and opinions from the start to the end of the presentation,” says presenter Lauren Quan, from the University of Calgary EWB chapter.

EWB has long known that Canadians can change the lives of rural Africans through even small actions – like purchasing Fair Trade products – and the professional community is a big part of making this a reality.

“Professionals are often decision makers with a high potential to make significant contributions to the world around them,” says Eli Angen, Director of Corporate Engagement. “This campaign identified the actions necessary to make those contributions.”

The demand for workplace presentations hasn't stopped – they were so successful that 20 more are now scheduled for the fall months.

To request a presentation in your workplace, visit: betw.ewb.ca

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THANK YOU.

NOTEABLE DATES

SEP

1

Thousands of students at 27 EWB chapters begin another year of engaging Canadians with the role they have to play in Africa's future.

OCT

1

EWB's wall calendar and holiday cards will be available. To purchase online visit: ewb.ca/calendar.

OCT

15

Double the impact of your miles when, for 1 day only on October 15, Aeroplan will match all donations of Aeroplan miles to EWB. Donate miles online at: aeroplan.com/donate

NOV

19

Seven new long-term volunteers complete a month of pre-departure training and leave for Africa.