



SUCCESS STORY

As shea company expands, rural livelihoods improve in Ghana

A shea company's success is improving the livelihoods of hundreds of rural farmers in northern Ghana "one woman at a time."



Naasakle Ltd. produces black soap and ivory, beige and yellow shea butter for export. The company is using a \$95,000 grant from the U.S. African Development Foundation to expand and improve its use of information technology and add a full-time accountant and procurement officer.

The Trade Hub's sustained commitment to companies like Naasakle ultimately transforms the communities where jobs are created and incomes raised.

When Eugenia Akuete started Naasakle Ltd. in 2003, her modest shea butter company produced about 3,000 pounds of the natural vegetable fat for export every couple of months.

Now, thanks to a \$95,000 grant from the U.S. African Development Foundation and years of technical assistance and expert consulting from USAID's West Africa Trade Hub, Akuete's company expansion is continuing: Naasakle will soon be exporting 18-20 tons of shea butter every month, an estimate Akuete called "conservative."

Ultimately, Naasakle's success is a shared one, felt in rural communities, where women collect the shea nuts that become shea butter. As many as four million women in West Africa supplement their incomes through shea.

Naasakle will more than double its staff and the number of women it works with in the impoverished West Gonja district of Northern Ghana will rise from 300 to 700.

Akuete said the Trade Hub helped her take her first steps.

"The Trade Hub held my hand, teaching me how to walk and shielding me from the bumps of falling down on my face," she said. "Obviously the Trade Hub is doing something well to enable me to not just stay afloat but to move up!"

The Trade Hub helped Akuete participate in trade shows in the United States, linking her company to international buyers. Technical assistance on quality standards, marketing, and certification has helped her company expand further.

Akuete is using what she has learned to innovate: she is now linking rural producers with the international market to establish traceability and organic and fair-trade certifications for her shea butter and shea butter products.

"My hopes for the future are to be able to help as many women as possible improve their lives," Akuete said. "This is what I have termed 'The Shea Revolution: Changing lives one woman at a time!'"