GROWING GHANA’S INDUSTRIES THROUGH BUSINESS ADVOCACY

Volume 2

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WHY WE PROMOTE PRIVATE-PUBLIC SECTOR DIALOGUE

A well resourced business entity managed by an efficient entrepreneur is not likely to succeed in an unfavourable business environment where tax rates and tariffs are crippling, access to credit is virtually non-existent, business operating permits are difficult to obtain and basic infrastructure is woefully inadequate.

It is therefore necessary that both the public and private sectors must make conscious efforts to remove all the impediments in the business environment to enable private sector businesses to flourish. Public-Private Sector dialogue is a very potent approach that can be effectively used to enhance the business environment for the private sector. This approach suggests that both the public and private sectors have a critical role to play in creating a more enabling business environment for the growth of private businesses.

Governments create the political and macro-economic environment for nations through legislations and regulations. In fact, regulations and state policies are a form of government intervention in the economy which impact on the growth and
development of private businesses. Therefore, if these regulations place unfavourable burdens on private enterprises, productivity, incomes and job creation within the private sector will be adversely affected to the detriment of the economy. This explains why Private Sector Organizations (PSOs), through business advocacy, ought to dialogue with the public sector about the need to remove the impediments in the business environment to enable private sector businesses to flourish.

Both the private and public sectors stand to gain immensely from the creation of a better enabling business environment. The improvement of the business environment by governments encourages more private sector investments, while existing private businesses also experience increased productivity, jobs and incomes. Such wealth creation enables the private to honour their tax obligations to the state, thereby enabling the public sector to gain the tax revenues required to deliver public services and create a favourable investment climate. The virtuous circle diagram below illustrates how the public and private sectors mutually benefit from a conducive business environment created through public-private sector collaboration.

Public-private sector dialogue is at the heart of the BUSAC Fund business advocacy model; hence throughout a decade of operations in Ghana, the Fund has supported advocacy actions that have enabled PSOs to collaborate with the public sector to remove some of the barriers to doing business in Ghana. This compilation of success stories features a number of BUSAC Fund-sponsored business associations who have successfully dialogued with the public sector to remove the impediments hampering the growth and profitability of their businesses.

The virtuous circle diagram illustrates how both the private and public sectors benefit from fruitful dialogue.
Companies dealing in solar equipment in Ghana are expected to see a booming industry in the coming days following a directive given by Parliament that all kerosene lanterns be replaced with solar lanterns, a development which will see the growth of the solar industries in the country.

Following the directive, the Ministry of Energy has initiated invitation for tenders for interested companies to submit their proposals for the contract to import solar lanterns into the country. Some companies have submitted their proposals and are awaiting the final stages in the signing of the contracts.

This order by Parliament was as a result of an advocacy action undertaken by the Association of Ghana Solar Industries (AGSI) supported by the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund and is considered as the major achievement of the action.

After several engagements with Members of Parliaments (MPs) on the importance of solar energy in Ghana, Parliament saw the need to help improve the solar energy industry in Ghana and this prompted the directive that there should be a replacement of all kerosene lanterns with that of solar.
As part of the advocacy, some MPs were taken to Spain to have firsthand information on how solar equipment is being used and their benefits.

Mr. Omane Frimpong, President of the Association, in an interview indicated that the result of the advocacy action was phenomenal considering the directive given by Parliament.

In addition to the directive that “all kerosene lanterns should be replaced with solar lanterns,” the advocacy action has strengthened the association and its members. There is more cohesion and understanding among the members,” he said.

“The association is now on a high pedestal, the directive by Parliament is the biggest achievement even though that was not our initial target” he emphasized.

The association had several challenges until BUSAC Fund’s intervention and these challenges included high tariffs on imported solar equipment, how to get more people to use solar equipment and the seeming non-existence of cohesion among members but the advocacy action that was undertaken has now removed all the bottlenecks, according to Mr. Omane.
The main problem that the association was facing was high tariffs on imported solar energy equipment which has negatively affected the demand for such products and subsequently, the businesses of members but Parliament seems to have dealt with it and the other stakeholders involved in the action had indicated that these concerns will be addressed.

During the Advocacy action key agencies including Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and the Ministry of Energy were brought on board.

Bernard Asamoah, Secretary of the Association, in an interview did indicate that during the advocacy action coordination among the key stakeholders was good and the association is looking forward to submit their final report and document because they were required by the stakeholders to provide the documents to justify why the import duties on solar equipment should be removed.

“Without the fund the visibility we have created wouldn’t have been there. It has been good because we have been able to penetrate through Parliament, the ministry of energy. Now in fact they seldom publish any tender which is related to solar, they give us the information prior to the publishing, so I think it has been good,” he stated adding that “It has exposed us more. “

Even though the membership has not improved, the number has moved from 10 members initially to more than 30 members now, he said.

He attributed the low number to the “tricky nature of the industry” because there are those who want to bring in cheap quality solar equipment hence the real quality ones which are brought to the country by members of the association are neglected.

“They are not willing to join the association because the association has standards and will not associate with businesses who want to cash in,” he said.

He indicated that the directive given by Parliament is being implemented because the Ministry of Energy has invited interested companies to apply for the contract. “Some companies have applied are awaiting the contracts to be signed,” he said.

The Association located in Accra is made up of forty members with the objective of promoting the use of solar equipment in Ghana.
The response by the Nkoranza District Assembly to improve the infrastructure for automobile mechanics is yielding positive results for members of the Ghana National Association of Garages. The artisans say the provision of needed facilities has increased patronage of their services.
Leaders of the Nkoranza branch of the Ghana National Association of Garages (GNAG) are expressing their happiness about the increase patronage of their services leading to remarkable increase in income for their members.

The Chairman of the association, Mr. Jerry Adjei who attributed the rise in patronage of their services to the provision of basic facilities at the garages explained that the deplorable state of the Nkoranza cluster of automobile servicing shops (popularly known as garages) which made their place of work unattractive to clients, is now a thing of the past as the district assembly has helped to improve upon the facilities at the site.

“When we were forced to move to the new site by the District Assembly, there were no better facilities here to enhance the growth of our businesses. But after our advocacy action supported by the BUSAC Fund, the assembly has now provided us with a new six-seater toilet facility, thereby improving the sanitary conditions here. We are now more comfortable working here, and more clients now feel comfortable coming here for our services. Most of our members are now getting increased income,” Mr. Adjei stated in an interview.

Following a number of fruitful dialogue sessions with officials of Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), there seem to be light at the end of the tunnel as the leadership of GNAG have a strong
assurance from ECG that their garages will be connected to the national electricity grid before the end of the year.

The Secretary of the Association, Mr. Mohammed B. Sualiho pointed out that “the energy providers have shown a strong commitment to help connect our garages to electricity. Currently, officials of ECG are in constant consultation with members of the Nkoranza garages association to provide us with a new transformer that will supply our electricity needs.”

“Previously, many private transport owners who didn’t like the poor state of our garages often sent their vehicles to distant towns such as Kumasi and Techiman for maintenance. But now, due to the improved facilities and security situation at our garages, most of these clients have started coming back for our services. We are very grateful to the District assembly and the BUSAC Fund. Now we can happily pay our taxes to the local authorities,” Mr. Sualiho added.

The Nkoranza branch of the Ghana National Association of garages is a union of automobile mechanics who ply their trade at Nkoranza in the Brong Ahafo Region. When members of the association moved to a new location allocated to them by the district assembly, their businesses slowed down significantly due to the absence of basic infrastructure at the site. There were no sanitary facilities, security fences and transformers to house and distribute enough electricity supply for the operation of the automobile mechanics.

The neglect of the needs of the artisans at the site added a lot of cost to their businesses. Based on these issues, Nkoranza Garages sought funding from Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund to enable them advocate to the district assembly to provide basic infrastructure at the new site.

In response, the BUSAC Fund, supported by DANIDA, USAID and the EU, provided an advocacy grant which enabled the association to research into their problem and use empirical data and lessons from the research for effective advocacy with the district assembly and other duty relevant bearers to find solutions to their problems. The grant also enabled the association to organize workshops, during which they engaged key stakeholders such as the district assembly and ECG in discussions on how to address the infrastructural problems plaguing their businesses.
The Plastic Manufacturers Association in Ghana (GPMA) has greatly used its advocacy skills which have been traced to the various capacity building support received from the BUSAC Fund to save the plastic industry.
The association, through the BUSAC Fund-sponsored business advocacy, was able to negotiate its way to the Vice President’s office to present a proposal to the then Vice President, John Mahama, that has literally halted a decision to ban plastic use in the country.

The government announced its intention to ban the use of plastics due to the environmental hazard they posed. The ban would have resulted in the collapse of the plastic manufacturing industry as well as enormous job losses and its rippling economic hardship on people.

The association then took it upon itself to ensure the passage of a law to promote the use of biodegradable agents in the manufacturing of plastic products. However, that has not been successful due to the frequent change of policy makers at the ministerial level.

“The frequent change in Ministers has greatly affected our course in ensuring the passage of the law e.g. the current Minister of environment says we should resubmit our proposals and data to the ministry because new people are in charge,” George Prah, a member of the association, noted.

“Also, we spend time and money training a top official from the Ministry of Environment only for him to be replaced at the eleventh hour. This means we have to train the new official and we do not have the resources for that. Secondly, we do not know if this new official may even stay with us throughout the project,” he lamented.

Prah emphasized the urgency with which the law needs to be passed, adding that the nation can only collect 20% of the plastic waste it generates therefore there is the need to start using biodegradable agents in the production of plastics to take care of the uncollected plastic waste.

Mr. Prah noted that the introduction of biodegradable agents will lead to chain scission within finished plastic products; and as the chain scission occurs and the molecular weight of the polymer is reduced, the plastic begins to lose its properties and strength, thus reducing its longevity properties. In effect the material becomes brittle, and as the chain scission reaction continues, the bag simply falls apart and eventually decomposes.

The Plastic Manufacturers Association in collaboration with the Ghana Standards Authority undertook trials in Ghana to verify
the potency of the biodegradable agent in plastics, and it was very successful. The trials were done on plastic sachet and film products.

The project co-ordinator for the association, Ms. Faustina Hukportie stated that, “Our effort was not in vain as we succeeded in the placement of well labelled dustbins across the bus terminals in the capital city to separate plastic waste from other waste products. We also built our advocacy capacity in the process.”

The association, as part of the advocacy process, visited radio and television stations to sensitize the public and particularly policy makers on the use of oxo-biodegradable additives in the manufacturing of plastics. Selected members also travelled to the UK to have firsthand knowledge on the subject matter.

The association also joined the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology on a nationwide tour to educate the populace on the importance of using biodegradable agents in manufacturing plastic products.

“One of the objectives for the formation of the association was to act as a mouthpiece and talk on behalf of members when the need arises. GPMA has done so well to increase awareness about this important issue, and I believe BUSAC Fund had a lot to do with it,” Prah observed.

The total membership of the association which stood at 52 prior to the advocacy, increased to 56 after other members became aware of the good works and recognition of the association.

The importation of non-biodegradable finished plastic products and raw materials for the production of plastics coupled with the weak enforcement of relevant waste management by-laws have made the end of life management of plastics very difficult in Ghana. Countries like Oman and United Kingdom and more recently, Cote d’Ivoire have gone ahead to pass a law to enforce the use of the biodegradable agent in manufacturing plastics. The association awaits what the authorities in Ghana will do.
EGASS automobile mechanics at work

CATCHING UP WITH NEW AUTOMOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

Automobile mechanics at Techiman in the Brong Ahafo Region are delighted that they can now service more modern vehicles and make more money.
The mechanics belonging to the Eureka Garages Association (EGASS) attest to the fact that their advocacy action has presented them with the opportunity to learn ultra-modern vehicle servicing skills from technocrats at the Suame Magazine Industrial Development Organization (SMIDO); and these skills are helping them to service more sophisticated vehicles in the municipality which they previously turned away.

Speaking about the benefits EGASS members derived from their advocacy action, the Chairman of the Association, Mr. John Nkrumah stated that previously, “when the electronic system of a client’s car seems far above our knowledge, we were often torn between telling the clients to send the car elsewhere for servicing and doing guess work on the car. But our advocacy action made it possible for us to embark on a study to the famous SMIDO enclave in Kumasi to learn about servicing more sophisticated modern automobiles. Now we are servicing more modern cargo trucks and earning more income.”

But the members of EGASS are not resting on their oars yet as they are making maximum use of the advocacy skills they learnt from their advocacy action supported by the BUSAC Fund. With their enhanced advocacy skills, members of EGASS have successfully persuaded the German Technical Cooperation group (GTZ) and energy service providers to provide their work site with electricity.

“We have learnt to dialogue for things we need, and this has
enabled us to convince GTZ and our service providers to help connect our new 20-acre industrial site with a high voltage transformer to meet our energy needs”, Mr. Nkrumah disclosed in an interview.

As if that is not enough, the association has been able to use their enhanced advocacy skills to seek more support from other agencies such as the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET).

The General Secretary of EGASS, Nana Kwaadai pointed out that “the association can now boast of a health and safety program with COTVET with a seed fund yielding close to GHC 116,000.00.”

The Techiman Market has grown over the years to become one of the largest market centres in the West African sub-region and different kinds of automobiles ply its routes to do business. However anytime these modern heavy duty trucks show up with faults, mechanics at EGASS simply turned them away because they did not have the technical know-how to deal with them.

The automobile mechanics at EGASS were going through serious challenges as the lack of requisite skills to deal with modern automobiles was threatening to throw them out of business. The emergence of new and sophisticated auto-mobile Cargo Trucks coupled with their electronic and electrical devices, demanded supplementary theoretical and practical training in addition to the informal apprenticeship training the mechanics had.

The leadership of EGASS therefore applied for a grant from the BUSAC Fund to enable them advocate to the appropriate duty bearers for technical assistance in the form of supplementary training in modern automobile servicing. With support from its development partners, DANIDA, USAID and the EU, the BUSAC Fund provided a grant which enabled EGASS members to embark on an advocacy action entitled “Advocacy to Bridge the Technological Gap.” The advocacy action provided an opportunity for EGASS members to have fruitful dialogue sessions with officials from Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), GTZ, Business Development Services (BDS) and COTVET on how best to upgrade the automobile servicing skills of EGASS members. Eventually, these agencies heeded the calls of the mechanics and offered them training through the experienced automobile technicians at SMIDO.
Madam Faati Kpenka, thirty-five, mother of three, is among the few in Denugu community in the Garu District putting up a cement house.

Apart from that personal achievement, she and the husband have, through her soap making business, been able to support their...
eight other young relatives and three children through various education levels as well as taking care of their aging parents.

“Aside the soap making, I trade in millet and groundnut. Through the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund support I have cultivated the habit of saving, which has enabled me to access loans from the bank to expand all my businesses,” Madam Kpenka stated.

The breakthrough of Madam Fati and other 38 members (36 women and 2 men) of Denugu Noor-yeni Soap Makers from abject poverty are as a result of BUSAC Fund support for the group to advocate, the release of an agro-processing facility by the Garu District Assembly to increase and enhance product quality.

In 2010 the District Assembly and National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), with funding support from the European Union micro projects, built an agro-processing facility but the release of the facility has delayed.

Getting a three square meal a day and money to buy soap and clothing was a source of worry for Madam Memuna Asimami, but that challenged is a thing of the past.

“My husband is bed ridden, so the responsibilities to keep the home running rest on my shoulders. I am able to make ends meet now due to the advocacy skills by BUSAC fund,” Madam Memuna noted.

With an infectious smile, Madam Memuna says the income realized from the soap business has enabled her to start brewing pito, a local beverage which is also doing very well.

The Denugu Noor-yeni Soap Makers group is made up of mostly widows like Madam Ayaan Hawa, who shared the opinion that the best sustainable gift to give to a child’s lifetime is solid and sound education.

“I am now able to cater for the needs of my two children in both Senior and Junior High Schools as well as improve nutrition in my home all these fruits are from the benevolence assistance of BUSAC Fund,” she stated.

Mr Musah Abubakari, Deputy Coordinating Director of Garu District is convinced the advocacy by the group worked to
perfection because it helped the assembly to access some funding to complete the agro-processing facilities to hand it over to the group.

“I don’t know how quick we could have had resources to finish the facility to hand it over to the group, if not due to their advocacy. In fact it really facilitated the process of securing funding,” Mr Abubakari testified.

He said the current plea by the group which includes renovation, re-roofing of the centers and the provision of tools would be added to the assembly’s projects to be catered for in the course of the year.

The Assembly is now benefiting from the operations of the group in many ways including collections of small market levy when the product is sent to the market to be sold and has reduce the rate of poverty in many of the communities. School enrolment has also increased in the last three years.

BUSAC Fund is a project funded by USAID and European Union with DANIDA as the lead development partner. The objective of the project is to strengthen the advocacy capacity of private sector organisations (PSOs) to enable them undertake advocacy activities aimed at improving the Ghanaian business environment. Between 2004 and 2012, the BUSAC Fund has provided over 600 grants to various PSOs across the ten regions of Ghana. These PSOs are mainly business groups and associations in Ghana.

According to Mr James Yaro, President of group, through the GHS 30,000 grant from the BUSAC Fund, advocacy activities including two radio discussions and four press releases were issued by the association for publication to press home their request.

As part of the advocacy members of the association engaged with the Garu District Assembly on several occasions and finally convinced the assembly to hand over the facilities in the other community.

“The morale of members of the group, who are mostly widows, is very high now and production has increased from two to eight boxes and we sell our products in the Binduri, Zebila, Bawku and nearby communities in neighboring Togo. This trend is more sustainable”, he said.
For the first time in Ghana’s mining history, the Ghana Chamber of Mines appears to be winning the fight against illegal activities within the mining sector.
The Chief Executive Officer of the Chamber, Dr. Tony Aubyn is proud to announce that series of advocacy interventions undertaken by the Ghana Chamber of Mines (GCM) has led to the streamlining of small scale mining operations and increased environmental awareness.

He argued that, unlike before, many stakeholders including small-scale mining operators are now enlightened about the legal and the environmental consequences of their operations and through the BUSAC-funded interventions many foreigners especially Chinese nationals had been flushed out of the small scale mining business.

A team of experts were also commissioned to undertake research into some of the issues, adding that the report of the research team now served as a guide to members of the Chamber in respect of compensation matters.

Dr. Tony Aubyn who was full of praise for the BUSAC Fund’s support also added that, “we think that it’s been very helpful. It’s not just enhanced knowledge, but also improved compensation and the preservation of the environment,” he said.

Over the past years, issues of compensation to landowners and communities in mining areas have troubled the mining industry, with strong disagreements between mining companies on one side and landowners and affected communities on the other side. Sometimes, these disagreements have led to demonstrations and violent clashes in mining communities, resulting in the destruction of property and life.

Apart from compensation, the haphazard manner in which small-scale mining companies operate with little regard for the law governing their operations has also been a major challenge to the mining industry.

It is to help address some of these critical national issues that the GCM sought funding from the BUSAC Fund to undertake advocacy programmes involving the major stakeholders in the industry.

The stakeholders who participated in the programmes included representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, Minerals Commission, small-scale miners, traditional rulers, Water Resources Commission and national security taskforce against illegal small-scale mining.
Over 200,000 artisans in Kumasi will by the end of this year (2014) have access to a modern industrial complex on a 1000-acre land.
Leaders of the Suame Magazine Industrial Development Organisation (SMIDO) are working actively to relocate over 200,000 artisans of the light engineering cluster to a modern industrial complex by the end of the year in order to harness technology and promote enterprise competitiveness.

The project, a self-inspired initiative supported by the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund, is aimed at building a modern industrial complex on a 1000 acre land strategically acquired close to the present artisanal engineering cluster at Suame.

Dubbed the SMIDO-Otumfuo Industrial Complex, the project is located at Adubinsu-Kese near Kodie in the Ashanti region and about eight minutes’ drive to the present light industrial cluster, making the site attractive to the artisans.

The President of SMIDO, Mr Sarpong Boateng is hopeful that the industrial complex will offer support to technical production and services as well as technical skills upgrading for artisans and workers of SMIDO. Mr Boateng said the primary beneficiaries of the acquired land are the artisans of Suame Magazine and the four artisanal clusters in Kumasi who are part of SMIDO.

The secondary beneficiaries, according to Mr. Boateng, would be the two District Assemblies in terms of employment creation and increased revenue for Ghana Government, and West Africa as Suame Magazine is currently the vehicular repair and artisanal engineering service hub in the Sub-Region.
Like all indigenous artisanal cluster villages, Suame Magazine on its current site is unplanned, heavily congested and saddled with numerous environmental problems making it unattractive for investment initiatives that would stimulate the commercial operations of the artisans.

This is because Suame Magazine has exceeded its threshold population by over 180,000, leaving no space for expansion and planning purposes to transform it into a modern industrial estate to maintain its market position and to bridge the increasing technological gap in the industry.

Secondly, the existing land is under legal contention with threats of mass eviction. The BUSAC Fund assistance for the acquisition of the land at Adunbinso-kese was help foster private-public sector collaboration to decongest the place, infuse modern technology and free the artisans from any threat of eviction.

“The acquisition of this 1000 acre land, which is close to Suame Magazine is a source of pride and personal achievement for us the executives of SMIDO, thanks to the BUSAC Fund”, said Alhaji Abubakar Abdul Salam, Vice President of SMIDO.

Suame Magazine supports a livelihood population of over 600,000 on the lower variant of three dependents per artisan. It is feared that the collapse of Suame Magazine would signal the collapse of the artisanal industry in the Ashanti Region. The support of the BUSAC Fund is therefore seen as timely to legally acquire the 1000 acre land to sustain and transform the industry nationwide.

The General Secretary of SMIDO, Mr. Anthony Owusu Achiaw is upbeat that the relocation to the SMIDO-Otumfufo Industrial complex would bring stakeholders, particularly splinter and scattered associations together.

The support from the BUSAC Fund and its development partners-DANIDA, USAID and EU is therefore to harness the potential of advocacy to bring together public and private sector stakeholders’ for the acquisition, promotion and development of the 1000 acre-SMIDO-Otumfufo complex. The support is also aimed at establishing a partnership for the mobilization of funding for the development of the project and to negotiate for the provision of a lease cover by Asanteman Council and a Legislative Instrument by Government on the land.
The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) is expanding its services to micro, small and medium scale enterprises across the country.

More than forty percent (40%) increase in the budget of the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) is helping
the association to open more Business Advisory Centre’s at the district level. The association which had increased its district advisory centres from 102 to 151, is using these centres to facilitate the growth of small scale businesses.

Alhaji Abdul Saeed Moomen, National Secretary of the Association of Small Scale Industries (ASSI) noted in an interview that, “the increase in resources has enabled the NBSSI to open more Business Advisory Centres (BACs) that allow the board to execute its basic mandate of facilitating the growth of micro and small scale industries thereby creating more jobs at the district level.”

“We are getting reports from our members at the district level of efficient support service by staff of the NBSSI, which is facilitating the growth of small businesses and increasing their incomes and contribution of tax revenues”, He continued.

Tracing this achievement to the advocacy actions by the members of the Association of Small Scale Industries (ASSI), Alhaji Abdul Saeed Moomen, did not hesitate to commend BUSAC Fund for the funding support. He said the advocacy for the strengthening of the NBSSI was due to the support of the Business Advocacy Challenge Fund (BUSAC Fund).

“Today due to the advocacy support of the BUSAC Fund, ASSI has been incorporated into the membership of the board of the NBSSI making us part of the decision makers on issues affecting our members”, he added.

He said, due to this reinvigoration of ASSI and the support of the BUSAC Fund, lots of small scale business owners are joining the association thereby increasing their membership base.

The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) is the apex governmental body for the promotion and development of the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) sector in Ghana.

It was established by an Act of the Parliament of the Third Republic of Ghana (Act 434 of 1981) and operationalised in 1985 because government views the sector as having the potential to contribute substantially to reducing the high unemployment and to the growth of the economy of Ghana. MSEs account for a significant share of economic activity in Ghana and can play an important role in achieving the development goals for production. The long-term goal is for MSEs to maximize their contribution to the country’s economic and social development with respect to
production, income distribution and employment and the closer integration of women and people in rural areas with the national economy.

*The capacity of NBSSI has been enhanced to assist SMEs like this*
Persons with Disabilities (PWDS) now have the hope of getting all public buildings and other public places made easily accessible and available to PWDS following the acceptance of their findings from a nationwide consultation workshop on the Disability Act, 2006 (ACT 715) and a draft Legislative Instrument (LI) that will ensure the enforcement of the Act.

The nationwide consultation workshop formed part of an advocacy action supported by the Business Sector advocacy Challenge Fund (BUSAC Fund).

When the LI is passed, it will ensure that all buildings are made accessible to PWDS in the country. It is to the great disadvantage of PWDS that the legal requirements are not being enforced.

Isaac Tuggun, National Advocacy Officer of the Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD), in an interview explained that during the advocacy action, the then Ministry for Employment and Social Welfare accepted a collated view from the GFD after the nationwide consultation exercise had been carried out.

The Ministry in turn organised a validation workshop to enable stakeholders such as the Attorney General’s Department, National
Council for Persons With Disability and the Department of Social Welfare to have a second look at the Draft LI and compare it to the views that were collated.

“The duty bearers compared the two and asked for the rationale behind our views. They also tried to find out whether our views could be accommodated by the parent Act itself. Out of what we submitted, 60% of our views were accepted and the Attorney General was asked to use those views to review the then draft LI for a final validation workshop,” he emphasized.

However due to the 2012 elections, almost all the stakeholders were busily preparing for the elections and for this reason the final validation workshop could not come on.

“When it is passed, the Legislative Instrument will help all persons with disabilities to go about their business without any hindrance in order to improve upon their standards of living. It will help a lot in their activities because they can access many facilities,” he said.

He noted that the situation where buildings are not accessible to PWDs, “adversely affects income generation, consumer and recreation opportunities for members of the Federation as many workplaces, service providers, retail premises and street environments are inaccessible to them.”

Regarding the impact of the advocacy action, Mr. Tuggun said,
“the impact is great because the stakeholders were able to realize that Persons With Disability really have a say and that they have made their voices very clear with regard to the Act.” Frederick Ofosu, the Programmes Manager for the Ghana Federation of the Disabled, also in an interview explained that the advocacy action “helped in bringing together stakeholders in the sector to fashion out strategies to not only implement the persons with disability law, but also to look at issues around accessibility and how, as a nation we can enhance access to services and opportunities in places for the mainstreaming and inclusion of PWDs.”

He explained also that even though, the GFD has not realised the dream of getting the Legislative Instrument (LI) that will ensure the enforcement of the disability law passed, the critical study of the law as part of the advocacy action has made it clear that the disability Act, 2006 (ACT715) “was too service oriented compared to the accepted criteria for right-based legislation which should focused on the rights with persons with disabilities in spite of their places of abode.”

Mr. Ofosu noted that the understanding and the detailed scrutiny of the law also gave the GFD a deeper understanding of some of the issues behind the framework of the law; and that is what they are currently working on by trying to bring the disability law to terms with the UN convention on the rights of the disabled before they eventually push for an LI for the disability law.

“The BUSAC Fund support has not failed; it’s been a great success. The problems have been revealing and the direction has been set from this BUSAC project and I think that as a disability movement, if we put our hands on the wheel, we can achieve more for ourselves resulting from this study that we did with the BUSAC fund”, Mr. Ofosu remarked with optimism.

The GFD has its headquarters in Accra and is made up of seven member organisations. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) have now come to terms with the barriers existing within the economic environment that are impeding easy movement after the Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD) undertook a research work on the problems affecting PWDs.

The issues affecting PWDs are categorised into architectural barriers, attitudinal barriers and environmental barriers and these actually impede the effective participation of persons with disability within the economic system.
LIFTING TRADE BARRIERS ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

The Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA), located in Ashaiman in the Greater Accra region with membership all over the country is poised to break the barrier into the European market following its recognition by stakeholders and duty bearers.

DOLTA members want improved access to the international market
Lumber traders are unable to ply their trade on the European market because of the ban on chain saw operations. However the Association has been able to undertake an advocacy action which centered around the ban on chain saw operation.

Key stakeholders such as the Forestry Commission (FC), Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) were brought on board during the advocacy action, and these key duty bearers have taken the concerns of the association into consideration.

Until recently, DOLTA was never recognized and invited for dialogue and meetings on pertinent issues facing the lumber sector. However, with the advocacy action supported by the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund, the Association has been able to make all its members active to participate in dialogue sessions with the duty bearers.

In addition to the recognition, DOLTA, through the advocacy action, has been able to sensitisits members on cooperation, leading to the strengthening of the association. This will in turn see to the growth of the individual businesses to employ more people.

Anthony Partey Asare, Action Coordinator of DOLTA in an interview stated that “all the targets were met during the advocacy action; this has opened the way for the secretary of the association to be directly involved in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement [VPA].”

The VPA is a policy framework adopted by Ghana and the European Union in November 2009 to articulate the mutual commitment of the two bodies in addressing the difficulties of illicit logging and trade in timber products.

“Now we are recognised by stakeholders like the Forestry Commission, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Now they involve us in policy decisions affecting the lumber sector. Initially they were not recognising us,” he disclosed.

He added that when the ban on the chain saw operations are removed, “our businesses will boom, now almost everybody is shifting from the business because they are losing money,” he said.

DOLTA hither to the intervention of BUSAC Fund was faced with
a lot of problems. Key among them was the fact that DOLTA faces very limited legitimate market for lumber and wood products due to Government’s ban on Chainsaw operations.

For this reason there were major training events introduced as part of the advocacy action and these included training and sensitisation of members; policy makers; and the media. All these activities were successfully done according to Mr. Partey Asare. The main objective for the advocacy action was to bring all lumber dealers in Ghana together to form one body.

“This objective has been achieved, resulting in the active participation and the increase in its membership from 8000 members to over 30,000 members across the country,” Mr. Asare remarked.

The other objectives are advocating for policy makers to adopt a policy option that involves all stakeholders, including chainsaw millers, in the management of the forestry resources through a multi-stakeholder dialogue. This has also been achieved because the various stakeholders now involve the DOLTA in everything they do concerning the Lumber sector.

“The advocacy action has really enlightened us as members of the association,” says Dominic Kponton, a member of the Domestic Lumber Traders Association.

He adds that the advocacy has taught them how to relate to duty bearers and respond to laws regulating the sector. Respect for regulation will help to avoid unnecessary cost.
There is no doubt that the enactment of the new law to regulate the activities of licensed chemical sellers has brought many benefits to the members of the Ghana Chemical Sellers Association.

The leadership of the Licensed Chemical Sellers of Ghana has many testimonies about the successful passage of a new law to regulate their own activities. The chemical sellers are not only happy that the new law allows the members to benefit from the services of the National Health Insurance Scheme, but are also happy that the law has also brought recognition to the association.

General Secretary of the association, Mr. John Ofori-Atta said members are happy that the new law has created enabling environment for them and henceforth, the association will no longer be regulated by institutions with conflicting interests.

“This law will end the marginalization of chemical sellers and conflict of interest by the existing regulating bodies and allow chemical sellers to operate in an enabling environment and support the Government MDG agenda”, Mr. Ofori-Atta said.

According to Mr. Ofori-Atta, the Health Institutions and Facilities Act 829, which was signed and approved by the President in 2012

The activities of licensed Chemical Sellers in Ghana is now regulated by a new law Photo credit: http://www.comminit.com/files/nov7.png

INTRODUCING NEW LEGISLATION FOR CHEMICAL SELLERS
will enable association members to serve more clients since members will now benefit from the services of the National Health Insurance Authority.

“It is also expected to improve the confidence and trust of clients in chemical sellers and promote more patronage from clients as well as sustain the growth of our business, leading to the payment of more taxes and generation of more revenue to the government,” he added.

The Agency is also empowered to license, supervise, monitor and regulate premises, personnel and practice tools or equipment of health service facilities and providers.

“The legislation would also help to regulate the rapid spread of drug peddlers who operate without regulatory enforcement and to also control the proliferation of herbal shops that sell orthodox medicines without regulation.

Before the enactment of the law, there was a rapid springing up of drug sellers’ activities without any concerted regulations to govern their activities. Furthermore, many herbal medicine shops who are not licensed chemical sellers ended up selling orthodox medicines without the proper authorization and skill to do so. This situation put public health at risk. To curb this irregularity, the leadership of GNLCSA sought the assistance of the BUSAC Fund to advocate the passage of a law to regulate the operations of chemical sellers in the country.

The enactment of the Act 829, demands the establishment of a separate agency to regulate the activities of private and public health service providers.

This is because, hitherto, the association was regulated by the Pharmacy Council, which was considered as victimization and ‘drop-out’ of business strategies by some member of the association.

“We thank the BUSAC Fund for their support because through this advocacy, the service of chemical sellers in Ghana has been recognized by the state agencies and affiliated to health facilities. For example the Health Insurance Authority has begun process to accredit chemical sellers to provide services to clients under the scheme. It is hoped that this would benefit patients in remote and deprived areas where pharmacies are not prevalent”, excited Mr. Ofori-Atta emphasized.
BUSINESS ADVOCACY OPENS UP TAMALE CENTRAL MARKET FOR INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The decongestion exercise carried out in the Tamale Central Market has opened up the market for free movement of vehicles, goods and people to and from the market.

The advocacy action of PTA has led to the rehabilitation of the Tamale Central Market
Aside, the return of people who stopped shopping at the market due to the congestion, the market has been opened up for developmental projects such as the construction of additional shops to accommodate more traders, especially those selling on the pavements.

For one of the Members, Hajia Alima Ayeshetu, 40, mother of five, as a result of the group’s advocacy action, she had increased her daily average sales from two thousand to six thousand Ghana cedis because many people have access to her shop.

“I am grateful to BUSAC Fund for the support. Now I have expanded my business and I don’t need to run helter-skelter to look for money to pay the school fees of my five children who are at various educational ladders”, Hajia Ashetu stressed.
Secretary of the Association, Mr. Thomas Ade, fifty-seven, mentioned that aside using the advocacy skills to convince the assembly to do the decongestion, he was able to convince the officials of Northern Electricity Department of the Volta River Authority and Vodafone to re-align all the electric and telephone poles which were on the walkways within the market at no cost.

“Many illegal sheds were pulled down during the decongestion so the skills helped me approach the telecom offices to collect 170 pieces of umbrella for the women who were affected”, he said.

According to Mr. Ade, the decongestion was just a response to one of the many challenges the association faces and that plans were advanced to start the rest of the intervention like the construction of drainage systems and walkways which is scheduled to start in January, 2014.

Mr. Abdul Rahman Hannan Gundandoo, Tamale Metropolitan Chief Executive (MCE) stated that due to the advocacy action, the Assembly recognized PTA as a very important stakeholder and so the Assembly now involves them and solicits for their inputs concerning the facelift of the market.

“I am passionate about ensuring that the traders get good environment to sell so that the Assembly can increase revenue collection. Plans are advance to build 150 shops in addition to the existing shops through funding from Urban Development Grant”, the MCE said.

Mr Gundandoo said the rest of the issues which include building of the drainage and walkway will be included during the construction of the new stores.

Members of PTA secured a grant from the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund to advocate for proper market facilities (drainage and walkways) within the Tamale Central market to enhance the ease of doing business for over 200 traders.

The spaces between the sheds and stores in the market are always flooded anytime it rains thus deterring many customers from entering the market to patronize goods and services.
ENHANCING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Increased access to new and international market has been identified as one of the key achievements of the advocacy actions undertaken by the Empretec Business Women’s Forum (EBWF).
Executive members of the EBWF who are delighted that the business advocacy action has exposed their businesses to new domestic and international markets, also added that the advocacy action is helping them to increase their sales.

Ms. Paully Apea-Kubi, President of EBWF, testified that as a result of the exposure from the advocacy action, some members of the association had gained contracts to supply products to new clients both home and abroad.

“The impact of the advocacy action on our businesses has been amazing! The documentaries we aired gave our businesses enormous exposure, to the extent that many female entrepreneurs who featured in the documentaries won orders from local and international clients. This has resulted in the growth of our members’ businesses,” Ms. Apea-Kubi stated in an interview.

To buttress the assertion of Ms. Apea-Kubi, a member of the association, Ms. Fulera Seidu also testified that, “My business got enormous international exposure after featuring in the documentaries within the advocacy action. In fact, I was invited to a couple of trade fairs abroad where I had the opportunity to access new markets, increase sales and income and network with other business organizations. I also learnt a lot from this advocacy action, and honestly, my business has never been the same ever since.”

Members of the association also expressed satisfaction that duty bearers are beginning to respond by tackling some of the various concerns raised in their advocacy action including gender inequalities. This according to Ms Ama Vanderpuye, the Vice President of the association is helping more women to improve their businesses.

“As a result of the media exposure gained from the action, the management of Women’s World Bank Ghana amended their portfolios to create credit facilities and other special products to support women businesses in Ghana, and women businesses stand to benefit enormously from these new facilities,” Ms. Vanderpuye revealed.

The immediate past president of the association, Ms. Edwina Assan also pointed out that EBWF’s advocacy action has attracted significant support from duty bearers and private organizations in the form of capacity building for women entrepreneurs in Ghana.
“It is worth mentioning that the awareness created by our advocacy action prompted the National Board for Small Scale Industries to start collaborating with EBWF to train women entrepreneurs on business strategies; and many women entrepreneurs are benefitting from this training scheme. As I speak, both Google Ghana Ltd and Kofi Annan ICT centre have also expressed interest in developing ICT products to support women entrepreneurs in the informal sector,” Ms. Assan remarked.

The remarkable advocacy action of EBWF also attracted support from reputable organizations beyond the boundaries of Ghana. “The televised documentaries within our advocacy action also drew the attention of UN Women to EBWF’s activities. Subsequently, UN Women sponsored a member of EBWF to attend a workshop on women entrepreneurial issues in Senegal; and she returned to share her knowledge with EBWF members,” Ms. Vanderpuye added.

The Empretec Business Women’s Forum is an association of women entrepreneurs in Ghana. The association identified the lack of adequate understanding and appreciation of gender issues and its impact on women enterprises among duty bearers as a huge challenge for women businesses.

With support from its development partners-DANIDA, USAID and the EU, the BUSAC Fund responded by providing an advocacy grant to EBWF, making it possible for the association to embark on an advocacy action that has successfully led to addressing some of the challenges confronting women businesses in Ghana.

As part of the business advocacy action embarked upon the association, the group produced and televised 12 episodes of 30-minute documentaries (on GTV) which highlighted the challenges confronting women businesses in Ghana today. Following the airing of these documentaries on GTV, a number of women entrepreneurs who featured in the documentaries testified that their businesses have benefitted immensely from the exposure gained from the advocacy action.
Development cooperation between Denmark and Ghana began in 1957, and Ghana is today one of Danida’s major partner countries.

The main activities in Denmark’s current development cooperation with Ghana is general budget support for the implementation of Ghana’s Shared Growth & Development Agenda (GSGDA) and four large programmes aligned to the:

2. Health Sector Support Programme V (2012-2016) - DKK.400 million provided as health sector budget support and support the private health sector and HIV/AIDS.
3. Local Service Delivery and Governance Programme (2009-2013) - DKK.600 million to support the District Development Facility, water supply & sanitation and the rural feeder roads and Ghana Audit Service.
5. Support to Private Sector Development II (2010-2014). DKK.400 million to improve framework condition for the private sector, establish a Skills Development Fund, support selected agricultural value chains and provide rural finance.

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The United States has a long history of extending a helping hand to people overseas struggling to make a better life. It is a history that both reflects the American people’s compassion and support of human dignity as well as advances U.S foreign policy interests. Agricultural growth has been the major driver of poverty reduction, especially in southern Ghana. The sector is the largest source of employment for Ghanaians and is dominated by small farmers.

Ghana is a focus country for Feed The Future (FTF), and the initiative is contributing to the government’s commitment to food security and building on a common purpose shared among civil society, the private sector and development partners. Public-private partnerships are an important opportunity to strengthen food security and accelerate economic growth in Ghana and the West African region as a whole.

Feed the future in Ghana focuses on major rice, maize and soya value chains with particular emphasis on the north, where nutritional indicators, especially among children, are the worst. The approach integrates nutrition and gender issues throughout and emphasizes improving the resilience of vulnerable households in target communities. The program also seeks to improve the sustainable management of marine fisheries to enhance the food security and livelihood of coastal fishing communities.

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The country Strategy Paper for Ghana (2008-2013) presents the strategic framework for EU co-operation with Ghana under the 10th EDF. Assistance concentrates on transport connectivity and regional integration as well as governance through support to decentralization, civil society and non-executive bodies. Other non-focal sectors include migration and protection of the environment and natural resources.

The EU is committed to increasing the use of budget support in Ghana through cooperation with other donors and in this context, the commission will pay special attention to performance in social sectors related to the MDGs. It will also focus on public finance management, regional integration, private sector development and trade facilitation, including support for the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

EU interventions in Ghana also take account of crosscutting issues, in particular gender equality, environmental sustainability, democracy and good governance, decent work principles, civil society and non-state actors. The EU will provide €2 million of project financing for migration, security and catalyzing Diaspora resources management, including support for FLEGT, The EU Action Plan for forest Law Enforcement Governance and trade. The multi-annual indicative programme for Ghana under the 10th EDF amounts to €454 million to address all these priorities.

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PROMOTING PRIVATE-PUBLIC POLICY DIALOGUE IN GHANA

For being steadfast and visible in our efforts at supporting the growth of a vibrant Ghanaian private sector, the BUSAC Fund has won the 2013 SME Agency Award at the maiden edition of the Small and Medium Enterprise Ghana Awards (SMEGA).

We share this noble achievement with our Development Partners, Grantees, short term consultants, staff and the Ghanaian Private Sector – Ayekoo 1


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